Improving Teaching by Reflecting on Non-Teaching Practices

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Abstract

Professors are often operating with a dominant construct or metaphor used to conceptualize their roles as teachers. This presentation will briefly explore the construction of pedagogical knowledge, the process of teacher change, the audience's metaphors for teachers and the value and use of metaphors in constructing and changing teacher practice. A change in metaphor can lead to a change in beliefs and practices. Non-teaching practices will be presented as ways to attain a deeper understanding of their role and responsibility as educators, the nature of education, and the relationships between the teacher and student. These non-teaching practices can serve as organizers and construct new visions of teaching.

Constructing our images of teaching based on viewing the teacher as coach, conductor, manager, or some other familiar image has been a common and useful practice in the education and development of teachers. By reflecting on these non-teaching practices and the metaphors we use in education, we can improve our teaching. For example, by reflecting on how others operate we might give concreteness, clarify the unknown, express the subjective, and assist thought related to teaching. "Viewed in the context of our ever-expanding understandings of abstract concepts, the metaphorical process is an educational tool which can have unlimited development" (Hatcher, 1987, p. 83).

Teachers make sense of their experiences based on what is known and what is believed and construct images and models of teaching based upon their prior experiences (Johnson, 1987). Educators reflect on what they are doing as they teach (Schon, 1983). It is possible to develop the reflections and practices of a teacher by using metaphors relating to non-teaching practices.

The objects and tools of reflection exist as constructions of the mind. When we reflect on practice, we are reflecting on re-constructed images of what we remember from our classroom experience. In this case the process of reflection involves the assignment of language to components of dynamic images which are re-constructed in the process of reflection. However, we can go beyond the assignment of language to images during reflection. Reflecting on the epistemologies, metaphors, beliefs, values and myths that underlie practice also can be beneficial. (Tobin, 1990, pg. 25).

Teachers can reflect upon their own dominant metaphors, build a vision of what teaching should be like, develop a commitment to that vision and begin to apply it, they will further reflect on it using their new practice and pursue this change process in an ongoing basis. Conflicts can occur as teach...
on their practice and begin changing aspects of their teaching while leaving other aspects intact. For instance, one may practice a philosophy of student involvement in learning, yet have assessments that emphasize content centered book responses or teachers may use different metaphors such as when a teacher acts on one level as a technician but on another level as a social service provider.

teaching is such a complex activity, teachers may find themselves operating under several metaphors at once. The change of metaphor can dram one's beliefs and practices. An example is given by Tobin (1990) of a teacher who reconceptualized her role of teacher as manager to that of the vector in which she would invite the students to be a party of learning, rather than trying to manage or dictate the role of students in the classroom. In the metaphor of teacher as social director can choose to come or not come to the activity, but if they do not come, they should not disrupt the other students. One decided to participate in the learning and should be courteous to their host. By changing the metaphor the teacher was able to eliminate student almost overnight. The teacher was able to construct a vision of what teaching and learning could be like, to envision herself and her students in to develop a commitment to changing according to that metaphor. She then could reconstruct images of what happens to her as she applies this her classrooms.

' construction of their knowledge and their world view is important in the change process. The three cognitive requisites for teacher change are "ion and personalization of a commitment to change; the creation of a vision of what teaching and learning environments could be like and the zation of that vision; and reflection" (Tobin, 1990, p. 24). Teachers often feel discomfort when they find themselves operating according to metaphors not complementary to their personal world view and epistemology. By changing one or the other they may find a greater congruence and satisfac r teaching.

g on Non-Teaching Practices

can be thought of as shepherds, guiding and caring for their flocks and as expedition leaders with students as crew. The teacher-student relation d to the following relations: painter/canvas, waxter/automobile, program disk/computer, mechanic/car, fisher/fish, fire builder/fire, coa ked, rider/roller coaster, tree/sheltered plants, fire/candle, sun/flower, checking account/check, commander/soldiers, rider/race horses, refuge/ref ug, puzzle maker/puzzle, assembly line worker/product, director/actor, caterer/guests, supplier/contractor, light bulb/seers, chef/ingredients, ouse, rain cloud/earth, quilt maker/quilt pieces, race officials/racers, artist/found materials, popcorn maker/popcorn, oil/popcorn, soil/seed, tree/ tacter, water/soap, blender/ingredients, composer/notes, electricity+lights, money/slot machine, carpenter/materials, paddles/canoe, readers/books, eo, telephone/receiver, trails/hikers, lollipops/lickers, nurse/patient, farmer/livestock, river/boats, equipment/skiers, warden/prisoners, assengers, tour guide/tourists, social director/members, entertainer/audience, miners/mine, foresters/trees, mother hen/chicks, computer mer/program, pianist/keys, singer/song, writer/words, oak tree/squirrels, mason/bricks, hurdle/hurdler, guru/followers, waitress/customers, pluml books, collector/collectibles, traffic controller/traffic, potter/clay, man/dog, wind/sail boat, planter/seed, fireman/fire, watchmaker/parts, and npty page.1

image teaching can be seen as nurturing, commanding, leading, guiding, fixing, protecting, controlling, enkindling, enriching, riding, suppc filling, puzzling, solving, depositing, withdrawing, and a host of other activities. The possibilities for practice are endless. The non-teaching images, teachers can see as making/creating and teaching by reflecting on these comparisons.

Just as children have obligations to their parents, and parents have certain rights and responsibilities to their children, teachers and students each obligations, rights and responsibilities. The classroom or school is like an extended family in which the rules, virtues, and integrity of the classroom considered. The rights of the individuals and the group are to be balanced. The teacher/parent of the classroom must educate students according hts, obligations and prerogatives of each member in a school. Teachers/parents have some responsibility to develop students' knowledge and cha as role models and authority figures. Looking at how animals parent their young to full maturity might also be enlightening.

ferences between teachers and parents involve differing levels and kinds of responsibility, concern, attention, emotional attachment and roles. B differences involve the depth, nature, quantity and quality of the contact--teachers relate to a classroom of students for a limited time with limit sibilities, while parents have full-time responsibilities for one of those students. A teacher with a class would be like a single parent with thirty sar The settings and conditions differ, so the expectations also should differ.

s. Children are like young plants, and teaching them knowledge is to children as rain is to plants. The teacher/gardener tending young plants/stu at different plants have different needs and requirements to grow well. Some need special care and some are hardy. Others may need transplanti nd more sun and water. The teacher/gardener knows how to supply the right conditions for healthy growth and development, planting the seeds
ze, watering with encouragement and weeding out distractions and bad qualities. Teacher/gardeners often try to give enough sun, water and nutrients, which may be too much for some and too little for others. Teachers/gardeners cannot change the original nature of the plants; they can only provide the best conditions for their growth. Some plants may need grafting, transplanting, thinning, support or other intervention to help them bear good fruit.

The prophets are like teachers in several ways—humankind are like children in a school and prophets are like their teachers. Prophets change the world by their lives and their words. They give the law, bring knowledge and spirit from a higher power, prepare their followers for the future, and represent a higher function that might be similar to a teacher's role.

The patient relationship can shed light on the teacher-student relationship. The teacher/doctor should remedy faults and heal ailments. It depends upon the doctor/teacher giving good remedies/training or healing/knowledge, and the patient/student following the doctor/teacher's advice.

Some aspects of the prophets' practices that teachers might reflect upon are that prophets teach and show love, but have high expectations for behavior. Teachers' expectations for behavior are usually not appreciated by humanity, who in turn persecutes the prophet and belittles his teachings. The teacher/prophet can perform a miracle or two to win a little respect. They acknowledge the teachers that have come before them and foretell of teachers coming after them. Their message is not usually appreciated by humanity, who in turn persecutes the prophet and belittles his teachings.

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Teachers/physicians need to test to find out their client's condition, prescribe remedies and heal. Some patients cannot be healed based on the physician's knowledge and skill and must be recommended to a specialist. Some illnesses take more and longer intervention to bring about good results. The patients must play some part in the healing process and their attitudes influence the ability to help. Ignorance is like lack of nutrition, exercise is like applying knowledge and disease is like destructive thinking. Depending on the condition, the oyster/teacher covering the shell/education and the pearl/child develops as the result of some irritant getting inside the shell and the oyster/teacher then secretes calcium/learning to encapsulate the irritant so that it lessens the irritation. The shell/education protects the pearl/child from being damaged by the world.

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can use reflection, metaphors, analogies, parables and allegories to arrive at a deeper understanding of their role and responsibility as educators, education, and the relationships between the teacher and student. Beliefs about knowledge, students and education influence practices. Efforts to restructure and reform education requires a restructuring and reforming of the basic myths, beliefs, and metaphors of educators.

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References


