LEARNER FACTORS/TEACHER FACTORS: ISSUES in LITERACY RESEARCH and INSTRUCTION

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WHAT COUNTS IN TEACHER EDUCATION? DILEMMAS IN EDUCATING EMPOWERED TEACHERS*

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This is a talk about putting teachers in charge of their teaching. It is deeply rooted in my own experience as a young teacher when John Joy, my first principal, taught me to take charge of my teaching and, in so doing, to have deep faith in teachers and in what teachers can do if they are freed to do so.

But, as deeply as I believe in teachers being in charge, this has nevertheless been a difficult paper to put together. The problem is that putting teachers in charge of their instruction is, in many people's minds, a questionable premise to begin with. I then further argue that our failure to improve classroom literacy instruction is linked to a failure to put teachers in charge. And finally I argue that the failure is at least partially *our* fault—that teachers are not in charge of their teaching because we expect them to follow *our* thinking, which prevents *them* from thinking. The result may be the creation of passive teachers who, because they have learned to wait for us to direct them, are unable to respond flexibly and adaptively to opportunities to develop the kind of enriched literacy we all say we want. In short, I do not think we invest in the minds of teachers; instead, we invest in theories, programs, and procedures which we then expect teachers to follow. *We* come up with a theory, we expect teachers to follow; *we* come up with a program, we expect teachers to follow; *we* come up with a procedure, we expect teachers to follow. Thus, we teach teachers that the power lies with us, not with them.

I do not propose answers here. Instead, I describe dilemmas. In the end, what I argue for is inquiry—a new research agenda.

BACKGROUND

My comments are grounded in two ways.

Personal History

First, my comments are grounded in my personal history as a teacher and teacher educator, work which has involved me in many of the change efforts of our time. For instance, as a young fourth-grade teacher in inner city Buffalo in the same year that Sputnik went up, I took Jeanette Veatch (1959) seriously and tried to do individualized reading; as a laboratory school teacher at the State University College in Fredonia, New York, I took Conant (1963) seriously and became what he called a ''clinical professor''; in my early years at Michigan State University, I took competency-based teacher education seriously and designed and directed objective-driven reading methods courses enrolling 350 prospective teachers at a time; I took seriously assaults by critics such as Koerner (1963) and Silberman (1970) and tried to beef up my courses correspondingly; I took Teacher Corps seriously, and spent 4 years on that as well as 4 additional years on innovative programs that grew out of Teacher Corps; and I took clinical teacher education ideas seriously and spent 6 years teaching undergraduate methods courses in urban elementary schools where field situations drove instruction. I have grown old with reform efforts. When I look back, I do not know whether to be embarrassed or proud.

But I AM worried. Despite reform and isolated pockets of progress, classroom instruction is basically the same now as it was when I started in 1957 (Cohen, 1988; Cuban, 1984; Duffy & McIntyre, 1982; Durkin, 1978–79; Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; Herrmann, 1986).

Consequently, the first thing that grounds this paper is my own frustration with our inability to influence classroom practice. Despite all our best efforts, creating enriched forms of literacy for the masses of at-risk kids in our society is still an unattained goal.

My Research

But, more directly, my comments are grounded in my current literacy research. Recently, I have pursued three questions about teacher empowerment. First, what does an empowered literacy teacher look like? Second, what impact do empowered teachers have on at-risk students? And third, what teacher education practices expedite or impede the development of empowered teachers?

This research began when a northern Michigan intermediate school district requested that we conduct an inservice program to orient teachers to a new version of Michigan's statewide reading assessment test. Because of the evidence from Cuban (1984) and others that traditional short-term staff development does not result in substantive instructional change, we declined. Instead, we proposed a 5-year staff development effort which, in collaboration with Auleen Lutes of the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District, was initiated in 1988 with volunteer teachers and their principals in four small, low-SES, rural elementary schools. Auleen and I now work with eight rural districts and approximately 60 teachers and principals, and we will continue to do so for the full 5 years. The intent is to create in each building a cadre of teachers and a principal who develop substantive literacy with their at-risk kids and who, through their examples and coaching, restructure the literacy instruction throughout their respective schools and, ultimately, in neighboring schools.

The research questions were based on the assumption that we cannot develop enriched literacy unless we have ''empowered'' teachers, that is, teachers who create and orchestrate complex settings and complex instructional interactions. To develop empowered teachers, we created a staff development effort consisting of three components: (a) we instruct gatherings of all participants from the several schools once a month; (b) we coach teachers individually in their classrooms every other week; and (c) we develop in each participating school communities of teachers and their principal who live the principle that teaching is intellectual work, not technical work.

To answer my research questions, I targeted 4 of the teachers and 5 at-risk kids from each teacher's classroom for intensive, case study analysis. The results to date have been gratifying. The low-group target students I studied last year in each of four classrooms grew at a rate greater than at-risk students normally do. The 4 target teachers, for their part, changed their instructional practices.

But as gratifying as these results may be, what has puzzled me—and what ultimately became the focus of my research—is the difficulty these teachers had, and in some cases are still having, taking control of their own professional work. They often seem to believe that they *shouldn't* be in charge of their work.

Typically, teachers reveal this difficulty in discussions of the basal textbook. For instance, one of the teachers retrospectively discussed her early insistence upon sticking strictly to the basal by saying:

> I think my main inhibitor was I just felt that I had to do that basal . . . I didn't know where to start. I didn't—like I said, I was so chained to the basals that I didn't think I could just get a [literature] book and, you know? I didn't know what to assign.

But teachers' difficulties in taking control of their own work go well beyond basal textbooks. It was also reflected in their expectation that I should *tell* them what to do. In other words, they *wanted* to be directed. They *expected* to compliantly follow. And when I resisted giving them procedures or programs or directions to follow, all the teachers expressed disappointment, some were frustrated, and a few were angry.

These experiences troubled me. But, the more I thought about it, the more it became clear to me that teachers compliantly follow because they seldom have opportunities to do anything else. For instance, the directives of Madeline Hunter's ITIP (Hunter, 1967), of Reading Recovery (Pinnell, 1989), of IBM's Write to Read (Freyd & Lytle, 1990), as well as of a variety of theories, approaches, and belief systems, to say nothing of basal text teachers' guides, subtly (and, sometimes, not so subtly) set the expectation that teachers should *suppress* individual professional thought in favor of following along. Note, for instance, the frequent use of the word ''training''—as in ''teachers must be trained to use this program'' as it contributes to the ''following along'' concept.

The problem is not in the programs, theories, or procedures themselves any more than the problem is in basal textbooks. I am not, for instance, opposed to the principles of ITIP or Reading Recovery. The problem is in the perception—on the part of teachers and those of us trying to help teachers—that instructional power lies not with the minds of teachers but, rather, with programs, procedures, or theories that we create for teachers to follow.

In short, I began to think that we are participating in a system which encourages

teachers to compliantly follow rather than to take charge. My thinking about why this happens and what we ought to do about it—particularly as it relates to the northern Michigan teachers—is the major grounding for this paper.

THE NATURE OF EMPOWERMENT

Why We Need Empowered Teachers

But why do we need teachers who are in charge of their own work? Why can't we have teachers who follow? I think there are two reasons.

First, we need empowered teachers because only empowered teachers are creative enough to develop the rich literacy we all say we want. Rich literacy demands authentic occasions for literacy which cannot be anticipated by programs and procedures but must be created by the teacher on the spot; rich literacy demands spontaneous teacher decisions based on kids' restructured understandings which cannot be anticipated by programs and procedures but must be created by the teacher on the spot; rich literacy demands socially constructed learning embedded in instructional dialogs which cannot be anticipated by programs and procedures but must be created by the teacher on the spot; and, most important, rich literacy demands a tailoring of instruction to circumstances which cannot be anticipated by programs and procedures but must be created by teachers on the spot. In short, rich literacy demands teachers who create.

But recently it has become more and more difficult for teachers to be creative. Directive and prescriptive top-down policy mandates about programs and procedures, many based in the results of *our* research, take instructional control out of the hands of teachers and convey the message, ''Just follow these directions and everything will be okay.'' The result is passivity, not creativity.

Because I am a private pilot, I have been struck by how analogous this is to what is happening to commercial airline pilots. Commercial aviation, like literacy instruction, has become more and more complex in recent years. The response has been to remove control from pilots and to install automated cockpit systems which limit pilots to monitoring the system and its backups. Interestingly enough, however, this is coming under serious scrutiny by the Federal Aviation Authority (Lumsden, 1990). In work sponsored by the Aviation Safety Research Act, researchers are discovering that when things go wrong, commercial pilots tend to passively wait for the computer to fix it rather than taking charge themselves, sometimes with disastrous results.

This is not unlike teaching. When teachers are expected to follow materials, programs, tenets of theory and procedures, they become passive. And, like pilots, teachers stop making professional judgments—they come to depend on the system rather than taking charge themselves. Apple (1983) calls it the ''de-skilling'' of teachers. We see the results in our kids.

The second reason for empowering teachers relates to morale. Again, commercial aviation research provides an analogous situation. Pilots choose aviation as a vocation because they enjoy performing difficult, challenging tasks but, when that gratification is removed by taking basic flying tasks out of their hands, pilots are effectively circumvented and, ultimately, *dis*empowered. They lose the sense of professional dignity they had when *they* flew the plane.

Teachers, like pilots, choose to teach because they want to perform difficult and challenging work. But when we take control away from them by directing them to follow materials or codified approaches or tested procedures, we make them into technicians who follow directions. In doing so, we rob them of their professional dignity.

So we need empowered teachers because enriched literacy cannot be systematized and technicized. It can only be constructed in creative response to situational conditions. But we also need to empower teachers because it is the moral and ethical thing to do.

What Does An Empowered Teacher Look Like?

In the broadest sense, empowered teachers assume control of their work. As such, empowerment is a mental thing, and is not easy to observe. Over the course of 64 classroom visits (16 with each of my 4 northern Michigan target teachers), I saw three indications that they were assuming control of their teaching.

Three indicators of empowerment. First, I began to notice that, rather than passively following teachers' guide directions, these teachers began creating their own instruction. For instance, at the end of the year, one teacher reported:

> I don't know. I didn't really cover [comprehension] before. I just did comprehension . . . you know . . . I just asked questions at the end of the book, at the end of the basal. Kind of sad now that I think about it but . . . . Ha! That's where I was . . . [but now] . . . it varies depending on the story and the skill or strategy I'm working on.

She then described a flexible instructional pattern involving decisions about what kids are reading, the text structure of the selection, previously taught strategies, and modified versions of both teacher explanation and reciprocal teaching, concluding by saying, ''It's changed quite a bit. For the good, I think. I feel good about it.''

Second, I began to notice a growing ability to tolerate ambiguity. For instance, a teacher who had for years believed that there was a single procedure for figuring out words—the one promoted by the basal authors—now is willing to accommodate a more complex and ambiguous concept and to make decisions herself which she formerly believed to be the province of the basal text.

Third, the teachers demonstrated a growing ability to make reading instruction authentic—or, in today's jargon, to create situated cognition (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Leinhardt, 1988; Resnick, 1987). Whereas early in the year they directed students to prepackaged, commercially prepared activities, they gradually began creating genuine occasions for literacy—ones that began with their kids, not ones that began with their materials. Rather than ''materials driving instruction,'' it is now ''kids driving instruction.''

For instance, one second grade was having difficulty with interpersonal relations. Consequently, the teacher and her kids developed a unit on how to get along with each other. For these kids, this was an authentic situation—their troubles in the classroom were real, so there was nothing contrived about reading and writing about

interpersonal relations. But the teacher had to be in charge to accomplish it; the unit was not packaged for her ahead of time. She could not let the basal stories drive her instruction; instead, she searched two different basals and several trade books to find text dealing with kids getting along together. She could not let the basal's scope and sequence chart drive her instruction; instead, she analyzed what skills and strategies kids would need when reading texts about getting along together and taught those. She could not depend on "canned" prescriptions or procedures for carrying out instruction; instead she created her own instruction using combinations of instructional techniques gleaned from a variety of sources. In sum, she was in charge; *she* selected the materials, *she* organized the curriculum, and *she* created the instruction.

Empowerment as conceptual selectivity. As I continued to study these teachers, however, I began to realize that the essence of empowerment goes beyond these single indicators. These teachers' control of their work was embodied in their ability to use a variety of interdependent concepts in various combinations depending upon circumstances. Sometimes they put situated learning in the foreground and moved strategies to the background; sometimes they dealt with contextual constraints as the foreground and moved concerns about socially constructed learning to the background. Such selectivity is particularly evident when empowered teachers encounter difficulties. For instance, when one of these teachers was having difficulty teaching her kids how to monitor sense making, she put monitoring on hold and moved to higher ground, modifying the lesson to help her kids understand why sense making is the heart of reading. Knowing what higher ground is in any given situation and being able to fluidly select ways to move to it is an essential characteristic of empowerment. To use a coaching analogy, these teachers were not like football players following set plays; they were like hockey players who select different strategies in fluid response to different situations as these emerge in the flow of action. These teachers knew they were trying to develop enriched literacy; in trying to achieve that goal, *they thoughtfully selected various principles from among several theories or procedures for use at various times depending upon the situation.*

This phenomenon—which I began calling "conceptual selectivity"—became my ultimate criterion for empowerment. It is a kind of thoughtful eclecticism or, if you associate "eclecticism" with atheoretical, anti-intellectual, or conceptually ungrounded action, substitute instead "thoughtful integration" or "conceptual plurality." In any case, what characterizes conceptual selectivity is a programmatic coherence because, though situationally based, it is driven by a clear conception of higher ground—the goal of enriched literacy. As a result, these teachers are not randomly employing theories and procedures. Nor are they viewing knowledge as a set of rules or dogma to be faithfully followed in rigid ways. Instead, empowered teachers combine, adapt, and orchestrate what they know, creating new ways to achieve enriched literacy as new situations arise, just as they combine, adapt, and orchestrate a variety of materials to achieve that goal.

Summary

Teacher empowerment does not mean "giving teachers power," or that teachers should overthrow administrators and school boards, or that teachers do whatever they

want to. Teachers are morally and ethically bound to serve their kids; therefore, empowerment cannot be what Buchmann (1990) calls "private entrepreneurship in teaching." Instead, empowerment is a "taking charge" by teachers; a self-conscious determination of what makes sense in a given context. But teachers cannot take charge—cannot fight off the routine of day-to-day teaching—unless conditions in their environment encourage it. Specifically, they must be freed from being directed. And the issue I raise here is whether we in NRC free teachers from being directed—whether we set conditions which encourage empowerment.

POTENTIALLY DISEMPOWERING PRACTICES

I do not think we do. What counts with us often gives teachers the impression that they should comply. So, despite our good intentions, we often engage in practices which are potentially disempowering. Three examples—expectations, situations, and knowledge—illustrate how this happens.

The Expectations We Set

One of the northern Michigan teachers got me thinking about the expectations we set when she said to me in an interview: ". . . because you want me to change, Gerry, implies a criticism of what I am." In short, I was making her feel that *she* had been doing something wrong, that *I* had the answer, and that *she* had to comply. Immediately she was placed in a psychologically unempowered position.

The problem. The attitude that we have the answers and that teachers should passively follow us is endemic to almost all teacher education efforts. We see it in the apprenticeship model (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989) which, despite all its good immersion characteristics, expects the apprentice to emulate the master's actions in procedural and appropriately subservient ways. We see the same kind of "haves-and-have-nots" relationship in the expert-novice model in which we are the experts and teachers are the novices. We even see it in some teacher education reform movements in which university people are quick to go out into the schools to give the word to teachers but there is an embarrassing absence of a corresponding movement of school people coming to the university to give us the word.

There are two flaws in this arrangement. First, and most obvious, it is an elitist concept. We put teachers in a subservient social position. Lemke (1989) calls this "differential contextualization" in which the sense people make depends on their relative positions in the social structure. By placing teachers "under" researchers and literacy educators, we set an expectation that discourages empowerment.

The second flaw is the belief that we have the answers. We do not. The assumption that anyone—university people or school people—has all the answers in teaching literacy reveals an alarming naivete about the complexity of classroom life. Teaching generally, and teaching enriched forms of literacy in particular, is an inherently difficult task because it is dilemma-ridden. A teacher's attempt to create interpretive, problem-solving readers and writers cannot be reduced to the kind of rational directives which masters give to apprentices or experts give to novices. Buchmann (1990) de-

scribes this well, saying:

> Teaching . . . routinely involves multiple pairs of obligations—binding claims on one's attention—in which if one is satisfied, the other cannot be. Looking after one student who needs encouragement does not make the teacher's obligation to see to the learning of the whole class disappear. There is no simple answer to the question of how to honor the personal liberty of students while teaching them academic subjects, since disciplinary arguments must often override personal beliefs . . . . Philosophical and empirical studies indicate that such multiplying moral dilemmas are "resolved" in interconnected series of *imperfect decisions* [emphasis added] that bypass one horn of each dilemma and deal with any residues in the network later. (pp. 5–6)

It is in this context—one typified by daily encounters with dilemmas unresolvable by formulaic solutions—where teachers who develop enriched literacy live and work. Success does not result simply by following directives.

What is the alternative? The longer I work with the northern Michigan teachers, the more I think we must establish partnerships with teachers instead of directing them. In such partnerships, both teacher *and* researcher recognize that they are dealing with dilemmas and not solutions, and both take responsibility for accommodating research findings to the dilemmas.

Like all partnerships, this one demands mutual respect for the expertise each party brings to the endeavor. The NRCer's expertise is global and context-free conceptual knowledge about literacy and literacy instruction; the teacher's expertise is knowledge of the classroom and the dilemmas inherent in working in that classroom. Both parties possess expertise; neither party is subservient. Our first job is to insure that this mutual respect and honesty is in place.

The work of the partnership then proceeds on the understanding that teaching is a continuous process of getting smarter—similar to the existentialist notion of "becoming." Both the researcher and the teacher are fallible; neither possesses definitive answers; both are becoming; both understand that we don't ever get teaching right in any final sense of the word.

A dilemma here is how to establish a genuine partnership while simultaneously providing conceptual leadership—how to be collaborative while leading. I do not know the answer here, but I try to deal with it in several ways in the northern Michigan project. First of all, we establish from the beginning that teachers are to *adapt* what I say, not follow it. At first, the teachers did not believe it; they insisted on calling the staff development activities "Duffy's Program," and persisted in the expectation that I should provide directives. However, this has changed, perhaps because I frequently acknowledge that my insights are limited, that my own classroom experience was in contexts and times quite different from theirs, and that neither I nor anyone else has final answers. Second, I contextualize everything. My response to the question, "How do you do this?" is always the same: "It depends on the situation. How do *you* think it should be done? How can we adapt what we have been talking about to *your* situation?" Third, I make explicit that I am learning from *them*. One of the ways I do that is by having the northern Michigan teachers review all my papers and reports before I submit them, including *this* one.

But perhaps the most important thing I do is that I teach for them. One teacher

reported, for instance, that her empowerment, to some extent, came from watching me struggle with the same thing she struggles with: "I think one of the things that helps a lot is to watch you teach a lesson. To watch that you're as human as the next person and that the kids react to you the same as they react to me and misbehave the same." This teacher was empowered by my fallibility. Knowing that I was imperfect, she was able to accept imperfection in herself; seeing that I did not have all the answers, she was freed to look for her own answers.

Summary. The message here was well stated by my Michigan State University colleague Bruce Burke (B. Burke, Personal communication, November 2, 1990):

> What is corrupting is the longing for a panacea, a final solution, after which by some magic there will be no problems to solve. There *is* no automatic program. Yet people keep looking for programmatic perfection, rather than reasoned approximation.

In short, we discourage empowerment when we give teachers the impression that there is a final answer out there and that their job is to comply with the directives of particular programs or particular people. Instead, we need to set an expectation for "becoming" and for self-reliance. We want teachers like the one who said to me in an interview late last year, "I feel more confident now in arguing with you about things," and like the one who said that "duking it out" with me in spirited professional debate was an important part of her becoming empowered.

I suspect this happens only when a researcher and teacher have a partnership in which both parties search for workable hypotheses and, in the process, value the expertise each brings to the endeavor, when the expectation is that putting research results to work in classrooms is a matter of imperfect participants working together on equal terms to get better at an inherently difficult task.

This is a difficult expectation for university people to set. The professoriate culture dictates that, by virtue of being a professor, I must not only possess expertise but I must also act the role of the expert—or, more specifically, I must convey that *my* expertise is the only expertise that counts. Humility seldom characterizes experts. But, as Buchmann (M. Buchmann, Personal communication, November 15, 1990) points out, humility is the heart of classroom teaching. As she says, teaching is a matter of ". . . . knowing that there's always something—many things—you can't attend to right now, but you *ought to*, somehow, sometime. Regrets, errors, incompleteness of success are built into teaching as into life. Improvement is only possible if you see *that*."

Situated Learning

The way we situate the dissemination of our research findings also encourages teacher compliance. One of my colleagues at Michigan State recently summed this up well. She was suggesting that I give up traveling to northern Michigan and to substitute instead interactive television up-links which would allow me to stay on campus. When I replied that such technology does not help teachers use knowledge in their specific classroom contexts, she told me, "Yes, Gerry, but we're in the business of producing degrees here, and a degree means you've studied something, not necessarily that you can do it." The university enforces this view through a

grading system which insures that participants—including preservice and inservice teachers—will comply.

This is a problem of situated cognition (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Leinhardt, 1988; Resnick, 1987). In classrooms, for instance, we urge teachers to situate kids' instruction in authentic occasions for literacy—to immerse them in the act of being literate—because we know that children do not develop high forms of literacy unless they have genuine opportunities to engage in such activities.

The same principle applies if we want teachers to transform our research into usable practice. Our interactions with them must be situated in authentic activity—we must immerse teachers in the act of teaching enriched literacy. Studying *about* enriched literacy in the university immerses teachers in getting a degree; it does not immerse them in actions required to *develop* enriched literacy.

Examples of how situations mediate learning. The subtle power of situated learning on what teachers focus on was dramatized for me by two personal experiences.

The first is from my northern Michigan project. Because I am concerned about how teachers mediate teacher education, the staff development effort is conducted outside the parameters of the university. That is, the teachers do not sign up for university credit. Because they do not get credit, they do not worry about getting a grade. The task is not to accumulate grades toward a degree; it is to move target kids towards enriched literacy. Therefore, teachers mediate the staff development effort in terms of their individual classroom situations.

However, last year about six of the teachers who were pursuing Master's degrees at various universities in the state requested that I sponsor Michigan State University independent studies which they could transfer to their degree programs. I reluctantly agreed to do so as long as they all worked on developing portfolios documenting how they had moved their target kids towards literacy. In making this requirement, I reasoned that the teachers would continue to think in terms of their kids' progress toward enriched literacy.

I was wrong. As soon as they signed up for credit and began work on their portfolios, their focus changed. For instance, rather than asking questions about their kids' literacy learning, they asked how I wanted the portfolio organized, how many items needed to be included in the portfolio, whether it had to be typed, whether spelling counted, and so on.

This is because the university grading system forced the teachers to change their thinking about what counts. Before the independent study activity, what counted was the improvement of their target students; once they signed up for credit, what counted was making sure they got an "A" on the portfolio. They learned what I wanted a portfolio to look like; whether they became empowered teachers of enriched literacy is problematic.

The second example occurred several years ago when I was teaching preservice teachers. The program was long-term and field-based; that is, I taught an integrated reading-language arts course to the same group of preservice teachers for an entire academic year with all the sessions conducted in a Lansing public school and with all assignments embedded in their teaching a classroom literacy. I was excited about being part of this program because I thought the field-based situation would cause

these preservice teachers to mediate my instruction in terms of how to help kids become literate, not in terms of getting a grade.

I was wrong. Although, as I had hoped, they understood that their grades were tied to their teaching, they also soon discovered that the teaching grade was determined by the number of "yeses" they were awarded when observed by my colleagues using a form which listed what research said effective teachers did when teaching literacy. Once they discovered this, the checklist became the primary mediator of instruction. That is, they concentrated on maximizing the number of "yeses" on the observation form; in the process, they became technicians rather than empowered teachers.

This is not unlike what happens in traditional student teaching. Contrary to popular opinion, this venerable practice is a major culprit in our failure to improve schooling because the name of the game is how to get a good grade, often from a cooperating teacher who represents the status quo. Thus, we perpetuate standard instructional practices.

An alternative. I am not sure what the alternative is here either, but the more I work with the northern Michigan teachers, the more I think that Lampert and Clark (1990) are right when they suggest case-by-case responses to teachers' practical problem solving:

> Studies of practical problem solving have led to questions about whether knowledge of principles, acquired in academic settings, is of much use to practitioners when they come face to face with particular problems . . . . Related work questions the extent to which expert practitioners actually hold knowledge in the form of distilled abstract principles, suggesting that the knowledge they use would be more adequately described in terms of a case-by-case response to the particulars of the problem they are trying to solve. (pp. 22)

This was dramatized for me the other day in northern Michigan. I was working with four teachers in one school on how to apply concepts about situating literacy instruction in authentic activity. The first teacher I worked with was a former high school science teacher in his first year teaching second grade; the second teacher I worked with was a former special education teacher trying to apply situated learning to a basal textbook unit in a third grade; the third teacher I worked with teaches a Joplin-grouped third grade and was trying to figure out how to create situated learning experiences when you only have the kids for 50 minutes a day; and the fourth teacher was a first-grade teacher who was trying to create purposeful literacy experiences for at-risk, rural 6-year-olds. Each teacher had access to the same knowledge during our class session, but each had a dramatically different teaching context; consequently, the task of *using* the knowledge was dramatically different for each of them. To help them be empowered by research findings about situated learning, I had to help them transform *our* findings into *their* case-by-case situations.

This, of course, is the point of situated learning. We must find ways to situate our research findings in authentic teaching contexts because that's what is real for teachers. As one teacher pointed out:

> I don't think I could have done this without help. We can go to the classes and come back in the classroom but none of those changes would have been made if I didn't have you in my classroom and really talking about it . . . . Even though in my mind

I thought I knew what I was doing, talking about it with somebody and discussing it, you find it isn't always great or the way it should be.

In other words, the way it sounds in *my* staff development session is seldom the way it works in *her* classroom.

There are dilemmas here, too, of course. First, in genuine situations, learning tends to be conceptual rather than superficial. As such, it requires an extraordinary amount of time. For instance, one teacher, talking about her improvement during her second year in the project, said, "I don't think I could have improved like that [last year] . . . I don't think you can do it in one year." This makes one question how much change can be expected in a semester-long course.

Another dilemma is that, in genuine situations, the transformation process is continual and iterative. That is, teachers are constantly "becoming." For instance, one teacher and I, at the end of her first year in the project, were still thinking about how she could use what she had learned about meaningful reading and conceptual understandings while simultaneously maintaining high scores in the state assessment test and assigning grades according to school policy. Another teacher and I, in the same building but in her second year, were still transforming knowledge about meta-cognitive strategy use into a context dominated by concern for literature content. This, too, is unlike university courses where we act as if learning to teach is tied to clear-cut beginning and ending times. In actuality, knowledge transformation is a longitudinal process of continued transformations as teachers and those trying to help teachers struggle to make knowledge useful in specific classroom situations.

Summary. What I am suggesting is that we examine how we situate our work with teachers. This is not to say that teachers should do *no* university work. Obviously, some important learning can occur *only* in the comparatively sheltered environment of academe. The dilemma, of course, is deciding what work should be situated in the messy world of real classrooms and how that work can be freed of the institutional forces which act on teachers' learnings in miseducative ways.

I have no illusions about our ability to do this. Although medical interns and residents accomplish genuine situated learning in cutting edge teaching hospitals that operate outside the university's system, our commitment to university life is so deep-rooted that I doubt our desire to work outside its warm nest. But I do not see how we can empower teachers when the task is to get a degree which certifies you have studied *about* enriched literacy instead of getting a degree which certifies that you can *develop* enriched literacy in kids. If the principles of situated learning are valid, we must get teachers into teaching situations where they are responsible for developing enriched literacy; keeping them in student situations only helps them learn to pass our tests, to write our term papers, to make our journal entries, and to engage in our discussions. It does not necessarily help them develop enriched literacy.

Knowledge in Teacher Education

Once we start thinking in terms of authentic teaching situations, we are forced to think differently about what knowledge to convey. This is because, in real classroom situations, it quickly becomes apparent that an idea or theory or procedure is appropriate in practice only if it fits the situation.

Typically, however, we convey inert forms of declarative and procedural knowledge as if they were universals. We further complicate the situation by couching our arguments for one or another theory in polarized positions. The endless argument over direct instruction versus whole language is a prime example.

Polarizing arguments may help scholars clarify positions. But when we talk to teachers in these terms, it is frequently misleading. In real classrooms, for instance, it is seldom a choice of Vygotsky versus Piaget, of immersion versus nonimmersion, of direct instruction versus whole language, of automaticity versus metacognition. To the contrary, sometimes automaticity is important; at other times, metacognition is important. It depends. Even "teaching and learning for understanding" is not immune. Most of us who spend a lot of time in classrooms know that there are times, though rare, when the situation calls for "teaching and learning for memory." It depends.

But we do not teach teachers about "it depends." Instead, we make teachers feel like they must adopt one position to the exclusion of others. I convey my theory as if it were *the* theory when, in actuality, it is simply *a* theory among other conceptual frames potentially useful to teachers dealing with complex problems. Whether it is useful in a given situation depends on circumstances.

We do the same thing with procedural knowledge. We give teachers "research tested" lesson plan formats, activities, heuristics, instructional techniques, and handy hints. We tell them to do mental modeling (Duffy, Roehler, & Herrmann, 1988) or to implement reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984), giving the impression that these are universal panaceas. Teachers love this, of course. They think they are getting something practical. But, unless they also know how to decide when to use it and when not to, they are nothing more than technicians following a procedure indiscriminately. And, of course, it does not always work because the context changes. Like theory, a particular procedure may or may not be appropriate—it depends.

The point is not that we should not present declarative knowledge about our theories and procedural knowledge about tested techniques. The point is that such knowledge alone is too narrow for teachers working in the complexity of real classrooms. My friend Margret Buchmann (M. Buchmann, Personal communication, November 15, 1990) says it well when she describes the power of theories and procedures in terms of uni-directional searchlights throwing intense light on a *bit* of land in *one* direction while remaining blind to what's happening on other land in other directions. This does not work for teachers because teachers do not enjoy the luxury of being uni-directional—they must take action on *all* lands and in *all* directions. In effect, we have theoreticians operating from positions uncontaminated by reality trying to teach practitioners who, by definition, must modify all theoretical positions to accommodate the contamination inherent in the complexity of classroom reality.

An alternative. So how do we help teachers understand the "it depends" concept? How do we help them learn to select from a broad range of knowledge depending upon the nature of the situation? How do we help them develop "conceptual selectivity"?

The more I work with the northern Michigan teachers, the more I think we *do not* do it by emphasizing declarative knowledge about theories or by prescribing procedures. I think we may do better by teaching teachers multiple alternatives, by

teaching them how to network these so they can be accessed appropriately as needed, and by helping them understand that teaching demands fluid, multi-dimensional responses to an infinite number of classroom situations, not narrow, uni-directional responses.

I am not saying that we should not ground teachers in theory. I work hard to ground the northern Michigan teachers in social constructivism (Gavelek, 1986), situated learning (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Leinhardt, 1988; Resnick, 1987), cognitive mediational paradigms (Doyle, 1983; Winne & Marx, 1982) and cognitive and strategic approaches to literacy (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983). But, I do not want teachers to learn the terminology or follow the procedures associated with these theories. I want them to see "the point" of a theory or procedure, when it would be applicable and when it would not, and to select among theories and procedures according to their judgment about what the situation calls for. As Gavelek (J. Gavelek, Personal communication, November 20, 1990) points out, this itself may be a theory, but it is a theory grounded in what teachers actually have to do in the reality of classrooms.

In accomplishing this, I am much less didactic than I used to be about doing it my way. And teachers' perceptions play an increasingly more important role. They put limits on my favored theories and procedures, make me more sensitive to the realities of situational constraints, help me understand the difficulties of "conceptual selectivity," and keep reminding me that the measure of success is kids.

This is not to say that it is easy for teachers to become conceptually adaptive. One of the northern Michigan teachers, for instance, told me about "that little voice," as in "that little voice started whispering in my ear; you know that little voice, Gerry? The one that tells you to teach word cards when you know you should be developing positive attitudes?" What happens is that teachers' conceptions based on their 13 years of experience as school children and their years of experience as teachers pushes them toward conventional practices and away from conceptual adaptivity.

Quieting that little voice of experience is often a painful and sometimes emotional process. For instance, one group of teachers reported during a gathering of the intellectual community of teachers in that building:

> We expected to come [to the monthly sessions] and learn things that would challenge us. But we didn't expect to be upset. But when we go back [to our school], we're angry, and mad, and churned up inside. It makes us mad.

And another teacher who was the subject of one of my case studies said, after reading my description of her work last fall, "I don't mind telling you, Gerry Duffy, that I thought about [that case study] and I thought about it; then I burned it."

Summary. Knowledge, like expectations and situated learning, is dilemma-ridden. It is a fine line between devasting teachers and opening them up to the possibilities of empowerment; it is a fine line between directive forms of declarative and procedural knowledge and the development of personal positions; it is a fine line between the "it depends" concept and an "anything goes" approach to teaching; it is a fine line between conveying our theoretical position as the only position and clarifying our position for teachers.

But, despite the dilemmas, we must get beyond giving teachers the impression that the key to effective instruction is compliance with our favored theories and our favored techniques. We must instead convey the much more complex reality that what is useful usually depends on the situation. Consequently, we must help teachers understand what a theory or procedure is good for, when it might be useful, and how to make those decisions, rather than making teachers into what Buchmann (M. Buchmann, Personal communication, November 15, 1990) calls "ideological camp followers" who *adopt* a theory or procedure regardless of circumstances.

CONCLUSION

So, what are the implications here? First, I reiterate that I am *not* proposing answers.

What I *am* saying is that there are complex dilemmas inherent in our attempts to help teachers. We in NRC must confront those dilemmas.

We cannot avoid this by hiding behind the old argument that translating research findings into practice is someone else's job, someone like a teacher educator. In the first place, such a notion is just another example of elitism, of creating yet another layer in a caste system which puts teachers at the bottom of the pile. And secondly, it is not honest. We may be researchers, but we also are all teacher educators. That is, we all talk to teachers, have teachers in our courses, write articles and books for teachers, do speaking engagements for teachers, consult with teachers, and write commercial materials for sale to teachers.

I have argued here today that, for openers, our teacher education responsibility requires us to confront whether we empower teachers and our responsibility for doing so. True, we cannot *demand* empowerment; ultimately, individual teachers must decide to take charge. But they will never decide unless we lay appropriate groundwork. Again, my friend Bruce Burke (B. Burke, Personal communication, November 2, 1990) says it best: "Empowering teachers means creating the conditions in which teachers can make up their own minds, do their own best work, and define their own context."

Do we do this? Do we invest in the minds of teachers? Do we help them make up their *own* minds, do their *own* best work, define their *own* context? Or do we invest in theories, programs, and procedures in the expectation that teachers will compliantly follow?

I am further arguing that if we choose to invest in the minds of teachers, we must make a fundamental shift from faith in simple answers, from trying to find simple solutions, simple procedures, simple packages of materials teachers can be directed to follow. Instead, we must take a more realistic view, one which Roehler (1990) calls "embracing the complexities." She argues that the way to improve strategic reading instruction, for instance, lies not with developing techniques which ignore the complexities or by following procedures which screen teachers from the complexities. Rather, the complexities are themselves the heart of the matter. Consequently, teachers should be encouraged to capitalize on the complexities rather than being protected from them.

But once you embrace the complexities—that is, once you begin to understand that improved practice does not result from attempts to convert an inherently complex situation into an artificially simple one—virtually everything else about how to improve practice is altered.

For instance, what counts as progress is altered. We talk glibly in university classes about whole language and literature-based approaches, but I have learned that in real classrooms huge changes like those are rare. Instead, for a 20-year teacher who has an established set of routines which effectively accounts for the complexities of teaching 28 kids a variety of subjects in limited time under the gun of the state assessment test in a context where compliance with policy mandates is expected and in school districts where virtually every bond issue is voted down, a huge change is moving from not providing any sustained silent reading time at all to trying it out for 10 minutes 3 days a week.

Similarly, you change your concept of how much time is enough time. In our northern Michigan project, we thought we were pretty enlightened to think in terms of a 5-year staff development effort. Auleen Lutes and I are now beginning to understand, however, that it is naive to think about change in terms of individual teachers; we are now beginning to understand that change occurs in communities of teachers who operate within a school culture where practices are embedded as mores and in which substantive change is not realized until the community as a whole replaces the established mores—until, in effect, the change itself becomes a more in that culture. In light of that, a 5-year staff development plan for northern Michigan was pretty naive. It may well take *10* years to effect the instructional change which will result in widespread development of enriched forms of literacy in these rural Michigan school districts. In short, the day of the "quick fix" is over (if, indeed, it ever was appropriate).

But embracing the complexities also means our research must change. Up to now, we have been asking basically simplistic questions about "What works?" in hopes that we will discover directions, prescriptions, procedures, or programs we can direct teachers to follow. Such research fails to impact practice because it is based on the assumption that literacy instruction is primarily technical work. Instead, our research must be guided by the understanding that literacy instruction is, first and foremost, intellectual and moral work. This changes our research questions in fundamental ways.

But, more fundamental still, we need to open up a whole new frontier of research, one that critically examines *our* practices. We are researchers. We study all sorts of literacy-related issues. However, although some of us are beginning to follow Lampert's (1986) example by studying our practices as we teach kids, few of us study our practices as we teach teachers. But, since some of the worst instruction occurs in university settings, it is not unreasonable to think that part of our failure to improve school literacy instruction lies with our own teaching of teachers. This may be because most of us received little instruction on how to work with teachers as part of our doctoral work. As a result, we emulated standard practices of the past. I taught like my major professor taught; he taught like *his* major professor taught. We took our teaching for granted; we never considered the possibility that perhaps university teaching and staff development is also complex; that perhaps working with teachers is as dilemma-ridden as working with kids. But if we wish to empower teachers, we must

bring our analytical skills to bear on our own work with teachers, on what our practices contribute to a teacher's empowerment and, on the basis of that, alter our own teaching practices.

So, in the end, I do not have answers. I only have dilemmas—dilemmas about how to put teachers in charge of their own work so that masses of at-risk kids achieve enriched literacy. My only real hypothesis is that we cannot wait for someone else to show us the way. Only when we begin studying *ourselves* and the messages we convey can we empower classroom teachers to empower kids.

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