Teachers' Stories of Experience Guide Collaboration in Teacher Education

Judith McPhie
coquitlam, b.c.

The development and implementation of a program for the education of new teachers begins with teachers based in schools and teachers based in a university enquiring together into the knowledge that guides their work in education. This collaborative work requires a shift in the traditional roles and responsibilities of school- and university-based teachers. According to teachers' recountings, five educational domains inform their professional decisions; these domains constitute the scaffolding on which the program is built. Collaboration can be characterized as ongoing and reflective processes that support participants in increased self-knowledge, and in increased knowledge of others' perspectives and understandings. This provides the basis for the negotiation of new meaning. The weave of theory and practice challenges and deepens all participants' knowledge, and increases the possibility of agreeing about what counts, in the beginning, for student teachers.

L'élaboration et la mise en oeuvre d'un programme de formation des maîtres commencent lorsque les enseignants dans les écoles et les professeurs à l'université se penchent ensemble sur les connaissances qui orientent leur travail en éducation. Cette collaboration exige une transformation des rôles et des responsabilités traditionnellement dévolus aux enseignants dans les écoles et aux professeurs dans les universités. Lorsque des enseignants racontent leurs expériences en matière de prise de décisions professionnelles, cinq facettes émergent; celles-ci constituent en quelque sorte l'échafaudage sur lequel repose le programme. La collaboration revêt la forme de processus de réflexion constants grâce auxquels les participants parviennent à une meilleure connaissance d'eux-mêmes et des points de vue des autres. C'est sur cette base que se négocient les orientations nouvelles. Les relations intrinsèques entre la théorie et la pratique stimulent les participants, leur permettent d'approfondir leurs connaissances et améliorent les possibilités d'en venir à une entente sur ce qui, au début, compte pour les étudiants-maîtres.

The student teacher stopped reading the story. She looked around at her eight-year-old pupils sitting motionless in their desks, holding their collective breath, waiting to hear what happened. "And then," she whispered, barely audible, reluctant to remind the children they were sitting in a suburban classroom rather than crouching by an air hole on the frozen Arctic Sea, "what do you think happened?" A student raised an arm, waving it excitedly and ready when the teacher gave permission, to provide an ending. The teacher listened to the explanation then, clearly disappointed in the reply, gave the student a weak thank-you nod and turned to another. The child's body slumped and the excitement seemed to drain out of it.

But why not that ending? I thought, as I watched from the back of the room in my "supervisor-of-student-teacher" role. The student's answer had surprised me — the line of

reasoning was different from mine — but yet, it delighted, it had possibilities and I was curious — what in this child's experience had led her to that conclusion? I wanted to sit with her and have her help me understand why that might have been the outcome. (notes to file, March 1990)

To create an environment for exploring possibilities, for welcoming different perspectives, is the aim of my work in teacher education. It was what led me, as a coordinator of teacher education programs at Simon Fraser University (SFU), to invite school-based teachers to join teachers based at the university to extend our experience and shared understanding of education, and to develop a curriculum for educating student teachers. Such a collaborative effort required participants to suspend the norms and assumptions that had, traditionally, sustained both the isolation and the hierarchical relationship between universities and public schools. It required a willingness to listen "deeply" to narratives describing other points of view and to entertain new possibilities. In this article I describe and analyze some attempts to build such a community of learners in teacher education.

CONTEXT

Simon Fraser University's teacher education program, called "PDP," or the Professional Development Program, is a year-long curriculum leading to certification in either elementary or secondary education. Most student applicants for PDP have completed their academic requirements in their teaching areas but have not taken any coursework in education. With almost half the student teachers' time spent in the classroom, this professional year is clearly based on principles that encourage practising teachers' active participation in the education of student teachers. Classrooms are not "borrowed" to provide places for student teachers to practice skills and methods learned in university courses. They are the environments in which school-based teachers, herein referred to as "school associates," introduce student teachers to the complex nature of learning to teach. The work of the school associate is vital to the success of SFU's teacher education program. In my view, teacher education programs situated so centrally in the classrooms of teachers need to be developed with their partnership.

In 1989 the provincial government provided funds to develop teacher education programs in the less populated northern regions of the province to alleviate an increasingly serious teacher shortage. Specifically, the government wished to see school districts form consortia with universities and regional colleges to develop programs that would enable local persons to qualify for teacher certification without spending a year away from home at a main university campus. I coordinated the development of two such off-campus teacher education programs for Simon Fraser University.

These consortia provided a unique opportunity to attempt collaborative models of teacher education. Steering committees comprising representatives from the

school districts, regional colleges, and SFU's Faculty of Education oversee the programs. Superintendents, or their designates, are involved in the selection of schools and school-based teachers for the programs. The colleges work with SFU to provide courses necessary for student eligibility to PDP. Simon Fraser personnel, including "faculty associates," "coordinators," and regular faculty members work directly with the "school associates" to implement the program.

"Faculty associates" are classroom teachers seconded by the university to assist in educating student teachers. Often they have been school associates and are encouraged to apply for the faculty associate position because of their particular abilities to mentor student teachers in their own classrooms. Their term is two years. They are responsible for day-to-day work with student teachers in the two practicum semesters.

"Coordinators" work with groups of faculty associates and the student teachers for whom the faculty associates are responsible. This work includes both educational leadership and administration. I was the coordinator developing the teacher education work described in this article; at the same time, I was a doctoral candidate in SFU's Faculty of Education. I was situated at the main university and commuted to the various sites, whereas the faculty associates were seconded locally.

Teachers' Stories of Experience

I am particularly concerned with the collaborative endeavour as a means to repair institutional power differentials and injustices, to ensure that the practices of teacher education recognize all participants' voices. The main theoretical framework here is a critical perspective of knowledge as serving particular human interests (Habermas, 1972; Lather, 1991)—an appropriate frame in which to begin to speak of emancipation from conditions that work against the participation of all stakeholders in dialogues about education.

We began our work together in the consortia with the participants' stories of professional experience that both recognized the individual voice and provided a common focus on teaching and learning. In the past decade interest in teachers' stories has increased (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Elbaz, 1983) as a vehicle to develop an understanding of "what we are about and what we are" as teachers. These narratives can provide a sense of personal and professional coherence, pointing to the influence of past experience, present events, and expectations for the future (Carr, 1986). Having teachers tell stories is a dialogic method for accessing participants' meaning, for accessing the values, beliefs, and assumptions often held tacitly and for which pedagogical language is not readily available (Schön, 1987). For many interested in this manner of pursuing teacher knowledge, the telling of the stories would seem to be an end in itself—self-conscious reflection on practice providing the process necessary to understanding and growth.

In this article I assume that personal story-telling is an important step. I agree with Britzman's claim that reflection as an exploration of one's biography is a necessary condition for individual transformation (Britzman, 1986). It is vital, however, to move from private to public inter-subjective reflection, to what Cinnamond and Zimpher (1990) describe as a model of constructive power: "As a result of reflection, one must continually communicate with others to unify the principles of the communities involved" (p. 65). But the project here is larger than simply checking with community members. The project is to re-construct—to generate, through reciprocal action—new roles and the possibility of new understandings and perspectives. I attempt here to describe processes whereby teachers based in public schools and universities can contribute to knowledge in teacher education by engaging in a dialogic relationship that regards their different roles as equally necessary, and their perspectives and knowledge as equally subject to informed critique. It is an attempt to "learn how to let experience shape and reshape theory . . . the aim being to *understand* rather than to find methods of justification, verification, and control" (Code, 1989, p. 169).

Freedom from regulatory forces that have traditionally determined what we know and how that knowledge is displayed will be evidenced by "the degree or quality . . . of the perspectives available and of the [opportunity for] reflectiveness on the choices made" (Greene, 1988, p. 80). I recognized only too well that as a researcher and facilitator "from the university," and as a participant-learner, I needed to do a lot of trust-building. As well, we needed to develop understanding about our common purpose and processes, within which "freedom from hierarchical arrangements" and "equality of chances to assume dialogue roles" would be the desirable norm. The stories of our "successes" are mixed.

The practicum semester of interest in this article is the first of the three semesters required for certification. During these 14 weeks, students spend half their time in the field and half in seminars and workshops on campus. In both consortia, school associates, faculty associates, and the coordinator came together for four planning days before the practicum semester began, and for four days during the practicum semester for further planning and modification.

The Planning Semester: October

With both consortia groups, we began our work together examining the idea of a collaborative effort. (For the rest of this article I merge the activity of the two groups as if I were talking about a single group.) At our opening session I spoke to the idea of collaborative effort:

> What we will develop will be unique because it will be our particular journey together, taking place here and now with unique individuals. We will have different understandings of our work and some differing beliefs and values which inform what we do all day. And we will have some common purposes binding us together in the educating of children.

Together we will know what to do. As a community of teacher educators we can support, clarify, and enrich each other's personal knowing. This is a new program needing new interpretations.

Our task is to develop a vision of a good professional — to identify what a "good" teacher understands about teaching and learning, and carries out in successful practice. As we talk about our work we will begin to articulate those understandings and what they look like in our ongoing professional activity. And we will use those understandings to build a curriculum addressing the question: What should a student teacher understand and see and do — in order to foster his or her development as that "good" teacher?

Through private and public reflection on our work as educators, we attempted to deepen our understanding of the personal and professional knowledge, values, and assumptions informing our activity. We recognized our common purposes by writing about and then discussing what we would celebrate about young peoples' graduation from public education if we had done our work well. And then we thought about what we would do to guide young people toward those goals. Here we began to describe the unique and individual expressions of those goals guiding our daily work.

We began telling our personal/professional stories — the events and circumstances that affirmed our sense of self as teacher. Our language was inclusive, and centred largely on classroom dilemmas and practices. We entertained such questions as: What was a time you felt particularly successful in your work? Why do you think that was the case? Develop a metaphor to describe yourself at work. What do these accounts signal about what is important in teaching and learning? What values, beliefs, knowledge inform your work?

The first two days together we focussed on our daily professional lives. We began to appreciate the challenge of developing a practicum to introduce to student teachers such complexity and deep knowing. We discussed what we expected to gain from taking on this work. We began to name what we believed are the characteristics that make good teachers and good practice.

At the end, we reflected on the session and the expectations it had engendered. There were a range of interpretations, influenced by past experience and by expectations for the future of our work, and indicative of the range of collaborators. There were approximately 25 school associates (school-based teachers teaching K through grade 12) in each of the two groups, three faculty associates, and the coordinator.[1]

SA1: I am a relatively new teacher so what I hope to gain from this is an understanding of myself not as a student anymore but as a teacher. I remember looking at myself being a student teacher and now I am still in there and getting to be a teacher. I think having a student teacher is going to help me look at myself as a teacher.

SA2: On the other hand, I have been teaching forever it seems. It is good to go back and to tear the whole thing apart and see what makes it up and remind myself again what's involved.

SA3: I have been teaching for quite a while and tend to, you know, well, we did this today and tomorrow we'll be doing this. I need to keep thinking more than sometimes I do, thinking why am I doing this. I am hoping it will help me understand more, to think more. I am not very good at explaining why I do things and I am wanting some help in articulating that to a student teacher.

From the outset participants showed openness to and curiosity about the perspectives and knowledge of teachers from all grades and institutions, and were willing to share experiences and dilemmas of practice. Throughout the sessions the expectation was reinforced that the knowledge we needed to develop our program resided within the group and would be developed as a result of the study of our practices and the understandings that inform practice. The first session affirmed and celebrated our daily work, and acknowledged its continually challenging nature. A summary by a school associate from one small group discussion illustrates this:

This whole session developed trust, sincerity, openness, and therefore was conducive to communication. We thought that maybe out of this we could see that we were all student teachers, that no one knew it all. That we were all learning. . . . There was tremendous respect for what other people brought to this. . . . We came to realize that even though we were from other districts, from different grades, there were many similarities as well as common threads and themes and purposes. We could celebrate the differences. We do have different ideas, and we have common goals. We could say we all grew from this exchange. . . .

The teachers' stories of experience, reflected on privately and shared with others, seem to have affirmed the professional self and the self within a professional community. Having risked, across grades and districts and institutions, describing our thoughts and actions as teachers, we gained new perspectives and knowledge. It provided us all a wider horizon from which to view the educational enterprise.

The Planning Semester: November

We began our second session a month later with case studies each of us had written. They described educational dilemmas we faced, and how we dealt with them. At the end of the first session, to provide an example, I had shared with the whole group my own case study of a decision about the evaluation of an assignment in an undergraduate course I had taught. The group had assisted with questions, helping me reflect upon what I believed, valued, and understood about teaching and learning that had led to my decision. The questioning gave me new insight into my action. By way of our case studies, I explained, we would be able to identify main areas or domains to which we paid attention when we made decisions. These would provide a framework within which to build our program for the first semester practicum.

At our November session, the case studies were first explored with a small group of colleagues who would assist the storyteller to examine the beliefs and values that underlay and guided his or her decision-making. It was hard work. Often the presented issue, upon reflection, uncovered a deeper purpose for the dilemma chosen as well as for the decision made. This, in turn, encouraged further examination.

DEVELOPING THE DOMAINS

The following example of narrative enquiry into a case study is from the large group discussion (which followed the small group work) in which participants briefly summarized their cases.

SA: A lot of what others have said relates to me as well. I had to come to grips with the fact, accept my failure to teach a concept based on my time line. I have to have patience to continue it at the child's individual speed rather than in my tempo. To meet the needs of the child rather than — this is mine, my goal, and this is the speed I like to teach at. This is what I expect of you children. And sometimes they are just not ready.

Coord: I was writing it here, thinking about it as respecting individual children, but it was also talking about instruction and how instruction has to meet the needs of so many different children. There are different developmental stages for children.

SA: That's where I had to stop and quit with a certain group of children. I couldn't just keep on trying to force information, they just weren't ready. Like where the majority of the children had it, let those children go and carry on, accept the fact that these kids just don't have it yet, but hopefully, with extra work they might come around. So I had to accept some failure on my part and justify it with the parents.

FA: Is there not a need to indicate that there is some sort of tension between curriculum or expectations and that last point about the method being right? We have been drawing lines of tension between the individual child and the group in the classroom. I think there is also tension between the standards and expectations that we have, and that individual development or those individual rates of development.

As teachers recounted their stories and reflected on their choices, the force of institutional regulations and relationships was evident. In this example, the teacher found herself in conflict with norms and assumptions accompanying public school curriculum. Repeatedly during this session teachers brought the focus back to the welfare of the child. There was tremendous resilience and tenacity in reaching toward the clear purpose of providing the experience of success for children. Children, they theorized, must experience success or learning will not take place. Further, they placed responsibility for providing the environment for children's success squarely upon themselves: "I couldn't keep on trying to force information that they just weren't ready for."

As they spoke, I summarized their remarks on the board, clustering similar ideas that influenced participants' practice. There were shortcomings in these processes. First, although initially it was "genuinely" an evolving picture of the domains driving educational decision making as represented by those group members, later, although I tried to resist it, prior expectation inevitably influenced my clustering: I would be "looking for" certain patterns rather than discovering them. A more intimate involvement of all participants in determining the clustering could help overcome this effect. Second, it is clear, reading the transcripts of our large group discussions, that I controlled, to some extent, the direction of questions. Although quite frequently my line of questioning was challenged/corrected, it is desirable to find ways to have a framework be more clearly the work of all participants if joint ownership of the program is a goal. Finally, I realized that the narratives contained understandings I had not focussed on. I do not believe this matters in terms of building the framework, which could be built in a number of ways, its purpose to provide us with a scaffolding that is our own. On the other hand, it matters in terms of individuals having the opportunity to deepen their understanding of their own practice through critical reflection.

Not withstanding these limitations, our discussions led us to identify five predominant educational domains consistently guiding our educational decision making. (We also came up with a rewarding process for examining more seriously, and in depth, our understanding of pedagogy based on teachers' stories of experience.) We identified these guiding domains as: the student; educational environments; the curriculum; the role of the teacher; and evaluation.

Developing the Understandings within Each Domain

Having determined a conceptual framework for talking about teaching and learning, each person chose a domain to work on and began, in cross-grade, cross-district, cross-institution small groups, the challenge of developing understandings, observations, and experiences student teachers should have in that domain. From these deliberations came guidelines for day-to-day activity for the semester: for campus seminars with faculty associates and for classroom experiences with the school associates.

A school associate reports the discussion of the small group working on the "domain of the child":

> We felt the most important understanding was that children are unique. Everyone is different — and they are coming to us with a history — that there is a family behind this child and that can affect what is happening in the classroom. How a child is learning today may be different than how she functions tomorrow because something different is happening outside of the school. There is a wide range of children in the classroom. For instance, some children have had no exposure to reading before kindergarten, others are

reading already and you have to accommodate all those — and how do you do it? It can be pretty scary for the student teacher but they have to understand that they must meet those diverse needs. And not only needs but interests are different and so learning has to be encouraged differently just through something interesting to each of them.

We talked about different rates — someone might be more advanced academically but socially and emotionally they are at a different rate. Some move quickly through an area and others need more time and practice. So you can't think if I do this, they will all know that — you have to realize some will and some won't after many tries and you have to deal with that.

So part is respecting their backgrounds, how they learn, respect for them as people. And because of that respect, the need to maintain confidentiality.

Throughout our discussions, my understanding was continually enriched, as was that of faculty associates, as one described:

The faculty associate job is totally enhanced by collaborating. It works! It is absolutely essential. It brings different perspectives together. We need continuously to be shaken up — for new learnings and possibilities — for the opportunity for new knowledge to be generated.

Evaluations received from school associates after the planning sessions indicated that for many school-based teachers these sessions fostered confidence and professional growth. We contributed jointly to a broadening of perspectives and an increase in depth of knowledge about teaching and learning.

SA1: I am starting to see myself more as a professional, one who has the knowledge and expertise. I feel less of a need to "look elsewhere" for solutions to problems and insights into ways to be innovative.

SA2: I have become aware of more options available to me as a teacher and so experiment more with different strategies. I also focus less on teaching curriculum and more on teaching kids.

Our framework not only emphasized the importance of treating children in classrooms wholistically, but consistently embraced a similar approach to working with student teachers. Not surprisingly, this consistency influenced the teacher education curriculum we built, and, in my opinion, signalled a major contribution resulting from our collaborative efforts.

Our planning sessions were clearly viewed as important collegial work, work Lanier and Little (1986), in their review of research on teacher education, describe as active, sustained, and purposeful. One school associate explained:

This has been an enriching experience from my point of view. Firstly, I have been asked to work with colleagues to think about what I do, how I do it, and, more unusual, why I do it. It is a rare occurrence for teachers to have the opportunity to share their knowledge. Secondly, many of us have felt enriched by the discussions on theory in

education. The sessions made me think, reflect, and analyze the practice of teaching. The discussions enabled me to articulate my beliefs in a safe environment, then questions those beliefs against my practices as a teacher.

Comments by school associates offered a perspective on the role and responsibilities of the university-based teachers in these planning sessions.

Thank you for the facilitating and probing questions. I was able to think about ideas and values which I hadn't expressed very often and were sometimes difficult to articulate.

The feeling generated that you [school associates] are important is greatly responsible for the success of the program.

I regard these comments with mixed emotions. They speak eloquently to the traditional success of the educational hierarchy, to the regulatory force determining who speaks and who listens. I am struck by human fragility and the need, emphasized time and time again in our sessions, to build an environment where participants can feel successful. To discuss publicly our personal/professional thoughts and actions is risky, exciting—and highly unusual. (Yet it is exactly the process we require of student teachers during their practica.) One of my recommendations is that student teachers more often be included in these exploratory and potentially emancipatory dialogues. But I am aware as well of the risk of prematurely shutting down the dialogue among teacher educators. Some of our conversations would not have taken place with student teachers present. When is the best time to bring other stakeholders into the critical discussion?

Our planning sessions were worthwhile in and of themselves. But the evolution of the program was far from perfect. School associates left behind the understandings we had developed together, and their recommendations for student teacher activity. They were not involved in the detailed planning of the program.

The Practicum Semester: January and February

Faculty associates, supported by the coordinator, translated this collaborative work into program activity and assignments. We made a concerted effort to be faithful to the framework established in the sessions with school associates. The faculty associates introduced the program to student teachers during their first week on campus. In the second practicum week student teachers joined the faculty associates, school associates, and coordinator for a two-day session where school associates heard, for the first time, details of the developed program. For some school associates, the details did not appear to acknowledge the framework they had helped build. Ensuing conflicts and tensions signalled a challenge of collaborative work. As program decisions are considered, ongoing discussion with, and feedback from, all participants is desirable.

During the month following the January session, student teachers moved through a variety of experiences including observations in different classrooms and grades as well as a two-week period in their school associates' classrooms. The faculty associates visited all the classrooms and, along with school associates, observed student teachers in their first interactions with children. At the time of the session recorded below (our seventh of the eight days we had together), student teachers were on campus again. Their major work was preparing a unit to be taught in the four-week immersion back in the school associates' classrooms, to begin the following week.

Participants in this session — school associates, faculty associates, and the coordinator — came together to share practicum perceptions and experiences, to reaffirm what would take place in the remaining six weeks, and to review ongoing supervision and evaluation methods. I begin the description of this session with a conflict that arose as a result of school associates not having sufficient input into student teacher activities.

SA1: How much do they have in the way of assignments in this four-week time with us? Are there a lot of other things they are expected to do? [It would be the expectation of the faculty associates that this information would have been discussed between student teacher and school associate. It was also discussed during the January session.]

SA2: They have their journals — and a child study.

FA1: Which is tied in to their work in your room. And they videotape one of their lessons if possible.

SA1: That is an extra assignment.

FA1: Yes, but tied in to what we are doing together.

SA1: When you add it up — the lessons, and the journals and the child study and midterm — that is a lot of work.

SA3: Besides all the planning!

SA4: And depending on the different backgrounds they are coming from — they are all at such different levels.

SA5: I would rather the student teacher was at the school for some of the planning for their unit. My children do some of the planning. I might say we are going to be working on this topic, what do you know? what do you want to know? And the student teacher should be there when the children are doing that rather than be on campus. Maybe there should be some options here. Whatever way the teacher is doing it. Whatever way is best for the two of them.

SA6: Are you going to guide them in planning?

FA1: We are building in flexibility because some of the new themes they are introducing in your classroom don't start till next week. So they are not starting the unit right away. They will have something to bring to you but then they will work with you.

FA2: And we were doing the same. They started out with you, they chose a topic with you, and now they have been to a conference and have heard some more things about planning and some of them can incorporate those. We have said that the

theme should come to us but we are not expecting it to be complete. Obviously, they need more time with you.

FA3: I guess I need to have a sense before they go back to the school of what it is that comprises this sequence — where it will begin and how and what are the anticipated outcomes and why. And what I have asked for is the first lesson done in detail and a good sense of the second. . . .

SA1: I do not see how they are going to do that without time with us. I couldn't do it. If I was trying to plan a lesson for your classroom and show it to somebody else, I couldn't do it without spending time with you.

We seemed in this exchange to have lost touch with one another — with our common purposes as teacher educators — and the hierarchy is reaffirmed. There were clear statements that school associates felt the need for more intimate involvement with student teacher development at this stage. That the student teachers were "elsewhere" was antithetical to a central understanding of our program — to shape practice around the child's needs. As one school associate remarked,

When we are out, couldn't they be out too? I mean, why couldn't they be part of the session today? I know I feel I am out a lot already. I am reluctant to take more time when you guys are here anyways — and we are here — that maybe we could have done it that way.

I think the school associate was right. Here was a time when student teachers could have joined our learning community. As the demands of the practicum semester crowded in, time together to continue the reflective listening characterizing our more collaboratively successful beginnings seemed to disappear. These stresses were exacerbated by the fact that student teachers were not with us, joining and enriching our dialogue. Had the critical examination of practice that took place here included them, it might have sustained our beginnings and emphasized the need to develop co-equal relationships between university- and school-based teachers to speak and to be heard. That the differing perspectives of the school associates and the faculty associates were spoken and heard in itself signalled a shift in perceptions about the roles and responsibilities each participant should have — the hierarchy was challenged.

I believe these shifts were most difficult for the faculty associates. They were accountable not only for organizing and carrying out the campus portion of a program, but for ongoing negotiation of its meaning throughout the semester with all the participants. One said:

At times I feel very supported through this collaboration, that we are not carrying all of this alone, that we are not expected to make all those decisions out of context and then have them fit someone else's context. I actually like this process but it doesn't make it easy. You are taking into account everyone's point of view. You feel accountable to all the school associates all the time.

Although recently out of classrooms themselves, they had acquired a different role and other responsibilities to children and education by virtue of their university affiliation. They were to teach, supervise, and evaluate student teachers. But so were the school associates. And faculty associates and school associates were developing the program together — both perspectives necessary to a coherent whole. Said one faculty associate:

> Well, you do have a voice, but only to a point. You are only one of the players. And in the final analysis you are having to have responsibility without authority, I guess would be a way to put it. But that is false too because in the end you control your own situation.

The stresses included not only the challenge of shifting roles and responsibilities but more pragmatic concerns characteristic of northern school districts. For all of us, travel (often in poor weather and over long distances) was a major concern. Preparation for substitutes (often in short supply and underqualified) meant extra time and worry for school associates. And we were attempting to understand, develop, and implement a program within a relatively short period of time. Time was a perpetual concern. Our collaborative efforts to develop a teacher education program put increased pressure on all participants. For instance, we all strongly agreed that conferencing with the "triad" — faculty associate, school associate, and student teacher — was one of the most satisfying discourses and one in which "challenging and opening," as one faculty associate described it, was frequent. It was also one of the most difficult groupings to arrange, given all members' time commitments and responsibilities. Where was the time to carry out that task well and to reinforce the collaborative whole?

In her study of collaborative work, Lieberman (1986) states; "Ambiguity and flexibility more aptly describe collaborations than rigidity and certainty" (p. 7). Although this may be true, knowing it does not necessarily make collaboration easier. Although we have to take some responsibility for constructing meaning for ourselves, as well as with others, facilitators need to support this work by building in continued time for reflection, both interactive and individual. Teachers need support for and recognition of this effort from others within their institutional settings — university or school district settings — or the commitment such work requires will likely disappear.

The Practicum Semester: March

As we discussed priorities in our program, it was clear that time with student teachers took precedence over time for the personal/professional growth for participants characterizing initial planning sessions. This is not surprising, given our mandate. In my view, however, this collaborative work has the potential to resolve this impossible and unproductive choice — to meet the need of all participants in the education of student teachers for ongoing and critical reflection (McPhie, 1992).

The critique forced us to re-examine the way we conducted teacher education. For instance, school associates believed student teachers' assignments needed to be more appropriately tied to the developmental stage of the individual student. The procedure suggested was to come to agreement as a teacher education community about the main understandings student teachers needed to acquire, and then to leave the "triad" to negotiate assignments appropriate to individual students. This required sharing power in coming to agreement about both the student teacher's stage of development and the appropriate assignment to match that stage.

During the final session we also re-examined the educational domains as well as the concomitant understandings, observations, and activities developed under each domain. Fresh from the experience of intense weeks of work with student teachers, our narratives revealed a new, or renewed, appreciation of the education of teachers as a continuum. The developmental nature of learning to teach was emphasized — student teachers need time to observe, plan, attempt, reflect, modify — to live in the middle of learning events, and to demonstrate increased ability to identify the values, beliefs, and assumptions shaping their responses to those events. It was a slower, more reflective pace, suggesting more allocation of time to observation of a variety of educational environments as eyes became "wiser." It was a more holistic view of education. This is not to say that these were not already emphasized, but in terms of the understandings we had drawn up in the beginning, it represented a shift. This shift indicated, I believe, a renewed understanding and valuing, on the part of all learners within our community, of the practitioner as an effective and intentional professional, at the heart of the child's learning. As one school associate put it,

> Our celebration at the end of the semester was great. It is amazing how people who have only met on five separate occasions, come from different areas of education, have different ideas, values, beliefs, can feel so bonded (for lack of a better word). I am amazed by the strength of the bonds. This in itself has made it worthwhile. Many of the activities we co-operated on made me feel part of a vast group with similar goals and objectives regardless of the level within education we were dealing with. The gathering into small groups to re-define the domains was also quite a good experience. Our group found that the basic ideas had not changed but we had some experience to draw on which changed the specific outcomes. We actually felt we knew what we were talking about and for me it was the first time I felt that way. Even in our "sluggish minds" on the "day after" we were able to think and, what is better, to articulate what we knew to be meaningful experiences.

CONCLUSION

This collaborative effort aimed to make available new perspectives and possibilities in education and teacher education by providing equal opportunity for the voices of educators from schools and from universities to be heard and to

influence decisions. To arrive at the understandings and procedures of our teacher education program required us to take on different roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis one another — across institutions, across grades, and across districts. I suspect this meant the development of new skills and attitudes for all of us. We needed to learn how to be co-participants in the generation of meaning, to understand the reflective quality of our colleagues' talk and the social conditions that shaped its content (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1991).

Our collaborative work put the practicing teacher at the centre, as the referent. Through self-reflexivity, and through critical dialogue within our community, we sought a richer, more inclusive understanding of our complex enterprise. For public school- and university-based teachers, enquiring together into their knowledge and experience expressly to create a program for educating new teachers provided a structure that enhanced opportunities for growth both professional and personal. The work was viewed as good professional development, providing "the opportunity to reflect on what teaching is all about in a way not normally possible" and in a richer manner because the dialogue was across grades, subject areas, and institutions. The tensions such a dialogue creates have the power to encourage an intelligent and critical re-interpretation of what constitutes knowledge in education — and of the roles and responsibilities of educators who develop and critique that knowledge.

Tensions between participants became most obvious as demands of the practicum semester crowded in, and time together to continue the reflective listening characterizing our more collaboratively successful beginnings became even more scarce. How can the attitude of reciprocity toward learning that constitutes the power of a collaborative effort be sustained? I am suggesting that student teachers, in the process of becoming, join the school-based and university-based teachers in the struggle of an ongoing discourse concerning work in education (Britzman, 1991). It is thus more likely that the discourse will be sustained over time and that the traditional hierarchical relationship to knowledge will continue to be thrown into question.

Paradoxically, the data suggest one reason for the splits that appeared was participants' reluctance to give up their role in the hierarchy. At times, the need to "subvert" the collaborative effort was strong. Each of us had "territory" to defend and, of course, one cannot debate everything. But it is an attitude I am speaking of, a belief in the intelligent self-direction of all human beings, an attitude empowering the "other," which needs to guide our actions. That this was not always evident is unsurprising. The difficulties of collaborative efforts cannot be underestimated: collaboration is an ongoing process, undertaken to enrich the dialogue. The required time and skills are not always possible for any of us.

In some ways we have come full circle, honouring again, as in pre-literate societies, the oral tradition, the rights of the speaker, and the particulars of an event. Yet this is not a static or tradition-bound view. It is a view which

recognizes that the unique experience and perspective of each participant merits attention. And it is a view which cautions that potential gains in education will go unrealized unless we are prepared to entertain, as learners, within community, multiple perspectives and possibilities.

NOTE

[1] Hereafter, school associate is abbreviated as SA, faculty associate as FA, and coordinator as Coord. Numbers are used to distinguish individual speakers *within* a dialogue (e.g., SA1, SA2); they do not refer to the same speakers throughout the paper.

REFERENCES

Britzman, D. P. (1986). Cultural myths in the making of a teacher: Biography and social structure in teacher education. *Harvard Educational Review, 56,* 442–456.

Britzman, D. P. (1991). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Carr, D. (1986). *Time, narrative, and history.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Cinnamond, J. H., & Zimpher, N. L. (1990). Reflectivity as a function of community. In R. T. Clift, W. R. Houston, & M. C. Pugach (Eds.), *Encouraging reflective practice in education* (pp. 57–72). New York: Teachers College Press.

Code, L. (1989). Experience, knowledge, and responsibility. In A. Garry & M. Pearsall (Ed.), *Women, knowledge and reality: Explorations in feminist philosophy* (pp. 157–172). Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990, June–July). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19*(5), 2–14.

Elbaz, F. (1983). *Teacher thinking: A study of practical knowledge.* London: Croom Helm.

Greene, M. (1988). *The dialectic of freedom.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Habermas, J. (1972). *Knowledge and human interests.* London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Lanier, J. E., & Little, J. W. (1986). Research on teacher education. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed.; pp. 527–569). New York: Macmillan.

Lather, P. (1991). *Being smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern.* New York: Routledge.

Lieberman, A. (1986). Collaborative work. *Educational Leadership, 43*(5), 4–8.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

McPhie, J. L. (1992). *Between the "no longer" and the "not yet": A description and analysis of collaboration in teacher education.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC.

Schön, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Tabachnick, R. B., & Zeichner, K. M. (Eds.). (1991). *Issues and practices in inquiry-oriented teacher education.* London: Falmer Press.

Judith McPhie, a consultant working with educators to develop collaborative cultures, can be contacted at 550-329 North Road, Coquitlam, British Columbia, V3K 3V8.