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Review: Re-Imagining Teacher Education

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# Book Reviews

## Re-Imagining Teacher Education

A Review of *Learning to Teach: Teaching to Learn—Stories of Collaboration in Teacher Education* by D. Jean Clandinin, Annie Davies, Pat Hogan, Barbara Kennard. Eds. New York: Teachers College Press, 1993.

**Reviewed by:**

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When William Perry listened to college students describe their discovery that knowledge was not given from on high by some all-knowing authority, divided dualistically into what was “right” or “wrong,” but rather constructed by individuals themselves, he called the transformation a quiet revolution (1970, 111). Students never quite viewed the world the same, but could never imagine that they had not always seen it that way. This book, too, portrays a quiet revolution. It describes a bold experiment, one that sought nothing less than the redirection of a teacher education program. But it records what might have remained the silent part: how the individuals involved—university faculty, their student teachers, and their cooperating teachers—came to consciousness of the real transformation at work in themselves, in their understandings of their own work and, in the ways in which they viewed the institutions they sought to change. This coming to consciousness occurred through a unique method—what might be called simply telling stories. The authors mean more: they call it storying and restorying experience, a mode of narrative inquiry about one’s own experience. The story they tell is one rarely recorded in the literature of the reform of teacher education: the personal and interpersonal transformations of selves in collaborative relationships; the unexpected and surprising difficulty of collaboration; and the necessity to recognize the deep incursions of institutional habits into efforts at school change or collaboration—the almost invisible behavioral regularities and norms of hierarchy and power of universities and schools. But *Learning to Teach: Teaching to Learn* makes visible something else: it reveals the very processes at work

within and between individuals as they construct their own knowledge of practice and of institutional change. The editors—Jean Clandinin, Annie Davis, Pat Hogan, and Barbara Kennard—place this knowledge before their readers. Through compelling and sobering narratives, they describe their efforts to invent a new pedagogy of practice for the education of teachers in a reimagined partnership arrangement between schools and a university. It is a powerful but in the end a cautionary tale. Those who read it are not likely to hear stories of school restructuring or the reform of teacher education in quite the same way.

The experiment recorded in *Learning to Teach: Teaching to Learn* took place at Calgary University. It began with the suggestion of a department head about the possibilities for an experimental program in teacher education. For the participants, there was another beginning. Jean Clandinin, university teacher educator and partner in the experiment, describes a prior insight that became a fundamental assumption of the project:

In elementary school classrooms, in seminar rooms of graduate school, in walks and talks with good friends, in writing projects, and in our journals, my colleagues and I began to be aware of the ways in which we, as teachers, were writing our lives (Heilbrun 1988) as we worked in our classrooms. As we listened to each other's stories and told our own, we learned to make sense of our teaching practices as expressions of our personal practical knowledge (Clandinin 1986; Connelly and Clandinin 1988), the experiential knowledge that was embodied in us as persons and was enacted in our classroom practices and our lives. It was knowing that came out of our pasts and found expression in the present situations in which we found ourselves. For many of us it was an acknowledgment that had been missing as we lived out our lives in the prescriptive environments of schools where our stories as teachers had not been valued and the kind of knowledge we possessed had not been given voice. (P. 1)

This perspective of the teacher as embodying personal practical knowledge connected to one's life history and finding expression in one's teaching practices fit with the emerging purposes of the so-called Alternative Program. The new program sought to promote "a different relationship between theory and practice" (2). Rather than beginning with theory, the proposed alternative would begin in practice. As student teachers began to develop and understand practice, various theoretical readings would be introduced. Practice was to be the starting point "because it is from this perspective that individuals construct their own personal knowledge of teaching" (2). This practical starting point would give students a grounded way to make sense of the theories, models, and research they would encounter in university classes. The new program would acknowledge too that students begin teacher education with knowledge deeply connected to their own prior experience:

Both the experiential knowledge and the practical starting point provide a context in which students can plan, experiment, reflect and read in order to develop their teaching knowledge. (Clandinin and Hogan 1988, 2, in Clandinin et al. 1993, 6)

This would be the starting place for all—the twenty-eight student teachers, their cooperating teachers and university professors, and the editors of this book: university faculty (Jean Clandinin), school-university coordinator (Pat Hogan), and cooperating teachers (Annie Davies and Barbara Kennard). A new conception of teacher education as the construction of personal practical knowledge forged through collaborative, reflective inquiry and the storying and restorying of experience would be created.

The heart of this book is its stories of the collaborative inquiries that took place over the life of the project.

### STORYING THE EXPERIENCE

*Learning to Teach* is divided into five parts, five reflections on the experiment. Each portrays a set of experiences of the participants in the Alternative Program. The book opens with the stories of student teachers; it then presents those jointly authored by intern and cooperating teachers; a third section focuses on the learnings of the cooperating teachers and university faculty; and, in a fourth section, the editors turn away from the stories of individual participants to present what they call the “institutional narratives that shaped both our individual narratives of knowing and the ways the Alternative Program was experienced” (5). The book closes with a chapter in which the editors assess what it is they have learned from these inquiries as they hazard a sketch of a future, transformed teacher education.

These chapters are richly textured presentations. Like a kaleidoscope, each section of the book focuses on one set of participants. But the lenses reveal different kinds of patterns, different constructions of meaning. In the autobiographies of the teacher interns, it is possible to see how one’s own remembered experiences as a learner intersect with those of one’s students. In one painful memory, a student teacher sees herself as a small child reading aloud before her class and being rebuked for using her finger to guide her reading, leaving the class forever convinced that she is a poor reader. How, she asks herself, is she convinced that she is a poor reader? How, she asks herself, is she now interacting with her own students, offering praise, deepening the possibilities of failure or success? Another teacher connects her own hard-earned insights into learning with those of her third-graders. As the teacher of young Michael, Jean Fix, the student teacher, finds herself helping with a math problem difficult for him, saying:

A nickel is five cents, which is five pennies or five ones. If you have five cents and you give me two, how many do you have left? We could use the same numbers with beans or pencils.

Three, Michael said simply.

Right three cents or three beans. Right depending on what we are working with: Math is based on patterns.

Oh, Michael said. Nobody ever told me. I can do this.

The teacher is reminded of her own discovery of the patterns of math years before. She smiles to herself, aware of the class. "It was good to explain patterns to Michael. Maybe my own connections are not his, but if I do not share mine, perhaps he will not recognize his own" (45).

In the longest part of the book, the stories of collaboration between student teacher and cooperating teacher are presented. Mostly authored by the paired teachers, these stories reveal the joys and frustrations of collaboration and, importantly, speak to the unsuspected difficulties as well. The details of these encounters make it possible to see how the construction of collaborative inquiry actually works. Journal keeping, for example, mandatory for the teacher interns, their cooperating teachers, and the university faculty, became the heart of the new pedagogy.

The editors' commitment to journals and journal writing came from their previous experience in a teacher-research project. Then they "had begun to understand how dialogue in the journal could be a mutual construction of knowledge" (53). In the Calgary project, each student was to keep a journal in two parts: one for dialogue with the university teachers who were teaching the methods courses—a way of keeping university people in touch with students' conversations about theory; a second part would be a classroom journal kept in dialogue with both the university teacher responsible for the student's small group seminar and the cooperating teacher. Through their journals all participants could share common inquiries. As the cooperating teachers and university teachers responded to their interns' observations, comments, or questions, they would offer support along with their own perspectives on life in classrooms. The journal, the place for respondents to connect to their own life history, their practice, and each other, would further the thinking of all of the teachers involved. Thus shared journal writing became a kind of pedagogical linchpin of the new program. And while there was no specifically prescribed way of writing a journal, there were different interpretations that resulted in wonderful discoveries and some painful searchings on the part of the writers. Some began struggling to find out "what the university wanted." Others began to recognize the power of telling and retelling their own stories.

In one chapter, Annie Davies, a classroom teacher, Pat Hogan, the school-university person responsible for a small discussion group, and Benita Dalton, their student teacher, record just how this three-way conversation worked. Annie Davies and her teaching partner, Pam Rinehart, with three years of experience in journal writing, viewed journals as places to write what they chose "about things that mattered in our practice, things we were trying to figure out" (54). So they introduced their student teachers, Helen Mahabir and Benita Dalton, to this special place for "choice" and their own "wonderings." Benita, who admits that as a child she could never think of anything to write in a journal, suddenly becomes an avid writer—there was just so much to capture and question. Importantly, Benita says, "I don't feel like I am being evaluated. I feel like I am working with

Annie rather than under. That is a good feeling” (Journal entry, October 6, 1989 in Clandinin et al. 1993, 56).

In another chapter, Deb Lloyd Nettlesheim and Sherri L. Pearse reconstruct the excitement of their experiment, the freedom they felt to make mistakes, to take risks, to learn from each other, and to grow. Their journal records their responses to each others’ comments on the daily events of the class they shared as well as their own stories. In one instance, one of Deb’s stories recounting an event that had happened in her childhood, a piece she called “The Mittens,” became a way of seeing more deeply into her own teaching practices. That happened because her student teacher, Sherri, had read Deb’s story. In “The Mittens,” Deb had written about an incident that had happened to her in eighth grade that revolved around shared secrets between her teacher and herself. Deb had told Sherri that she thought the story was about friends and their importance to her. But when she dealt with a difficult student in her class and devised a contract with him that did not involve notifying his parents, Sherry offered a new reason for Deb’s remembered story: it was also about sharing secrets that resulted in new trusting relationships between student and teacher. Deb describes her discovery that “things we believe in are somehow in our own stories”:

I was not aware until that moment to what extent personal practical knowledge and storying ourselves becomes a way of making sense of what we know. In the telling and retelling of our stories, new meaning is created and we experience change . . . in a different light (Coles 1989). The threads of our own stories tie into our beliefs and give us more insight into who we are. (P. 67)

But these were not the discoveries of all. For some the journal never became the reflective practice that the program hoped it would. The program designers came to see that “what the university wanted” became an ongoing struggle for some students. For these students, journal writing remained an assignment, never used to explore or figure out their own practice. Like good reporters, these students wrote about what happened in class, but not about what was happening to them as practitioners. And in some instances, cooperating teachers faced similar difficulties:

Students and even cooperating teachers were intimidated by the threat of evaluation. Students may have been cautious about revealing too much about themselves because intimacy frightened them or because a grade was attached to the journal as part of each methods course. Cooperating teachers may have felt that their words or their practices might be judged if committed to paper. This led at least one student to feelings of defensiveness in response to each of our wondering questions. Our attempts to engage in “wondering with” were read as challenges and were met with certainty or silence. (P. 62)

But for some, like Benita, the journal writing became the means of professional growth: “I gained a voice through the dialogue that occurred between myself, Annie (Davies), and Pat (Hogan). . . . I was curious and

questioned Annie about her knowledge that she has in the classroom. By questioning her, she thought about her own practice and also gave me more questions to think about. The journal was a place where I could reflect and think deeply. It recorded my growth as a teacher and a person” (62–63). The journal, for the student teacher, made possible the “development of my personal practical knowledge” (Journal entry, July 10, 1990 in Clandinin et al. 1993, 63).

Sometimes the journal was augmented by conversations that took place between the practitioners. In one chapter, a seasoned cooperating teacher, Garry Jones, recognizes the significance of his conversations with his student teacher and the student teacher’s own journal writing:

I haven’t written down much of my experience with Gary Godfrey because we talk to each other constantly and he wrote everything down. I didn’t recognize the importance of his entry into my life until after Christmas. I have learned a lot about me. I’ve seen what I do. He provides a mirror reflecting me back to myself. (Journal entry, February 7, 1990 in Clandinin et al. 1993, 119)

Recollecting his discovery of how his student teacher was a mirror, the teacher was guided by the students’ journal entries. One event took place on the first day of school. The student teacher had asked urgently, “How do you keep control of everything so that they (the students) don’t go crazy?” The teacher had responded: “That’s a very good question. I don’t know how to explain this to you. It’s a little bit of this and a little bit of that. You’ll just have to wait and see.” To which the student teacher remembered thinking, “I will have to wait and see? This is no answer!” (120).

As the teacher remembered this event and his conversations with his student teacher, he realized that the student teacher began to make sense of what was going on in his classroom by watching the teacher’s actions with his students. The student teacher writes: “I watched the way you brought those kids around on the first day. . . . It was then I noticed that you knew what you were doing, you had confidence. It was a different you. It was not the you I had walked down the hall with, the undecided you, the unsure-of-how-to-answer-the-question you. In front of this audience, you were a different person.” From his student, the teacher comes to recognize that “much of my knowing is submerged, like fish swimming unseen in a dark, green sea. . . . I understand what Schön (1983) means when he describes the reflective practitioner as one who ‘reflects on the phenomenon before him and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior’ (68). While in the past I have used a journal. . . , Gary (the student teacher) became my living, interactive learning log. As I struggled with the answers (to his questions), I learned to put words to my knowledge” (120–121).

It is impossible in this space to retell the wonderful stories presented in these sections of the book. They must be read for all of the intricacies of connections made, of the joys and dilemmas of communicating or not between these teachers. The stories are balanced by new understandings:

of one's self, of personal insights and some larger ones, such as the false naming of the teacher-student teacher relationship as a dichotomy between expert and novice. In the view of teaching portrayed here, both experienced and new teachers are always engaged in the same task: how to connect with their students. For each the journey is ever new in the encounters between individuals in learning. Teaching is an ongoing process of inquiry.

In the fourth section of the book, the editors step back to examine some of the larger issues of the collaborative venture. In particular, they focus on the institutions they are attempting to bridge. As they encounter barriers to the success of the Alternative Project, they come to see that the stumbling blocks are in the ingrained ways of doing things within the university and the schools of which they are a part, what Seymour Sarason calls the behavioral regularities of institutions (Sarason 1982). Role descriptions become role barriers. Daily, taken-for-granted practices become obstacles. The school calendar itself must be reconsidered. Placing the student teachers in schools in sync with the schools' cycles puts them at odds with the university's school year. As their work continues, the project leaders come to see that there is a fault line between school and university that is growing perilously wide. Needed is some new place for institutional collaboration, a third arena, a new but necessarily common ground. But where and how?

### **LESSONS LEARNED: TEACHER EDUCATION AS IMPROVISATION**

In the end, the editors find several lessons in the Alternative Program experiment. In the epilogue of the book, they argue persuasively for a radical reformulation of teacher education, for reconsideration of teacher knowledge, of knowing, and for the construction of the knowledge of the craft of teaching. "We view teacher knowledge narratively." Knowledge is constructed and reconstructed in the living out of lives, in and out of school. "This view of knowledge acknowledges that teachers' lives are composed over time and their stories are lived and told and relived and retold as teachers encounter new situations . . ." (218). Teaching is an ongoing inquiry, into the teachers' own lives, the lives of their students, and the ways in which all are engaged in making sense of the subject matter and of the contexts in which they work and the tasks of learning that engage them. Voice must be given to all participants in learning:

Teacher education is a sustained conversation in which we need many responses to our stories to be able to tell and retell them with added possibility. Conversations with theory, research, social conditions, different cultural groups, other teachers, and children allow for a response-filled environment and encourage more mindful retellings. These tellings and retellings are education. (P. 219)

In this reinvention of teacher education, programs cannot be conceived at the university and implemented in schools. Teacher education must be situated in some middle ground in which the conversation of education can take place. Nor can the focus be solely on professional knowledge.



Rather the editors seek to ask what kind of situations can support the narrative inquiries of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university teachers. As they reconstruct teacher education, other things must change. Assessment is reconceived as sustained conversations, a way of making sense of classroom experiences. Collaborative inquiry is ongoing in all phases of teacher education. But the conversations of collaboration must be carried out in special kinds of relationships, relationships grounded in ethical considerations, what Nel Noddings would call considerations of caring (Noddings 1986).

As someone who has been involved with teacher education working within a school-university partnership model, I found myself asking what it is this book teaches me. Where does its inquiry intersect with my own work? Having experienced the difficult task of trying to strengthen an existing professional school model and also of now working with the very vibrant one at the University of Southern Maine, I read this book with great interest and curiosity. I began mulling over the stories, reading slowly, savoring the details of each set of experiences, taken up with the humanness of what was portrayed. I realized that who these teachers were, their life histories and experiences, was webbed into the new worlds they encountered in school. You could not deny the resonances of past experiences, recognize that hard-earned learnings, things half-remembered, might come flooding back in some new struggle witnessed in a class as a child grappled with some difficult problem or asked a simple question. But what was probably more startling was the recognition of how seldom we acknowledge these connections or see them as building blocks of professional development and knowledge. Similarly, I was struck by the revelations about the difficulties of collaboration. Where have these real stories of pain, misunderstanding, and the subtle intrusions of the regularities of institutions and their hierarchies been portrayed? And what have we lost by not hearing them?

I believe then that *Learning to Teach* is an important and powerful book. It opens a window on the processes of deliberation and of understanding in the construction of teachers' knowledge. It demonstrates a potentially significant pedagogy for the education of teachers through the concept of narrative inquiry. And in its insistence on the merging of the personal with the professional, it clarifies the starting place of all teachers, both new and experienced, in every learning situation. But *Learning to Teach* also contains a disturbing story for teacher educators. In the conclusion, on the very last page of the book, the editors say what happened:

The Alternative Program in its original form no longer goes on at the University of Calgary. The participants in the program have gone on to compose their lives in new settings. . . . The cooperating teachers continue to write about their practice in journals and in papers. They have new and imaginative ways to work with student teachers within the confines of the traditional practicum. The Alternative Program has provided a model for the university teachers as they try to move to more collaborative forms of teacher education. For each participant, the experience of the Alternative Program continues to shape our lives. (Pp. 221–222)

This ending is disturbing in that it seems we have not heard an important story. Why is the Alternative Program no longer in existence? What happened? Where are the tellings and the retellings of this part of the experiment that might deepen our knowledge of school change?

What is obscured here is a needed institutional story, for it connects with an emerging and significant phenomenon, that is, the proliferation of school-university partnership arrangements, sometimes called professional development schools (PDSs). These intra-institutional creations with a long history had a resurgence as part of the educational reform explosion of the 1980s (Stallings and Kowalski 1990). Believing that school reform cannot be carried out successfully without the reform of teacher education, various reformers—notably John Goodlad, the Holmes Group of education deans, as well as the Carnegie Forum that created the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards—urged a new model for teacher education (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy 1986; Goodlad 1990, 1993; Holmes Group 1990). Based in large part on the medical school model, what James Conant called the “clinical school” and Dewey a “laboratory school,” teacher educators would move to house teacher education directly in school settings (Conant 1962; Dewey 1896). Like the idea of teaching hospitals, schools would become professional development sites. There beginning teachers in cohort groups would work directly with experienced practitioners and university faculty. The model would promote ongoing education of experienced teachers and join teachers and researchers in examining critical issues for the education of all children for the twenty-first century. Networks of professional development schools proliferated such as Goodlad’s National Network of Renewing Schools, the Michigan Partnership, and Teachers College National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST)—to name a few. Today loosely coupled networks of professional development schools can be found in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Abdal-Haq 1993).

The vibrancy of this movement is matched only by the slowly emerging tales of the real difficulties of bringing these institutions into being (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Issues of costs, of institutional boundaries, of defining whose knowledge counts, of who owns what institution remain. This is where the Calgary experiment offers important insights: one only wishes that there were even more.

In one sobering chapter, Jean Clandinin writes about her own emerging understandings of the difficulties of learning to collaborate at the university. Looking back to the beginning of the experiment, she sees “how I thought that both I and the other participants in the program could learn to live a new story of teacher education as easily as we could tell a new story of teacher education. Even then . . . we struggled. It was not an easy task” (181). Clandinin acknowledges that it was not easy to share her own stories of teaching with her university colleagues. “Sharing personal stories of practice is not the usual behavior for university teachers who live within an institution that encourages, even demands, competition between colleagues

and considers individual research a key mark of success and accomplishment” (180). Similarly, it was not easy to break the role of the provider of answers, a typical one for a university professor working with school people. She writes, “The powerful institutional narratives drew us back to the old story where university teachers gave answers to teachers seeking our knowledge” (Clandinin 1993, 181). Slowly the participants in the Alternative Project had to acknowledge that the work of the project, resulting in a shared, collaboratively constructed knowledge of practice, would not count in the university’s traditional conception of knowledge as fixed and unchanging, not dependent on contexts. When the participants in the program faced some difficulties, it was easy to slip back into old roles. It was harder to live a new, actual story of teacher education than to create “possible stories” (185). While the authors hope that the stories in *Learning to Teach: Teaching to Learn* might be seen as models of new possibilities, re-imagining the work of teacher education, it is clear that tough tasks remain.

But the book provides important clues and perhaps a needed method for the work ahead. From its own learnings, it inscribes a set of reminders: first, that long-standing relationships of trust are the foundation and glue of successful intra-institutional collaborations. The editors themselves, partners in several teacher education experiments, speak directly to the significance of the special relationships needed for collaboration as they characterize them as ethical, caring ones, responsive to the needs of integrity as well as accomplishment. They stress too that the enterprise must be considered as an ongoing invention and inquiry, an improvisation. Such an activity emphasizes a continuing kind of tension that may well have to be managed rather than resolved, as Lynne Miller and David Silvernail write about the development of the University of Southern Maine and its partner school systems (in Darling-Hammond 1994). Finally, it may be necessary to sort out the implication of the need for a third place, a new ground for the activity of school university collaborations. It seems no accident that professional development school partnerships have always had some element of a third grounding. The very name PDS indicates the creation of a new institution, one standing between schools and universities. Finally, in the idea of narrative inquiry, the contributors to this work offer a useful methodology, the idea of telling and retelling the stories of collaboration, deepening our own and the understanding of all participants.

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