

A PEDAGOGY OF COLLECTIVE ACTION AND COLLECTIVE REFLECTION

PREPARING TEACHERS FOR COLLECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

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If teacher educators are to prepare teachers to become leaders who work together toward reform in newly restructured schools, schools of education must change the curriculum and design of their teacher education programs. Drawing on a study of an experimental teacher education program, the authors recommend changes that prepare new teachers to assume greater leadership responsibility, particularly for collaborative curriculum design and implementation. Teacher educators must model these practices in teacher education coursework. A pedagogy of collective action beginning with a process tying educational theory to practice for teacher education students is suggested. This process of bridging theory and practice is the heart of a program that nurtures new teachers' inclination for joint work and capacity for collective school leadership. Grounding this discussion in a detailed analysis of an actual program, the authors highlight the complexity of this challenge and some of the dilemmas faced by those with this agenda.

"Actions speak louder than words," goes the popular aphorism. Although university-based teacher educators frequently find themselves immersed in words, most are deeply concerned with actions. In fact, teacher educators work to influence the actions of scores of prospective teachers who pass through their classrooms each year primarily through the words of educational research and theory. Even more important, a growing number of teacher educators struggle to demonstrate to their students the connection between action—in this case teaching—and the academic literature associated with pedagogy and learning. These educators hope to prepare teachers who are thoughtful consumers of education theory and research and, as a result, think carefully and critically about their own practice.

At the same time that teacher educators are seeking to close the gap between research and practice, schools are demanding another set of skills and practices from teachers (and hence from teacher education). School reformers now hope that teachers will become leaders who work together across corridors, departments, and disciplines to foster educational reform (Barth, 1990; Lieberman, 1995; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Maeroff, 1993; McLaughlin, 1993). The ability to work with colleagues in a strong school community is seen as essential in the school restructuring efforts that have characterized education reform over the past decade (Hargreaves, 1994; Murphy, 1990). Because forms of teacher collaboration and community have thus far been underconceptualized, however, they make up a weak foundation for

school change. As Andy Hargreaves (1994) suggests about teacher collaboration and community, "much of the burden of educational reform has been placed upon their fragile shoulders" (p. 187).

The emphasis on school-based decision making, team teaching, interdisciplinary curriculum, and teacher professionalism have led teacher educators to consider new approaches to teacher preparation (Goodlad, 1990; Grossman & Richert, 1996; Merz & Fuhrman, 1997; Shulman, 1989). Important reports such as the Holmes Group's (1986) *Tomorrow's Teachers* and the Carnegie Task Force's (1986) *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* were issued with an eye toward meeting the challenges posed by these new school structures and priorities. Although these ambitious reports aspired to broad goals not likely to be attained any time soon, they helped create dialogue about possibilities for change in the way we prepare teachers to work in schools. They spurred a shift in focus from technical proficiency to teacher leadership. Methods for preparing teachers to build meaningful school communities, however, remain vague (Westheimer & Kahne, 1993). Although reformers argue that teachers must be "organized, mobilized [and] led" (Lieberman, 1988) to overcome the norms of autonomy that pervade teaching, the means of such organization, mobilization, and leadership are rarely specified (Westheimer, 1998). As a result, many newly restructured schools encounter serious obstacles because teachers come to them ill equipped to work together designing interdisciplinary curriculum, making scheduling decisions, or planning schoolwide activities (Beane, 1997; Lieberman, 1995; Murphy, 1990).

Those interested in narrowing the gap between research and practice generally do not focus on how to teach teachers to collaborate or design and manage a school as a professional community. Conversely, those promoting collaboration and community among teachers in schools do not often point to narrowing the gap between research and practice as a means of furthering their goals. In this article, we bring together these two teacher education reform agendas—preparing teachers for collective

school leadership and bridging theory and practice. Specifically, we suggest a pedagogy of collective action. By this we mean a process through which teachers collectively design, implement, and reflect on curricula. Bridging theory and practice is at the heart of this process. Student teachers learn to collaborate and build a professional community at the same time as they bridge private teaching practices with public educational research and theory.¹ We ground this discussion in a detailed analysis of an actual program to highlight the complexity of this challenge and some of the dilemmas faced by those with this agenda.

TOWARD A PEDAGOGY OF COLLECTIVE ACTION, COLLECTIVE REFLECTION, AND TEACHER LEADERSHIP

In what follows, we describe the Experiential Curricula Project (ECP), a two-term, experimental course sequence for prospective teachers designed to provide participants with a rich experience as a community of teachers by engaging them in reflective practice.² Each year, the ECP worked with 16 to 25 prospective teachers. The teachers examined the role of experience in education, studied a variety of curriculum theorists, and explored their personal and professional experiences in classrooms. In addition, they designed, implemented, and reflected on three experience-based curriculum units for classes of 9th and 10th graders from two local high schools.

Before describing the project in more detail, it is worth mentioning the role experience plays in preparing teachers for collective practice and leadership. Why is this endeavor called the Experiential Curricula Project? Why not the Collective School Leadership Project or the Teacher Community Project? In other words, why place experience at the heart of a program designed to promote collective leadership among new teachers? The simple response is that experience drives the curriculum of the ECP. Analysis of students' prior experiences and engagement of students in new collective experiences provides a powerful vehicle for integrating discussion of theory and practice. In

Table 1 The Experiential Curricula Project's Two-Term Course Sequence

First term	
Weeks 1 through 3	Identify characteristics of powerful curriculum both from students' "private" experience and from "public" theory
Weeks 4 through 6	Develop first curriculum
Week 7	Implement first curriculum in local school
Weeks 8 through 10	Assess curriculum, engaging in collective and individual analysis
Second term	
Weeks 11 through 13	Examine normative dilemmas in curriculum development
Weeks 14 through 15	Develop second curriculum
Week 16	Implement second curriculum in local school
Weeks 17 through 18	Assess first and second curricula; integrate accumulated theory in developing third curriculum
Week 19	Implement third curriculum in local school
Week 20	Reassess validity of original private and public theories; adjust theories accordingly; explore impact on individual and collective teacher practices

addition, as the description below details, the emphasis on experience also supports the development of a professional community.

To highlight the ways students and instructors use prior and current experience to structure collective efforts, we focus on three phases of the curriculum. Collectively, the prospective teachers (a) generate theory from their own experiences, (b) develop and implement curricula in local schools, and (c) follow each curriculum implementation with a structured process of reflection, which informs the development of subsequent curricula (see Table 1).

Collectively Generate Theory From Individual Experience

Those seeking to bridge theory and practice (but not necessarily seeking to promote collective teacher practice and leadership) might approach a course in curriculum design in the following manner. First, students read the work of various education theorists to gain a conceptual understanding of the matters at hand. Next, the professor presents the class with examples of various approaches to teaching for students to consider. Finally, perhaps as the term project, students design their own lesson plans or perhaps a unit to share with the professor and the class. When possible, students may even test out these lessons in conjunction with their individual student teaching assignments. This approach is consistent with many recent conceptual models for teacher education (Fullan,

Galluzzo, Morris, & Watson, 1998; Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990).

The ECP shares a number of these features: students explore educational theories, consider practical applications, and devise curricula that they implement in local schools. But there are also important differences that promote the blending of theory and practice and lead to a collective orientation to work in schools. Perhaps the primary difference is in the use of a collectively generated theory of curriculum and pedagogy. Students share their individual experiences, categorize these experiences, and integrate them with what they are reading to create a working theory of teaching and learning generated collectively by the class. We explain this process in some detail below.

Rather than beginning by reading and discussing the conceptual foundations of curriculum design, students share stories of their best and worst educational interactions with each other in small groups. They are discouraged from selecting general experiences (a seventh-grade algebra class they enjoyed, for example) and asked to focus on particular positive and negative interactions (a time when local politicians provided feedback on a community-based project they had completed). Over the following week, each student develops a written description of a significant educational interaction he or she had. The descriptions include the type of activity, assessment of success or failure of the activity, and speculation on the reasons for success or failure. In the seminar,

students and the instructor work to identify common features of these interactions. Negative interactions, for example, are sometimes traced to miscommunication, a betrayal of trust or abuse of authority, a violation of boundaries, or a dehumanizing feeling. Features that the class often associates with positive interactions include experiences in which students and teachers engage in meaningful relationships, break down their traditional roles, overcome real or perceived limits, or produce a tangible product. Examples of these categories drawn from students' writing are compiled, typed, and distributed to the class. These documents chronicle the seminar members' individual experiences and privately held theories.

Over the following 3 weeks, each of these categories or features is reinterpreted as students reflect further on their experiences and examine the writings of curriculum theorists. As they assess the implications and desirability of Noddings's (1992) ethic of care, for instance, they are asked to reflect on the relationship of this ethic to their own conceptions of good educational interactions. Positive features are then extracted and refined. Students consider and debate curriculum theorists' work or "public" theories (Cole, 1990) with explicit reference to their own varied experiences. Through these discussions, the prospective teachers work to develop a coherent and agreed-on set of characteristics of powerful teaching and learning experiences. In one seminar, for example, the class focused on the importance and influence in curriculum design and implementation of teacher charisma, leadership opportunities for students, challenges that build on students' talents and abilities, and extended multidisciplinary projects.

Using students' collectively compiled experiences in schools to examine critically more public theories of teaching and learning brings the two closer together, enriching students' understandings both of their own experiences and of scholarly texts. Teachers start with individual theories based on personal experience about what works in classroom practice. Of course, these privately held theories are not always productive. To "become educated as a teacher,"

note Bullough and Gitlin (1995), these "commonly held assumptions about teaching must be challenged and tested. . . . Masquerading as common sense, [teachers'] private theories need to be made explicit so they can be criticized and, when found wanting, reconstructed" (p. 15). By collectively examining these theories through narrating and analyzing individual experiences, private theories are put to public scrutiny. At the same time, public theories are put to the test of experience by analysis based on teachers' own principles of practice derived from their experience. As Schwab (1959/1978) notes, "Any theory of practice finds its full meaning only as it is put into practice and gains its 'verification' only as it is tested there" (p. 169). As students described the process, engaging in conversations about professional practice "gave me a sense that my experiences and what I had to say mattered," "helped us learn from our experiences," and enabled the class to "use the more theoretical readings as a sounding board for our intuitions."

In addition, engaging students in deep conversations about practice informed by their experiences, analysis of their particular context, and a knowledge base with regard to teaching and learning supports the development of an emerging professional community (Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Rust, 1999; Shulman, 1989). For many of the teachers, these discussions lend legitimacy to their own experiences while creating a common base of experiential knowledge and a familiarity with each other's values and orientations—essential ingredients for an emerging professional community of teachers (McLaughlin, 1993; Newmann, 1994). These settings also enable students to experience dynamics associated with the sense of trust, respect, and common purpose that advocates of professional communities prize. As one student noted,

In this class, I always felt totally comfortable talking. . . . When you know people more, you really want to know what they have to say. . . . It was more than my own participation, it's this overall professional respect for each other's thoughts and ideas, and that makes a huge difference.

Collectively Develop and Implement Curriculum Projects

Following their collaborative analysis of powerful learning experiences, the prospective teachers in the ECP then begin to design their own educational activities. Rather than develop and implement these activities individually, however, they do so collectively.

Communities, as John Dewey (1900/1956) made clear, are built from the collective experiences of their members. The process by which experiences are shared through collective action and reflection both builds community and defines it. Collective action can create a commonly understood set of experiences from which to generate theory and incorporate the research and theory of other educators. Collective reflection, in turn, requires community and also strengthens it (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995).

Schools led by communities of teachers who are responsible for making curricular, organizational, and sometimes financial decisions require that newcomers are well versed about the benefits, commitments, tensions, and trouble spots that emerge when people work together in demanding environments. Research to date has indicated that without adequate preparation, expectations for teacher collaboration in teacher-led schools are easily thwarted (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; Little, 1990). To prepare teachers for work in these types of schools, teacher education programs should make it a priority to model what communities of professionals might look like and to give new teachers a positive experience designing curriculum within such a community. The impact of such an experience can be enormous (see Westheimer & Kahne, 1993). As one student explained when interviewed by another for her action research project,

The idea of creating a community of learners . . . you can talk about that . . . but to see it happen is another thing entirely. . . . The way we not only planned and implemented the [curriculum], but the way it worked. . . . Something happens over time, people make connections. Those connections have carried us through the two terms, through the three trips, but at the same time, they're a basis from which we can make connections to the kids.

By providing the opportunity for preservice teachers to experience professional communities, teacher educators also make it possible for them to develop the insight, knowledge, and orientation needed to pursue collective practice in newly restructured schools.

The students in the ECP work together designing curriculum for classes of 25 to 30 students from a local urban high school. The curriculum is then implemented over a 2-week period, which features a 2-day overnight curriculum, outdoors and away from the norms and constraints of traditional school settings. Preliminary and follow-up educational activities take place at the school site. As they begin to plan their curriculum, the class forms working committees, each with specific responsibilities. One committee coordinates transportation and develops curricular activities for the bus ride and walk into the campsite where everyone will be spending the night. Another designs curriculum for small groups of the high school students. Other committees handle logistics, whole-group projects, outing themes, and pretrip and posttrip activities to be implemented at the high school. The prospective teachers sit on as many as three committees. The class also chooses a curriculum coordinator. This person works across the committees to ensure coherence and communicate ongoing developments.

For the next 3 weeks, the students meet together as a class and in the smaller committees. They discuss their options, goals, and teaching strategies in light of their own categories of curriculum design and each week's readings. They deliberate, report back to the class, and seek to improve on one another's ideas.

One year, for example, the transportation committee proposed that three class members, posing as park rangers, greet the high school students during their walk into the campsite. The rangers would ask the students to participate in a poll and then facilitate a discussion on policies related to park use and access.³ As the class of prospective teachers explored this possibility, they decided to adopt park policy as a curricular theme for the weekend. The small group activities committee later suggested that

the high school students cycle between five workshops, each addressing ethical, political, and environmental concerns of park use. The whole group projects committee designed a forum in which groups of students would deliberate, write position papers, and make presentations that support their positions. Each committee contributed similarly as the class went back and forth between committee and whole class meetings until a coherent design for the entire curriculum was created. "In that first week of planning," another prospective teacher wrote,

all of the committees met and came up with plans. . . . Each group laughed and joked as they presented their part, even when the rest of the class was seeming skeptical. . . . The following week, the committees met again and were able to take the best aspects of the ideas which had been tossed around earlier, and add new twists. By the following Tuesday, we were no longer asking "Do you really think it's going to happen?" Now we were wondering how we were going to fit everything in!

Once implementation of the curriculum begins, the prospective teachers are in charge. Decisions, from disciplinary measures and logistics to on-the-fly curricular revisions are left to the discretion of the class. The course instructor provides some feedback, consultation, and oversight but does not run the event. Assessments of the curriculum and of the students' performance as teachers are the focus of the classes that follow each weekend curriculum implementation.

Collective and Individual Reflection

Having had the opportunity to test their curriculum ideas, the prospective teachers enter the second term of the course during which they design two additional curricula for new groups of students. As a starting point, the class systematically considers their previous experience, revises their priorities and assumptions, and researches the new conditions they will face. For the next 10 weeks, the students prepare detailed plans for this curriculum and the next. During this time, the class also reads further about innovative curriculum design (e.g., Elliot Wiggin-ton's [1986] *Foxfire*) and explores a number of

normative issues related to pedagogy. This phase of the program—when students reflect on one curriculum, read educational literature, and design the next curriculum—offers the best opportunity to collectively integrate theory with practice. The ways the class members integrate their experiences and home-grown theories with the research and theoretical models developed by others is best illustrated by a discussion that arose concerning creativity and pedagogy, a topic familiar to teacher educators.

Prospective teachers had just returned from a 2-day curriculum in which they had facilitated discussions and activities about the then-current presidential campaigns. They observed that when groups of students were asked to make creative presentations about presidential platform issues, the results were less than inspired. Most groups had one or two students read a lengthy written statement in monotone while the other group members stood behind. One group split the reading among all of the group members. The effects were predictable. Few in the audience listened carefully to their classmates' presentations, the presenters took little pride in their performances, and minor disciplinary problems required sporadic attention from the prospective teachers. Why, the prospective teachers wondered, were the presentations so lackluster? They had given the students the freedom to present in any way they wished and had even encouraged them to be creative.

As the class explored possible answers to this question, much debate ensued. A number of student teachers were hesitant to give up their long-held theory that if schools would simply diminish the constraints imposed on student behavior, they would free students' natural capacity for innovation and creativity. Others pointed out that the outcome of their planned activity demonstrated the opposite. The students were afforded plenty of freedom to be creative but chose traditional means to present their work. The students' private theories came head to head with their experience and with some of the research they had read and summarily dismissed as not child-centered enough. As one student explained,

We talked about all the drawbacks of teacher-centered classrooms. . . . But when we went and did our curriculum, even though we didn't intend for it to be this way, the activities depended on us, and upon our setting up the situation. And that was one of the things that we talked about as being a negative in the traditional classroom, that the teacher shouldn't have to be the center of attention that way.

As the class further discussed freedom and pedagogy, they began to consider the antecedents of creativity. Were freedom and encouragement enough? Do children in educational settings tend toward creative expression, or do they tend to replicate patterns of behavior they commonly see? Would the modeling of alternative presentation styles expand the range of creative options that children consider or would it simply substitute a new dominant presentation style for the old one? As they examined these questions, multiple interpretations of the experience and its causes emerged. The class revised its theory to accommodate new understandings of the relationship between pedagogy and creativity.

It is common in teacher education to rely on theories to shape students' understanding of educational interactions and outcomes. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) have shown that such reliance is unwise because new and veteran teachers alike are likely to make decisions based on their own experience even if research contradicts their judgment. New teachers see the connection between theory and practice as tenuous, and teacher educators find approaches for meaningful integration of the two to be elusive. Teacher education students routinely report that their university coursework does not inform their teaching and that their experience with children is accorded little value in university classrooms. As Mike Atkin (1989) writes, "a great many teachers and administrators believe—and say, with conviction—that educational research is irrelevant, wrong-headed, or both" (p. 200). This is particularly troubling in light of the series of educational reforms intended to give teachers greater responsibility and control over the schools in which they work. If we are to take seriously the notion that meaningful change is going to come

only when directed by those who will implement it, then the ways practitioners understand and respond to theory-based and research-driven reforms is very important indeed.

In the example described above, students' assumptions with regard to how best to encourage creativity were called into question by their collective experience working with high school students. They found that freedom to be creative did not necessarily result in creative expression, and they returned to their original assumptions about the public theories they had read to reconsider them. "In that second visit to the readings, we were struck by what some of the education authors had to say," one student noted, "that maybe the ones we had dismissed had a point, that maybe this was more complicated than we had expected." Privately held theories of class members were challenged and adjusted accordingly.

The activities described above provide a strategy for integrating theory and practice and for incorporating systematic reflection in teacher education. Teacher educators have drawn attention to the importance of forging these links in teacher preparation and staff development programs (Atkin, 1992; Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Kroll & LaBoskey, 1996). More important for our argument here, however, is that the process of collectively generating and revising theory became a lesson for student teachers in what meaningful collective work is like. These reflective experiences derive much of their power from their expressly collective nature. In contrast to student teachers' sharing their individual experiences and asking their peers for advice, students implemented this curriculum together. Several students echoed one student's observation that "there was such a sense of common purpose that made [these conversations] meaningful. . . . We had an opportunity to be an expert and to learn the expertise of others." The shared experience enabled discussions among the prospective teachers about their teaching and its effects, which in turn facilitated a kind of professional collaboration that would have been much

harder to create had the students worked individually.

NOT ALL WORK IS COLLECTIVE

It is important to note that not all the work in the ECP is collective. Through action research projects, each student teacher conducts a study related to the three curricula designed and implemented by the entire class. One student, for example, assessed the consistency of the curriculum the class developed with a set of principles John Dewey (1938/1963) provides in *Experience and Education*. Another wrote a qualitative study of the impact of the 2-day curriculum project on the high school students' attitudes toward traditional educational experiences.

Individual projects are essential for teacher preparation. Indeed, teachers in schools will do the great majority of their work individually. Our point is not that all of teaching must be a collective enterprise. Rather, we are suggesting that individual efforts should be related to a collective, if broadly defined, endeavor. In this case, the action research projects were combined into a volume of written work from which students could draw in the more general discussions of curriculum design and classroom practice that take place toward the end of the seminar. The findings of some of these projects, however, lead us to several points of concern.

BALANCING THE WAY SCHOOLS ARE WITH THE WAY WE WOULD LIKE THEM TO BE

Teachers must be prepared for the institutions they are likely to enter as well as those they hope to create. Although we found that the ECP inspired teachers to think creatively, work collectively, and utilize educational theory and literature as partners in curriculum design, the nontraditional aspects of the project that made this possible also raise important questions.

The ECP helped prepare students for leadership in restructured schools by redefining the norms of teaching so that these prospective teachers were free to develop interdisciplinary curriculum and authentic learning experiences that built on the high school students' interests and needs. The teachers engaged in theory

building; learned from their own experiences in a structured, analytic manner; incorporated the work of education scholars; shared knowledge with each other; and worked in concert. The experience ignited many students' passion for entering the field. "This seminar," wrote one student, "has fueled my interest and excitement about education. More than ever I am sure that I want to go into the field." Another student wrote that the time spent planning the curriculum together was "more inspiring than any other professional experience I have had. . . . I have never been so exhausted and so willing to do more than the night before our final curriculum." For the 3 years the course sequence was taught, students consistently emphasized the inspirational power of the experience.

On the other hand, these inspirational field experiences, which allow prospective teachers to explore freely the practices expected of them in the finest restructured schools, differ dramatically from the schools in which most are likely to work. They planned curricula for settings in which many of the norms and barriers that constrain experience-based approaches, team teaching, and collaborative planning were not operative. The curriculum student teachers created could not be easily implemented in most schools.

This is an especially important consideration given the current climate in a vast majority of schools. Highly restrictive, state-level curriculum frameworks and increasing use of standards-based evaluations and high-stakes testing for teachers and students can severely curtail new teachers' capacities to teach as a community of colleagues who locate their teaching and curriculum development in the primacy of their own and their students' experiences. Standards, high-stakes testing, and competency testing for both students and teachers are currently the noisiest and most prevalent educational conversations, and few calls for experience-based learning or innovative collective teaching can be heard above the din. Forty-nine states have now adopted higher academic standards as one of the major strategies for educational improvement (Clark & Wasley, 1999). Test scores are frequently used for decisions

with regard to tracking, promotion, and graduation (National Research Council, 1999). Especially in districts where low test scores and high-stakes policies threaten students, teachers, and principals, a test-centered pedagogy and curriculum will frequently dominate (Brabeck, 1999; Goodlad, 1999; Shepard, 1991; Wiggins, 1993). In many cases, opportunities for collective school leadership are constrained or are focused solely on raising students' test scores.

Many teacher educators emphasize the importance of giving student teachers real experiences in real schools. We are prepared to argue for the importance of providing positive, even utopian, experiences for new teachers (in a profession that has resisted change for decades). However, there is often a conflict between teacher education that seeks to prepare teachers for collective action (which includes collective decision making with regard to both the goals of schooling and ways to pursue these goals) and schools that are under increasing pressure to focus on test scores. This raises difficult questions with regard to the balance of adequate preparation for existing schools, on one hand, and effecting change, on the other (see also Barton, 1999; Cochran-Smith, 1991). Until a new educational narrative arises about what good schooling looks like (Goodlad, 1999), such dissonance will remain a challenge to teacher educators seeking to implement a new vision for collective action and collective reflection in teacher-led schools. This is not to say that the public concern over the basics and subject matter knowledge is without sound pedagogical basis. The degree to which the curriculum designed by teacher education students ties into mandated curriculum frameworks and subject matter expectations also merits careful consideration when designing nontraditional curriculum. A focus on community and collegiality among teachers does not guarantee rigor in curriculum development. One preservice teacher found in her action research project, for example, that the high school students failed to make meaningful connections between the weekend curriculum planned by the student teachers and the academic subject matter they regularly studied in school. One high school student who said

she really valued the weekend experience also said that the projects did not "tie into anything academic" that she was learning in school.

Over the 2-day curriculum, the high school students engaged in numerous academically oriented activities—they wrote position papers on political issues as well as short stories. They debated ethical and philosophical issues and studied maps and environmental science. It may well be that the high school students simply did not recognize this curriculum as educational even though it actually was. But, we should not ignore either their critique or the limited connections they made between the curriculum and their education in school. Those involved in the ECP design fell prey to the most common critique of this approach. By basing their curriculum in meaningful experiences and by not tying these experiences to a systematic and sequential examination of subject matter, the high school students, though engaged in each experience, did not connect these experiences and what they were learning from them to what they were studying in school. In some important respects, the freedom from curriculum guidelines and educational norms that the preservice teachers found inspiring led to fewer connections to academic subject matter.

The need to free prospective teachers to develop powerful educational visions and to imagine new possibilities, although important, may come into conflict with the need to prepare them for schools as they currently exist. The tension between accommodation and change—not a new one to practitioners working in restructuring schools—is one with which teacher educators will need to grapple. The types of exciting opportunities that engender passion, commitment, and the ability to innovate will have to be balanced by direct work in more traditional school settings.

TEACHING COLLECTIVE WORK BY BRIDGING THE THEORY/PRACTICE DIVIDE

In explaining the importance of making teachers partners in the pursuit of theory, Atkin (1989) echoes Edgar Schein's dictum that there are times when understanding a human system

can come only from trying to change it. It is not so much that actions speak louder than words, then, but rather that actions inform words, or for our purposes here, that experience (practice) informs theory. Without action, without meddling in the practical minutia of curriculum design and implementation, teacher education courses are limited by the constraints imposed when operating in a closed system without context. Conversely, educational research and theory are critical to developing and improving practice. We already know that when theory and practice are kept distinct, new teachers, when confronted with the challenge of action (teaching), will follow the lead of their own prior and current experiences to the exclusion of informed consideration of theory (Bracey, 1989; Goodson, 1991; Johnston, 1994; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). For both new and veteran teachers engaged in classroom practice, theory is, after all, only words, and actions speak louder.

By collectively exploring the relationship between theory and experience, however, student teachers can learn not only to challenge privately held theories but to carefully consider public ones. They also learn to work together in establishing deep and meaningful principles of collective practice. If teacher educators are going to be successful in addressing the dual goals of uniting theory and practice and preparing teachers for collective leadership in the demanding environment of newly restructured schools, then schools of education must consider substantial changes in the curriculum and design of their programs. As one student in the program wrote, "Teachers of teachers must model their models." To foster schools in which teachers examine their own experiences in light of education theory while working within a professional community to improve the school culture and curriculum, teacher educators must provide these experiences for their students.

The ECP is not a formula to be replicated. It is one example of a program that worked toward these changes. Students shared important individual experiences, collectively identified characteristics of powerful curriculum that reflect these experiences, and collectively developed,

implemented, and systematically reflected on their own curriculum for high school students. These activities, in turn, develop the kind of familiarity, trust, and sense of common purpose characteristic of vibrant professional communities. By engaging students in collective actions designed to stimulate collective reflection, teacher educators sow the seeds of these communities. In addition, this process provides students with the opportunity to experiment with numerous practices promoted by advocates of school restructuring. Rather than taking part in abstract consideration of site-based management, team teaching, and interdisciplinary curriculum, for example, the students assess the merits and drawbacks of these practices through firsthand experience. Similar opportunities are worthy of further exploration in the contexts of other programs.

NOTES

1. Private theories, as described by Cole (1990), are those orientations and assumptions that are borne out of personal experience, whereas public theories are those encountered in scholarly research and writing. For further discussion of the distinctions between private and public theories and practices, see Cole (1990) and Griffiths and Tann (1992).

2. Joel Westheimer conceived of, created, and directed the Experiential Curricula Project at Stanford University. He also taught the program's two-term course sequence. Joseph Kahne spent 1½ years studying the program. He observed all but two classes, attended special weekend trips, interviewed the students, and, with Westheimer, examined student work. The authors contributed equally to this article.

3. This idea was met with enthusiasm by some who believed it would excite the students and was criticized by others who felt it was manipulative. Students discussed ways possible problems could be avoided, and although not all students were convinced that this approach made the most sense, they were sufficiently assured to support their more enthusiastic colleagues with the activity.

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