

# **Appendix A.1 - A Sample Study from BYU-Public School Partnership**

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## **Preparing Teachers as Inquirers through a University-Public School Partnership: Responding to the face of the other**

### **Introduction**

#### **Objectives**

For the last three years, together with others in the Brigham Young University-Public School Partnership, I have been exploring an approach for helping young people become teachers that invites them to become involved in a particular learning process and to think of themselves as inquirers *and* as teachers. Connecting literatures on teacher preparation, novice teachers, and teachers as researchers, I wondered if student teachers and novice teachers might benefit by learning to do

## **Qualitative Inquiry in Daily Life**

qualitative research and evaluation while learning to teach. It seemed to make sense that if they learned to learn this way early in their careers and had some success doing inquiry while learning to teach, student teachers and novice teachers might be more inclined to continue to be learners throughout their teaching careers. This approach might even alleviate some of the problems of burnout that plague many teachers and might help them inspire their own students to be life long learners as well. It also seemed possible that cooperating teachers and supervising university teachers might learn to serve *their* students better by participating with them as inquirers too.

This study was designed to examine the experiences of several Partnership participants involved in an inquiry based teacher preparation program to explore how well the notion works and what benefits might accrue in practice. This paper briefly summarizes one key lesson I learned during an exploration of these ideas and relates this experience to the work of the post-modernist philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas. Briefly stated, the lesson is: when teachers, student teachers, and teacher educators see themselves as learners, evaluators, and/or researchers and spend some of their energy trying to understand their students and their perspectives, they become less attached to pedagogical techniques and move quickly to a responsive and reflective way of teaching that is more commonly associated with master teachers. Because they know their students better, they tailor learning experiences for them that are more appropriate than generic curriculum could be.

## **Perspective**

The literature on teacher preparation concludes that one of the

## Qualitative Inquiry in Daily Life

most important parts of that educational process is the student teaching or field experience. However, the pedagogical practices of student teaching continue to be criticized as being less helpful than they could be (Lanier & Little, 1986). Guyton and McIntyre (1990, pg. 518) confirm this literature in an extensive review and call for research on critical questions about the field experience such as the following: "What strategies can be implemented to encourage student teachers to be students of teaching and reflective about their behavior and surroundings?" They urge the use of naturalistic inquiry to study the student teaching experience from the perspectives of the participants.

The literature on *novice teachers* likewise concludes that the first few years of teaching constitute one of the most crucial stages in the development of teachers (Bion, 1991). During this time, teachers are more vulnerable (Hoffman, et. al., 1986), unsure of their competence (Johnston & Ryan, 1980), and introspective (Pajak & Blase, 1982) than they are likely to be in later years of their professional lives. The questions raised by Guyton and McIntyre seem appropriate for this stage in teacher development as well.

Authors of a third body of literature have encouraged *experienced teachers* to be more thoughtful and reflective about their work by conducting qualitative research as a natural extension of the inquiries they make already in their classrooms and with their students (e.g., Fosnot, 1989; Goswami & Stillman, 1987; and Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). Goswami and Stillman (preface) note that several exciting results accrue when teachers "conduct research as a regular part of their roles as teachers." For example, they find that

## **Qualitative Inquiry in Daily Life**

teacher-researchers:

1. become theorists regarding their own practice, testing their assumptions against their practices;
2. perceive themselves differently, forming networks and becoming more active professionally;
3. provide invaluable insights into the learning process to the profession and to other researchers because of their insider perspectives; and
4. critically read and use current research from others, being less vulnerable to fads.

These literatures call for the use of research by the participants to enhance the learning experiences of student teachers, novice teachers, and teachers in general. Qualitative research was suggested by some as the most natural for practicing educators to learn and practice. It seemed to me that preservice, inservice, and teacher educator teachers could learn to build on their existing learning and monitoring skills to become insightful teacher-researchers/evaluators.

## **Methods**

### **Procedures**

This study grew out of a naturalistic investigation I have been conducting with cooperating teachers, administrators, high school students, and teaching candidates in a moderately large high school since January 1989. This school has been a “Partner School” in the Brigham Young University-Public School Partnership which was initiated by representatives of five school districts and the College of Education in 1985 with help

## **Qualitative Inquiry in Daily Life**

from John Goodlad and his associates. The Partnership was formed to encourage cooperative inquiry such as this, as well as joint development of curriculum, and collaborative preparation of educators. This study addresses all three of these Partnership goals. As a university supervisor, I have worked with the teachers and administrators at this Partner School to involve several groups of student teachers during their pre-service courses and field experience in this study and have continued working with them as they have taken teaching positions. They agreed to keep field notes to share with me and with each other during the study. As part of the study, I have taught the student teachers and their cooperating teachers naturalistic inquiry skills while their cooperating teachers taught them how to teach. All our work has been in the field.

The procedures we used were typical of qualitative studies with ongoing interpretive analysis. We observed and interviewed each other (the student teachers', their cooperating teachers, some administrators, and the associated high school students). We also analyzed documents produced by the teachers and students, such as curriculum files and student work.

Analyses of our field notes were conducted both individually and jointly by all participants, throughout the course of the study. Field notes containing observations, interview transcripts, document analyses, audit trail indices, analyses made during experiences as well as more systematic analyses made away from the school were maintained by all participants and shared with one another in weekly meetings throughout the project. Less frequent meetings and correspondence were maintained by me as the university representative with participants after they took regular teaching positions in this

## Qualitative Inquiry in Daily Life

and other schools.

Criteria outlined in Lincoln and Guba (1985) and by Williams (1986) were followed to enhance the credibility and utility of the inquiry. Response to these criteria included such precautions as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, thick description, and maintenance of an audit trail.

### Overview of the Participants' Roles and Experiences

Several aspects of these student teachers', novice teachers', cooperating teachers', and teacher educators' roles and experiences were unique as compared to the typical experiences of participants in teacher preparation programs and public schools:

1. The student teachers were involved for the whole school year, spending all day each school day in the school. Most student teachers begin after the school year is underway and leave before it is finished. This schedule gave these "apprentices" time to see the full range of experiences students have in school, just as good naturalistic inquirers hope to do in *their* studies. This full range of experience provided the student teachers a chance to develop richer relationships with the students (as naturalistic inquirers try to do with insiders who become their informants about the settings they study) and to modify their initial perceptions over time. Of course, as novice teachers, the participants were able to spend additional full years in schools conducting inquiries as they taught. Of course the

## **Qualitative Inquiry in Daily Life**

cooperating teachers and teacher educator had the full year to inquire in this same setting too.

2. Participants had opportunities to both team and solo teach while they learned about the students they were teaching and about the collective wisdom of people who write and think about education. They were part of a cohort of people learning to inquire and to teach. They spent time discussing the experience and the challenges they faced with one another, with their experienced cooperating teachers, and with me (the teacher educator). In the context of discussing the challenges of teaching, we spent time reading a variety of books and articles on learning and teaching, listening to guest speakers on novel ideas as well as historical views of education, raising issues for consideration during this year-long experience as well as in other situations, and thinking about how what we were reading fit with what we were experiencing. The readings, speakers, and associated theoretical and philosophical issues associated with learning and teaching were studied in the rich context of a complex learning and teaching experience in a school with real students. Participants earned the credits for education courses while having these teaching and inquiring experiences on site in the school in addition to taking their academic major, minor, and general education classes on site at the university.
3. Invitations were issued to graduates from this program to continue some form of dialogue as they took teaching positions within the school and elsewhere. Dialogue took place through correspondence and visits. Conversations were held with novice teachers about what they were doing, how they were applying what they learned during

## **Qualitative Inquiry in Daily Life**

the apprenticeship, and what they were learning about their students, about themselves as inquirers and as teachers, and about learning and teaching. Unfortunately, the novice teachers did not take the time for reading the sources that were discovered after they left the student teaching experience.

4. All parties involved (the student teachers, the novice teachers, the cooperating master teachers, and the university supervisor) kept field notes or journal entries on various aspects of these experiences. Often these were brief notes taken after school while participants reflected on the experiences of the day. At other times, student teachers could be seen jotting notes during conversations with students and during planning sessions with each other and the cooperating teachers. As novice teachers, there was even less time for note taking. Though some participants were able to keep notes at school or right after the school day, arrangements were made with others to tape record their thoughts and send them to me for transcription. Others photocopied relevant sections of their personal journals and letters to family and friends to share with me. In these notes, participants explored ideas from readings and discussions and analyzed how theories and philosophies fit with experiences in the classroom “laboratories.” We shared our notes both in writing and orally with one another on a regular basis, raising questions for further exploration, searching for patterns in our experience, relating these themes to the literature, and otherwise learning through writing and talking with interested inquiry colleagues. Several of the student teachers drafted articles for publication based on their experiences as well.

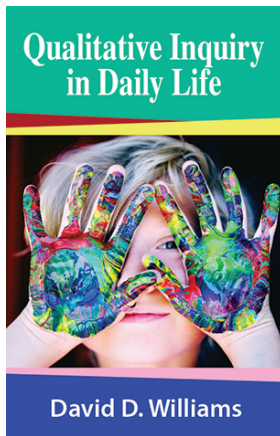


## **Qualitative Inquiry in Daily Life**

5. The cooperating teachers had unique roles to play too. They were willing to spend time on preparation of teachers for the full nine months of the year, even though this task sometimes interrupted their normal teaching duties. They obtained help from the student teachers but they could not simply turn the class over to them for the full year. They spent many hours before and after school reviewing their own decisions as teachers with these teacher candidates and responding to questions the students were asking based on the sometimes harrowing experiences they were having in their internship.
6. The teacher educator role was very different than the norm too. I did little or no lecturing to these student teachers but met with them weekly to respond to their questions, concerns, and thinking. I provided a variety of readings I thought they might learn from. I joined them in teaching the high school students from time to time. I spent a lot of time coordinating my teaching activities with the efforts of the cooperating teachers and we developed our curriculum for the student teachers cooperatively. I was doing research here and invited them to join me as full partners in inquiry about their experience and about the experiences of the students they were there to serve. I was explicitly combining my teaching and research (learning) agenda and inviting the cooperating teachers and student teachers to do the same in their own ways.

### Suggested Citation

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