

TEACHING CONCEIVED AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this thesis is to develop an alternative conception for understanding teaching practice. Teaching as a practice in schools is characterized by five essential features: it is purposive, polymorphous, rational, social, and moral. I argue that in order to account for what we understand to be its constitutive features, teaching has to be recognized as a species of social practice. A social practice is, first, a form of activity that has grown out of common needs in a community to accomplish certain purposes. It can thus be understood only in terms of its social context and purpose. Second, a social practice involves shared ways of behaving or acting. This is not to suggest a complete conformity; however, social practices involve patterns of behaviour and these are at least partly constituted by and constitutive of the practice. Third, the patterns of behaviour are guided by a complex array of norms.

In current accounts of teaching, there are three dominant underlying conceptions. Teaching is conceived as a technical enterprise, a craft, or a political activity. Those who see teaching principally as a technical concern argue that a scientific knowledge base must be built so that teachers may add to their

repertoire of effective strategies. Those who view teaching as a craft claim that teachers' judgement is the more critical aspect of teaching, and that we need to understand better the personal and practical knowledge that underlies what are apparently intuitive actions. Those who argue that teaching must be seen as a political activity contend that teachers must become critical of the social forces that create inequities so they can encourage critical awareness among their students. These accounts fail to recognize the essential features of teaching as we understand it, and offer narrow or incomplete, and thus, misleading conceptions.

It is critical that we have a clear and appropriate conception of teaching, not only because we will be able to proceed more competently in the practice, but because we will also be able to engage more appropriately in its significant related activities, namely, research and theorizing about teaching, evaluation of teaching, and teacher preservice and inservice education. Recognizing that teaching is a species of social practice provides insight into, and offers the potential to resolve, many of the central conflicts and dilemmas that beset these aspects of teaching.

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CHAPTER ONE

UNDERSTANDING TEACHING IN SCHOOLS

Introduction

Studies of teaching are by no means scarce. Teaching has been and is investigated and analysed from psychological, philosophical, sociological, and anthropological perspectives. Books and articles on teaching abound, contributing to the debates over what will lead to improved school practice. The literature divides into three main positions. One group, the "technical enterprise" group, argues that the answers to improving teaching reside in a scientific knowledge base which researchers will construct so that more effective strategies can be applied in practice. Another group, the "teaching as a craft" group, claims that teachers' judgement is the more critical aspect of teaching, and that we need to understand better the personal and practical knowledge underlying what are apparently intuitive actions. A third group, the "teaching as political activity" group, contends that teaching is essentially political and that teaching will not improve until teachers become more critical of the social forces that create inequities, and encourage critical awareness among their students.

I contend that these dominant accounts of teaching as a technical enterprise, a craft, and a political activity, offer limited potential to increase understanding of the practice or to improve it. They offer narrow or incomplete and, thus, misleading conceptions of teaching. In particular, I contend that the three predominant underlying conceptions, partly because they are at best too narrow in scope, actually distort our understanding of the constitutive features of teaching practice.

As I shall argue, teaching must be recognized as a species of social practice. I shall explain that the constitutive activities of a social practice have to be understood in terms of purpose, context, and a complex array of guiding norms. Viewing teaching as a social practice accounts more richly for the essential features of the practice as normally understood. Furthermore, as I shall explain, conceiving of teaching as a form of social practice illuminates important issues surrounding teaching, such as appropriate ways to research and theorize about teaching, evaluate teaching, prepare preservice teachers, and plan for ongoing professional development.

The "teaching" to which I will be referring throughout this argument is teaching in the context of schooling. Although a number of the points I make may apply to teaching in the context of parenting, religious training, or other contexts, these other contexts of teaching are not my concern. In other words, my primary interest is not in analysing the concept of teaching *per se*, but rather in conceptualizing teaching as it is engaged in school settings, which I shall call the *practice* of teaching. Coming to understand the constitutive features of a practice is different from articulating the conditions for the proper use of a concept. For example, while there is no necessary connection between "teaching" and ethical responsibility, I argue that the practice of teaching in schools is at heart a moral enterprise. Of course, there are a number of logical points about teaching that may apply regardless of context, but if we are to understand the nature of teaching in schools, we need to understand the constitutive features of the practice *in situ*.

In this introduction to my argument, I explicate five essential features of the practice of teaching. An understanding of each of them is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the practice. Teaching is purposive, polymorphous, rational, social, and moral. It is against this comprehensive view of teaching that the

currently dominant conceptions will later be compared and critiqued.

Essential Features of Teaching

Teaching as a practice is a complex, ethical, intellectually demanding activity. To properly understand teaching practice we must consider five essential features. One, the practice is purposive; in fact, the purposes of teaching largely define the practice. Furthermore, these purposes are tied to passionately contested values about what constitutes the good life. Two, any of a large number of behaviours and activities may qualify as teaching. The activities are limited to the extent that they must have potential to achieve the purposes of the practice, and they must be appropriate in the given context. Three, teaching is a rational enterprise and this is, in part, tied to its purposive nature. The rationality need not be seen as deliberative and it is not incompatible with notions of creativity, imagination, or emotion. Four, teaching is a social, as opposed to an individual enterprise. The norms of the school's communities have a role in shaping the practice. Five, since teachers have a role in developing the moral character of students, are charged with the care of children, and have considerable

authority in their roles, the practice of teaching has a moral dimension.

Teaching is Purposive

Teaching is necessarily a purposive activity. It makes no sense to say "I am just teaching." We must teach something to someone with a purpose in mind, generally speaking, to get someone to learn something: to understand something, or to be able to do something, or to appreciate something, and so on. This is not to say that teachers always have carefully articulated goals. I merely wish to distinguish teaching as an activity from something like tripping on a rock or forgetting an appointment which are unintentional or nonpurposive acts; or again, from taking an afternoon stroll or watching a television show for which a particular purpose is not essential (although, a person may have a particular purpose for doing them).

To put the point another way, it would not even make sense to ask a person "why did you forget the appointment, or trip on the rock?" You do not expect a person to have a purpose for such acts. It is

reasonable, however, to ask someone why he is teaching.¹ In the case of teaching, an answer in the form of "for no particular purpose; I just feel like doing it" would not make sense, though it might in the case of going for a walk. By definition, teaching involves purpose, furthermore, purpose of a certain kind. Thus, the answer to the question would have to be some version of "so that students will learn some thing."²

The purposes which guide teaching in schools are ultimately tied to expectations for the education of the young and they necessarily involve values. Value judgements are at the heart of every question raised about what it means to be educated, what children should be learning, how they ought to be treated, and, indeed, why they should be educated at all.³ That education is essentially value-laden is not seriously contested. And, although some technologically oriented theorists may attempt, consciously or otherwise, to ignore underlying

1 When it has been important to make a point using a singular pronoun, I have alternated my use of "he" and "she." In most cases I have used the plural to avoid the problem.

2 A person could answer the question "for what purpose are you teaching?" by offering an extrinsic purpose such as, "to earn a living." I am referring here, however, to the intrinsic purpose, that which is inherent in the concept of teaching.

3 Of course, there are a number of steps between community expectations (e.g., to preserve the cultural heritage) and the immediate activity of teaching (e.g., demonstrating the solution to a quadratic equation). However, ultimately, the latter should be tied to the former.

value questions, this cannot reasonably be done. Seemingly "value-neutral" procedures, such as needs assessments for making educational decisions, do not actually avoid values at all.⁴ Conducting a survey of curriculum needs in a community allows one to determine what curriculum is to be offered in schools on the basis of a frequency count of identified "needs." The procedure may avoid a debate on the underlying values; but, it does not eliminate the extent to which values must shape educational decision making. Rather, the process merely substitutes a tally of clients' values for a more rational debate of the values at issue.⁵

While education is generally acknowledged as a value-laden enterprise, what values should guide educational decisions is a much contested question. Educational values are necessarily tied up with our views of the good life and how to achieve it. I may believe that the good life involves participating in the intellectual discourse of the community; another person may argue that it involves having secure employment; and a third may locate it in being a good citizen. Views of the good life not only differ, but they may lead to

4 Pratt (1980) provides an illustrative example of curriculum work which ostensibly neutralizes the role of values in educational decisions making by employing a needs assessment.

5 See, for example, Cochrane's (1986) account of educational needs as a centrally normative concept, a point generally disregarded in needs assessments.

different views of the ideal form of education. Decisions about what to include in the curriculum, for example, will likely vary with different conceptions of the good life. If the good life involves engaging in the intellectual discourse of the community, a curriculum focused around the academic disciplines might be deemed a requirement for education. If the good life involves securing employment, then a curriculum more directly related to career options may be a more reasonable choice. If the good life involves able citizenship, then curriculum focused on fulfilling the rights and obligations of individuals within the state might be necessary.

Of course, the previous remarks are based on certain understandings of "intellectual discourse," "employment," and "citizenship." These and other concepts, such as "the good life," "desirable ends," "worthwhile knowledge," which underlie educational decisions, are often conceptually complex and unclearly understood. Consequently, decisions made by appeal to them may be incomplete, or confused. We may agree that intellectual autonomy is a desirable end for education, for example. However, if we are vague in our understanding of "intellectual autonomy," we may proceed to teach or plan the curriculum in a wide variety of seemingly appropriate ways. Given ambiguous meanings, deciding what

constitutes the best way to proceed is bound to be a matter for debate. Nor could the relative merits of the different ways of proceeding be intelligibly addressed without first identifying and resolving the initial conceptual confusion. Lack of clarity and conceptual differences, as well as the more straightforward disagreement about values, contribute to many differences of opinion about educational means.

Although decisions in many enterprises involve value questions of this nature, they are typically not as central to the enterprise. In engineering, for example, ends and means are not as immediately nor consistently connected, as they are in education, to deciding what is the good life. While from time to time these value questions become central to a particular engineering problem, more often the practice is directed by questions about technical matters and these are not generally contested.⁶ Dominant questions in engineering are about effective materials, efficient processes, and sound structures. The question of what constitutes "effective," "efficient," or "sound" in engineering are generally easy to agree upon (for example, the material must withstand pressure and heat, the process must not cost more than a certain amount, the bridge must resist

⁶ Questions about the environment are central to some aspects of engineering, for example, and these are connected to questions about the good life.

earthquake shock, and so on). The concepts are relatively clear and claims to effectiveness can be empirically tested; hence, they do not spark passionate debate.

Teaching Involves a Variety of Activities

A second essential feature of teaching is that it is a polymorphous notion. In other words, attempting to accomplish the purposes of teaching can involve a range of very different activities. If the purpose is to have students learn French, a teacher can, for example, explain vocabulary to students, play a record for them to listen to, write instructions on paper and ask students to complete the written lesson, ask questions and correct students, write instructions on a blackboard, take students on a trip to a French speaking community, show a movie, or answer students' questions. Furthermore, each of these activities might involve quite different arrangements: working with a large group of students, with small groups, with individuals, with different materials, in different sequences, and so on.⁷

7 Green (1971) and Komisar (1969) draw distinctions between the logical or intellectual acts of teaching (explaining, demonstrating, etc.), the strategic acts of teaching (motivating, grouping, etc.), and the institutional acts of teaching (taking attendance, reporting, etc.).

Whether or not an activity or set of activities constitutes teaching depends largely on the teachers' purpose for engaging in them. The activities can only be understood as teaching activities in terms of that purpose. For example, a person writing numbers on a blackboard may merely be providing an audience with telephone numbers or lock combinations. She might be running a lottery or playing a game. Or, she may be teaching students something she wishes them to learn about telephone numbers, lock combinations, lotteries, games, or mathematical concepts.⁸ What makes the activity make sense as a "teaching activity" is that it is directed to learning.

Teachers engage in various activities, often changing from one to another, often employing more than one at a time, throughout the day. Which activities are chosen when, and whether to work with the large group or some other configuration of students and so forth, is largely the teacher's decision. In other words, selecting appropriate teaching activities involves considerable judgement. Two important factors are critical in selecting teaching activities in any particular case: as already suggested, the purpose to

8 Cochrane (1982) makes this same point when he makes distinctions between teaching and broadcasting the news, between teaching and entertaining, etc.

which the activity is directed; and the specific context in which the teaching takes place.

In respect to purpose, there are necessarily limits to the kinds of activity that qualify as attempts to achieve a particular purpose. If a teacher is trying to get students to appreciate how artists are able to evoke emotional responses to their painting, he might show different examples of paintings, explain his own responses to these works, and ask students for their impressions. It would not make much sense for him to have students work out mathematical formulae, or memorize lists of names, though these activities may promote other educational goals.

Another consideration in deciding upon teaching activities is the particular context for decision-making. As public institutions, schools are required to serve virtually all children of the immediate community (not just a select group). It is likely that there will be a wide range of student abilities, backgrounds, and interests in any one school. It is also likely, because of the local characteristics of the school's community, that the particular complement of students will vary from school to school. Educational decisions must consider the many variables that will exist among teachers, students, and the broader physical and social context.

In one school, students may come primarily from middle-class families where high levels of literacy and intellectual development are valued. The community may expect its young people to pursue higher education so as to enter professions such as law and medicine. In another school, students may come from a more varied set of circumstances. Some students may have "middle-class" backgrounds. Others may have recently come from refugee camps in other countries, may be unable to read and write in their own language, and unable to speak English. Still others, though they speak English, may come from families where there is minimal literacy. In each case, there is a unique environment comprised of the complement of students and teachers, school resources, community values, and so on. The teachers, with their varied experiences, knowledge, personalities, cultural heritages, histories, beliefs, and values, interact with many students, each with their own socio-psychological make-up. These numerous, complex variables interact in a multiplicity of combinations over which one has little control.

It is reasonable to suppose that the arrangements for teaching will differ considerably in classrooms in each school. In the first school, a teacher may work with the whole group of students to explain a new

concept. In the second school, given the diverse backgrounds of students, teaching a whole class may not be feasible and, indeed, teaching that particular concept may not be appropriate in any event. In the first school, students would likely be able to work independently on a range of tasks; in the second, a teacher would need to spend greater time working with individual students. In each case, decisions about where and when to begin an explanation, how to proceed, how much time to spend, what kinds of activity students would profit from, and so on, depend on very different circumstances.

Certainly some generalizations can be made across classrooms. For example, giving clear directions, asking questions to determine if students understand the directions, and providing students with adequate time for their tasks are general tactics that do apply in a variety of circumstances. However, such generalizations tend to be too general to be of much practical use. Consider, for example, the principle that "time on task" is an important factor for teachers to consider in organizing instruction.⁹ Obviously, students cannot learn important concepts and skills if they have

⁹ Time spent on learning tasks has been studied over the last fifteen years by numerous researchers and results indicate that "the amount of time spent on a task powerfully predicts students achievement" (O'Neil, 1988, p. 173).

inadequate time to study them. But, to be of use, the principle needs to be interpreted in particular contexts. The amount of time required will vary from task to task and situation to situation. Which tasks are worthwhile depends, at least to some extent, on the context in question. The problem, as I shall argue, is that, while general principles do not provide direction, specific prescriptions can never have universal application because particular circumstances are so important for determining teaching behaviour.

To some extent, the same points about activities being related to a particular context and purpose can be made about other professional practices. Certainly, an engineer must consider the particulars of the environment when deciding on a course of action, and accountants need to be cognizant of particulars when assessing financial matters for a client. However, in teaching, the distinct natures of the variables are more difficult to identify and virtually impossible to control, whereas in engineering and accounting the nature of the variables makes them generally more amenable to clear identification, study, and control. Structural engineers, for example, deal primarily with the physical properties of materials and the environment. Problems that arise when working with such variables are largely technical, have clearly defined ends. Solutions can be

found by scientific means, as one isolates variables to determine cause and effect, searching for certainty and control. These are very different from problems that arise from variables in human interactions where values are central, ends are passionately contested, variables are difficult to identify and practicably impossible to control.

Teaching is a Rational Enterprise

In saying that teaching is a rational enterprise, I am following on Scheffler's (1965) notion of rationality as being "coextensive with the relevance of reasons" (p. 107). In this sense, rationality in teaching refers to points made in the previous two sections. That is, teaching is rational, first, in relation to purpose; and second, in relation to context. I have so far said that activities qualify as teaching activities if they are aimed at getting someone to learn something. I have also said that many different activities qualify as teaching, but some which make sense in one context, may not be appropriate in another. It follows from these points that the enterprise must be a rational one.

The definition of teaching presupposes a rational relationship between purpose and activity. If the

purpose of teaching in a certain instance is to develop students' abilities to critically analyze an argument, the activities the teacher is undertaking must at least have the potential to achieve that purpose. Having students observe the legislature when in session, for example, may be one way to have the students listen for reasons provided in the course of debate, as a first step for analysing argument. But, having students study a biography, even if the person being studied was known to be proficient in debate, would not be likely, in itself, to lead students to an ability to analyse an argument.¹⁰ This is not to say that there would be complete agreement about what activities would count as reasonable in this case. Nor are there only one or two activities that would qualify. However, the possibility that an activity will lead to learning the knowledge or abilities aimed for ought to be the reason for choosing to proceed in one way instead of another.

As I indicated in the preceding section on context, purpose is not the only aspect of the practice by which we may judge an activity of teaching. Appropriateness, given the particular context, is another. Using a tactic of cooperative learning where students each read parts of

¹⁰ It may be, however, that a teacher would have students read a biography of someone proficient in debate in order to have students understand the importance of being able to provide and analyse good argument.

a text, and then teach each other about the section they have read, may be valuable for use with literate students in grade ten who are studying aspects of Canadian government following a lesson on democratic principles. It may not be appropriate to use the same strategy with students in grade eight who do not have good reading skills and are learning about the concept of democracy for the first time. In this case, the students' inability to read, the nature of the concept, and perhaps the time available, the age and conduct of the students, or the teachers' limited knowledge of cooperative learning strategies may all be relevant reasons for choosing an activity other than the cooperative learning tactic for these students.

In saying the practice is rational, I do not mean to say that teaching is not creative or imaginative. Thinking of novel or unique approaches to teaching is clearly creative in one sense of the word, yet this, too, can be rational in the sense I have outlined. I do not suggest that teaching does not centrally involve emotional responses. Caring for students' welfare, by definition, involves emotion; but it may also involve a rational appraisal. Nor do I mean that teachers necessarily and always proceed in a self-consciously rational way. Given the kinds of judgements teachers must make in the course of the day, it is clearly not

appropriate to characterize their actions as resulting from carefully deliberated means-end reasoning or disengaged decision-making.¹¹ But, while we may think of the immediate apprehension involved in these judgements as "intuition," the judgements may nonetheless be assessed as rational.

Since teaching is necessarily rational, then, it is always appropriate to judge teaching behaviour in the light of reasons for and against acting in a certain way, given the purposes and the particular circumstances. To put the point another way, teachers, ultimately, ought to be able to justify their actions by providing relevant reasons for them.

11 Often characterized as "technical rationality," this view has been largely disparaged in the latter part of this century, especially in terms of its appropriateness for educational decision making. Feminist educationists such as Roland Martin (1986) and Noddings (1986) assert that technical rationality, divorced from emotional response, is a detached, sterile, and inappropriate. Phenomenologists, van Manen (1992), Jardine (1989), and Aoki (1989) argue that this notion of technical rationality is disembodied, ignoring the full range of human capacity involved in teaching and learning. Post-modernists and critical theorists such as Apple (1990) and Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) argue that disengaged, objective rationality is impossible and that those who argue for rationality are involved in power tactics to maintain the dominant society.

Teaching is a Social Enterprise

Teaching is a social enterprise. It is not merely the unique purpose of the individual teacher that determines what activities make sense, how they should be effected, how the class should be organized, how children should be treated, and so on. Broadly held purposes or expectations shape the nature of the practice and the actions of individuals in the practice. Teaching as a practice in schools, in other words, cannot be understood merely by examining the individual actions of a teacher engaged in the practice.

The school is located in a geographic community, and teachers are charged with educating the children according to expectations held in that community. This geographic community is located in a larger community, or society, which holds certain values that influence what goes on in the school. That community is again divided into various ethnic or cultural communities which, having their own particular interests, exert influence over teaching and learning in the school. A school also comprises a community of sorts, where a group of people engage in the practices of teaching and learning according to certain conventions and beliefs. Teachers generally, as a group of professionals, also form a community of interest and influence. Similarly, those

who study education comprise a community with an interest in teaching and learning. In other words, the notion of community is not a unitary one. In fact there are a multiplicity of communities with interest in the actions of teachers in schooling. Both purpose and activity are shaped by the values, beliefs, and norms of those communities. Indeed, the practice, in part, originates in the expectations and beliefs of the communities. Thus, teaching is largely guided by and judged in relation to expectations and beliefs that reside in the various communities.¹²

In a fundamentalist religious community, one purpose of teaching may be to have students believe that the earth was created in seven days by an act of God. Teaching in this case may involve instructing students to hold this belief and discouraging contrary positions by calling them heretical. In other communities where there is no commitment to this religious viewpoint, but there is a commitment to scientific understanding, the goal of teaching is quite different and, hence, the practice is also likely to be different.¹³ The activities in either

12 There will, inevitably, be conflicts among the values held in various communities. Being able to select among competing values and to rationally justify actions in the light of these, is important for teaching. More will be said on this matter in Chapter 6.

13 The fact that the community, in part, establishes the expectations for teaching is a key reason why so-called independent schools are established as distinct from the public system. When certain communities hold views that

case would be judged as reasonable teaching activities in relation to the expectations held in the community.

Other norms and conventions also operate in communities, and these, too, influence what becomes acceptable teaching practice in the community. For example, the common practice of teachers standing at the front of the classroom and speaking to students seated in desks organized into rows is largely convention. This tactic may be one way to achieve a purpose, but it is not the only way. Other ways of proceeding may be equally, or even more, rational in terms of the purpose and context, but teachers do not proceed differently because the activities have not been part of the practice of teaching as it has come to be understood in the school. Again, understanding the "social" dimension in teaching is essential for understanding the practice: the actions of a teacher have to be understood in terms of conventions, norms, and expectations of the communities within which they are practising.

are quite different from the dominant community, they want to have schools that will teach these views.

Teaching has a Moral Dimension

Since teachers necessarily influence the moral development of students, and since most of us would require teachers as custodians of our children's welfare to behave in morally responsible ways, teaching must be understood in terms of this moral dimension. This is the final feature of teaching in schools which I argue is essential for understanding the practice.

Teachers play a role in developing their students' moral character.¹⁴ While moral development may not receive explicit attention in the formal curriculum of the school, teachers are constantly teaching moral rules: cheating on tests is bad, stealing someone's lunch money is wrong, taking or selling drugs is wrong, mistreating other students who may be different is bad, and so on. In fulfilling their responsibilities, teachers must be concerned to develop in children a disposition and ability to make distinctions between right and wrong, and to make sound moral decisions. As models of behaviour in the class, they must themselves have a commitment to moral conduct. Most other practices do not have a

14 It is true that some would argue that the moral development of children is not the responsibility of teachers. Nonetheless, in their personal behaviour, their treatment of children and colleagues, and other conduct, teachers present models of morality and students learn from the models.

comparable moral requirement. A parent is expected to provide such direction, as is a religious leader; but one could argue that in fulfilling these aspects of their roles, the parent and the religious leader are both teaching.

Teachers' responsibility for children is partly custodial. For a large portion of children's waking hours, they are under the direct care of a teacher. The law refers to the teacher's responsibility in this relationship as being *in loco parentis*; the child is considered vulnerable and somewhat dependent. Moreover, the child is compelled by the law to be in that relationship.¹⁵ The nature of this relationship places great responsibility for moral conduct on teachers. There is a reasonable expectation that teachers will keep children from physical harm, will not inflict emotional harm, and in the case of very young children, will care for their physical needs. If the values in the school's community are commitment, fairness, kindness, and honesty, then these are reasonably required of teachers in fulfilling their responsibilities. Most other practices or occupations are not comparable in this regard, although medicine and other care-giving

¹⁵ In some cases, of course, a parent may intervene on behalf of the child and have alternative arrangements made, but for the most part, a child does not have an entitlement simply to choose not to be under the care of the teacher.

professions may be to some degree. There may be trust involved in the relationship between a bus driver and a passenger in terms of physical safety, between a store clerk and customer in terms of honesty, and between an engineer and client in terms of integrity, but these are not comparable moral requirements. In each of these cases, there would be a sense of reliance on the service, but the bus drivers, store clerks and engineers are not charged with the responsibilities inherent in the *in loco parentis* relationship. Passengers, customers and clients are not generally as vulnerable or dependent as children. Furthermore, children are compelled to go to school (in some cases there is no choice of specific school or teacher), passengers, customers, or clients are not compelled to use the service; they are typically entitled to leave and choose another service. The lack of compulsion diminishes the moral requirement of the service provider.

Related to these two responsibilities are three different kinds of authority which are implicitly or explicitly granted to teachers. One form of authority is a consequence of the teacher's qualifications. Authority, in this sense of the word, refers to specialized knowledge and may be considered an intellectual or professional authority. The teacher, being presumed to have this specialized knowledge or

skill, exercises considerable authority in the activities of the class. As well, informal authority arises as a consequence of the teacher's being an adult and the student a child. The teacher's adult status and attendant privileges conventionally accord authority. Furthermore, in schools the formal authority granted a teacher is quite extensive, permitting teachers to mete out various kinds of discipline and to grant grades and other rewards. There is considerable pressure on the teacher, at least in North American communities, to use these kinds of authority justly.

To summarize, the moral dimension of teaching suggests that teachers, as models of conduct, must act morally. In the role of adults charged with the responsibility of caring for children, teachers must execute the responsibilities morally. Furthermore teachers' intellectual authority should not be abused, for example, by indoctrinating children. The adult advantage should not be abused, but rather used positively for the care and welfare of the children. And, the formal authority to award and punish must be used fairly by teachers.

Dominant Conceptions of Teaching

The underlying conceptions of teaching evident in current discussions about the practice tend to neglect some of the features I have just described. In one conception, teaching is treated as if it were a technical enterprise. Although those who view teaching in this way do not explicitly draw analogies with technical practices, their treatment of teaching, as I will argue, nonetheless indicates that the characteristics of teaching are seen as analogous to those of a technical enterprise. In this view, there is a focus on means and an absence of consideration of purpose or social context. In a second view of teaching, the practice is seen to be a craft. In this conception, teaching and the teacher are described as analogous to crafts and the artisan. The focus in this view is on individual judgement and there is a concomitant neglect of social norms. In the third view, teaching is conceived as a political activity and it is explicitly described in political terms concerning power and oppression. Questions about purpose and context are all viewed exclusively in these terms.

Each of these conceptions of teaching is incomplete, and thus, when taken to be a full explanation of the practice, is misleading. By focusing on only one or two of the essential features of teaching, each conception

misrepresents and distorts the practice. It is true that those who adopt the views may not intend the conception to be taken to be complete. That is to say, those who study the technical aspects of teaching, or the craft-like knowledge of teaching, or the political nature of teaching, may say they are focusing only on one part of the practice, and that they understand it to be more complex than their discussions indicate. However, evidence I will provide suggests that many educators come to regard these aspects as sufficient for understanding teaching. This is not surprising since researchers rarely place the particular aspect in the context of a larger, more complete view of the practice, nor do they otherwise expressly discourage this mistaken understanding.

The distortion inherent in these conceptions of teaching is at least partly the consequence of their reliance on analogy or metaphor. Both analogies and metaphors may be helpful to the extent that they reveal similarities between concepts in education and those in other familiar fields. However, this advantage carries with it a liability: a focus on similarities often obfuscates important differences.

The classic "education as growth" metaphor, where the role of teaching is related to that of gardening, is

illustrative. In the interests of fostering the growth and development of their students, many teachers embrace the idea that the natural potential of the child (as flower) should be allowed to emerge naturally (as a flower is seen to grow from seed). This metaphor embodies a conception of the teacher's role that is confined to providing a suitable environment in which growth can take place. Just as a gardener merely ensures such things as the provision of water and sunlight, but does not himself "grow" the flower; so, too, the teacher does not "grow" the child.¹⁶ This is a limited view of teaching. For example, the metaphor emphasizes the teacher's role in understanding and supporting the child's development. However, in itself, it fails to provide adequate direction for teachers because it fails to note a host of crucial distinctions between flowers and children. Unlike children, flowers do not have attitudes and actions or interests and motivations that must be considered. Taken seriously as a sufficient account of teaching, the metaphor is absurdly misleading. For example, are there no capacities which a teacher ought to develop in children? If a child shows no interest in reading or writing, does the teacher have no responsibility for introducing the child to these occupations? Should all potentialities be supported? If

16 Others have made similar points about the use of the growth metaphor in education. In particular, see Scheffler (1960).

a child is showing apparently natural tendencies to violence, should the teacher foster this natural pattern or thwart it? These are not questions one would need to ask about the growth of a flower; nor are there any comparable questions in gardening. Yet, the growth metaphor is taken by some to be sufficient for understanding the nature of teaching.¹⁷

Metaphors and analogies tend to take on a life of their own. People begin to think in terms of the metaphor or analogy and to forget the important differences between the actual idea (education) and the metaphor or analogy (growth). "Growth" is probably the best known of over-extended educational metaphors, but there are numerous other examples of familiar metaphors and analogies in education: learning likened to computer operations, schools likened to factories, education administration likened to business management, and, I submit, teaching likened to technology, craft, and political activity. Education is a unique practice and its concepts are unique. Teaching may involve some

17 The reliance on the child as flower metaphor is at least partly responsible for current confusions about teaching. For example, it is suggested in many contemporary discussions of education that the role of the teacher is to be a "facilitator." See Stewart (1993) for a discussion of this confusion. In various interpretations of the child-centred model of education, the role of the teacher is seen as one of developing potentialities rather than providing direction. In 1938, Dewey wrote *Education and Experience* in reaction to some of these more extreme interpretations.

features that are comparable to, or indeed, common to a technical enterprise, a craft, or political activity. But, much more importantly, it is in a host of vital ways unlike each of these other practices.

Summary and Plan

I began by asserting that predominant conceptions of teaching provide incomplete views of teaching as a practice and, consequently, distort its essence. I suggested that conceiving of teaching as a kind of social practice provides a more comprehensive view of teaching that adequately accounts for its essential features. I argue in subsequent chapters that conceiving of teaching as a social practice reminds us that purpose and rationality are central to the very concept of teaching. I argue that judgement in day-to-day activities of teaching, the social nature of teaching, and the moral requirements of teaching are also properly explained in a conception of social practice. I develop my argument in three parts. The first part, which I have presented in this chapter, is an explication of the features of teaching which must be considered if we are to understand the practice. It is from this understanding of teaching that I will judge the value of current conceptions.

In the next three chapters, I review the three currently dominant conceptions of teaching to which I have already referred, and argue that each of them is inadequate. The conceptions are: teaching conceived of as a technical enterprise, teaching conceived of as a craft, and teaching conceived of as a political activity. The literature on teaching contains, of course, other ways of understanding teaching. For example, teaching has been conceived by various authors as a form of strategizing, as facilitating learning, and as a form of entertainment.¹⁸ Others have outlined underlying conceptions of teaching as labour, craft, art, and profession.¹⁹ I have selected the three conceptions that are the most common in literature on teaching in schools, because I believe these have had the most influence in guiding practice, research, and teacher preparation in recent years.

In the fifth chapter, I explicate the concept of a social practice and explain how recognizing teaching as a kind of social practice accounts for and provides insight into the essential features of teaching. I highlight three characteristics of a social practice and illustrate

18 de Castell (1988), Stewart (1993), and O'Dea (1993) have written about teaching as strategizing, facilitating, and entertaining, respectively.

19 Darling-Hammond, Wise and Pease (1986) look at evaluation of teaching from the perspective of teaching conceived as labour, craft, art, and profession.

how these can be recognized in the features of teaching as we understand it. Finally, in chapter six, I argue that current conceptions misdirect activities related to teaching, such as research about the practice, teacher evaluation, and teacher education. I explain how conceiving of teaching as a social practice would redirect these associated activities in more promising directions.

CHAPTER TWO

TEACHING CONCEIVED AS A TECHNICAL ENTERPRISE

"It has long been the dream of school people that a 'scientific' basis for teaching could be found."¹ An entire branch of educational research, called process-product or effective teaching research, is dedicated to this dream of finding scientific models for teaching. This branch focuses on teaching strategies and their correlation with, and ideally, causal effect upon, student achievement. Various teaching techniques are isolated for systematic study, yielding what are taken to be generalizable principles to guide practice.² Those involved are convinced that the research findings will result in a scientific knowledge base that "will make everyday teaching more systematic and more predictably effective" (Porter & Brophy, 1988, p. 83).

1 Olson (1992), thus, opens a chapter entitled "In Search of the Expert Teacher" in *Understanding Teaching*.

2 It is apparent from the use of the phrase "systematic study" in the literature on effective teaching that the researchers intend more than its dictionary meaning. Rather than simply referring to a methodical process as opposed to a casual or unintentional one, the research refers to particular methodologies associated with the scientific, empirical study of phenomena (i.e., one infers from systematic study that there is an experimental design, objective observation, statistical validity of data, etc.). In this section, I use the phrase as it is used in the effective teaching literature.

By "scientific," researchers apparently mean that the studies will generate laws similar to those that explain and predict in the physical and natural sciences. However, as I will argue, the dream of finding a scientific basis for teaching far exceeds its realization.³ In spite of harsh criticism from educators in the last decade, however, the research continues to dominate many discussions about teaching. Critics note that much of the research is flawed in its essential logic, design, conceptualization, and conclusions. This point has been argued convincingly, however, and the arguments will not be repeated here.⁴ What is important to my argument, and what I will focus on in the remainder of this section, is not the nature of the research itself, but rather its underlying conception of teaching as technical practice.

3 A recent attempt to develop a scientific knowledge base for school learning by analyzing studies from the last decade (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993) indicates 1) the continuing efforts to generate scientific "laws" and 2) the meagre return on the efforts, even though studies have been conducted for most of the last century (Kliebard, 1993).

4 For examples of these arguments, see Egan (1983) and Barrow (1984) on the logic of attempting to find general principles for teaching. See Egan (1983), Tom (1986), and Kerdeman and Phillips (1993) on the logic of describing what is the case, rather than considering normative questions about what ought to be in teaching. See Barrow (1984) and Kerdeman and Phillips (1993) on research design and flaws in the conclusions drawn. See Barrow (1984), Egan (1983) and Tom (1986) on flawed conceptualization in the research.

It is certainly difficult to understand why many educators have accepted a conception of teaching as a technical matter. Consider three major characteristics of typical technical practices: a focus on means, search for generalizable laws, and values of efficiency and effectiveness.

First, technical practices are centrally preoccupied with means rather than ends. In a technical enterprise, those involved devote much of their time to questioning how to effectively and efficiently (or creatively or economically) achieve whatever end they pursue. Rarely do they question what would constitute a desirable end, as the ends are typically unambiguous, not of a nature to invite debate. This typical feature of technical practices is illustrated in manufacturing. In manufacturing lead pipe, for example, a solid structure, capable of withstanding a certain force, is the straightforward end for which means are carefully studied, designed, and redesigned.

A second feature of technical practices is that they involve means, or techniques, that can be systematically studied in order to yield generalizable principles or laws, and these involve relatively simple application. Again, in the case of manufacturing lead pipe, properties of the materials and the effects of temperature and

pressure are studied in order to produce generalizable theories or rules for application. There is considerable predictability: ends will be achieved if one applies the means as directed by the rules.

Finally, the means used, or the techniques developed, are valued for their effectiveness and efficiency. Other standards, say moral standards, are typically of secondary importance or of no concern at all. In the manufacturing of lead pipe, the techniques used are judged for their ability to effect the end product -- strong, and possibly, cost-effective pipe. There are obviously exceptions, for example, values concerning the welfare of workers or effects on the environment are often considered; but these are not necessarily taken into consideration in judging the efficacy (or even the value) of the process.⁵

It is evident that teaching is not adequately described in terms of these three criteria, and certainly not by these three criteria alone. Indeed, no one could plausibly argue that teaching and manufacturing are in any important respects similar or comparable activities. Nonetheless, the studies of process-product researchers,

5 Increasingly such issues are being considered in technical enterprises, and even in these areas it is becoming necessary to include more complex sets of norms and values in an adequate account of the practice.

apparently without appreciation of the implications, do treat teaching as analogous to manufacturing. The central question asked in such research--namely, what teaching strategies or techniques contribute most effectively to so-called student achievement, certainly appears to be based on an idea of teaching as technical. The design of the studies, where technique is isolated from context and purpose in order to find generalizable principles, is clearly a technical model. And, the idea of using research findings to prescribe application is also a technical one.

Consider briefly the approach to research and the major findings from studies conducted by two well-known researchers of effective teaching. Brophy and Evertson (reported in Brophy & Good, 1986) assessed stability of teachers' effects on achievement by analysing data from three consecutive years of Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) scores for grades two and three students in one school district. Teachers were selected to participate in a teacher effectiveness study based on stability (the consistent trends of scores their students achieved on the MAT). In the study, 31 teachers were observed in the first year and 28 in the second, for ten and 30 hours respectively. Using a method called event sampling, selected teaching behaviours (e.g., providing praise, individual instruction), were coded. Frequency counts

plus proportion scores (e.g., proportion of private contacts dealing with academic matters as opposed to other matters, proportion of student-initiated as opposed to teacher-initiated contacts) were recorded. Data were analysed for correlations with student gains in achievement, for each of the two grades and for two levels of socioeconomic standing. Literally thousands of statistically significant correlations were found, but some general trends were apparent. For example, it was reported that effective teachers are business-like and task oriented. They assume personal responsibility for their students' achievement, redoubling their efforts where students are having trouble with the work assigned. Effective teachers ensure that students are engaged in academic activities by minimizing time spent on transitions or issues concerning conduct. They monitor the class, provide well-organized lessons, and frequently praise students for their academic achievements.

In a subsequent study, Brophy and Evertson singled out 22 such generalizations for effective teaching, including rules for organizing, managing, and instructing groups of students and for providing feedback to individual students. A manual was developed and used as the basis for the "treatment" in this experimental design. Teachers were trained to use the principles and tested for their mastery of the principles. The teaching

model developed was intended for any small-group instruction that called for frequent recitation or performance by students. Ten treatment and ten control groups were observed weekly for six months. According to the researchers,

The teachers were advised to sit so that they could monitor the rest of the class while teaching the reading group; to begin transitions with a standard signal and lessons with an overview of objectives and a presentation of new words; to prepare students for new lesson segments and for seat work assignments; to call on each individual student for overt practice of any concept or skill considered crucial; to avoid choral responses; to apportion reading turns and response opportunities by the patterned turns method rather than by calling on volunteers; to discourage call-outs to wait for answers; and to try to improve unsatisfactory answers when questions lent themselves to rephrasing or giving of clues. Praise of good performance was to be used only in moderation ... Academic criticism (not mere negative feedback) was to be minimized. (Brophy & Good, 1986, p. 345)

Achievement data were collected on entry and at the completion of the experiment; then, results were analysed. Findings indicated that treatment groups consistently outperformed control groups.

Brophy and Evertson, and others involved in studies of this nature, caution that the principles of effective teaching should not be seen to be prescriptions, that teaching is complex, and that teachers must use

discretion in the application of such principles.⁶ However, although they say that teaching is complex, their own inquiries are conducted in a manner that suggests rather the opposite.

Indeed, assumptions that characteristically make sense in respect of simple technical practices are taken to be equally reasonable in respect of teaching. In the research outlined above, we see five such assumptions. One, the researchers treat technique as a very important, if not the most important aspect of teaching. In the study, 22 principles of effective teaching were taught to teachers who had to "master" their use in all exercises involving small groups, regardless of the ends sought. Two, the researchers value techniques essentially for their effectiveness in achieving the end product. Effectiveness is assumed to be, not only a necessary condition for valuing the technique, but a sufficient one. No other value is mentioned, even though such techniques as offering praise and criticism, techniques which surely have ethical implications, were prescribed. Three, the researchers do not treat as problematic what counts as an achievement or an educational end. In fact, the question about what ends are to be pursued is not posed and must be assumed not to require debate. Four,

⁶ See, for example, Brophy and Good (1986) and Porter and Brophy (1988).

the researchers assume that systematic study can yield generalizable techniques and that such techniques will be applicable over a broad range of classes and for a wide variety of teachers, students, and subjects. The researchers instructed 17 different teachers to use a specific model of teaching in nine different schools for "any small-group instruction." Five, the researchers assume that techniques can be applied subsequently in a relatively straightforward manner. Having taught the teachers the 22 principles of the model and tested the teachers for mastery of the principles, researchers then observed classes to see the teachers apply these in their instruction. The instructions given were prescriptive, and there is no indication in the discussion that individual judgement was permitted, let alone encouraged.

I will consider each of these assumptions, in turn, in respect of their applicability to teaching. The first assumption is that teaching is principally a matter of technique. It is true, of course, that teaching involves techniques, and I will come back to this point later. However, techniques do not constitute the principal consideration in teaching. As I argued in the first chapter, purpose is paramount and a technique is only meaningful or worthwhile insofar as it promotes a legitimate educational purpose. Techniques that maximize the amount of time students are engaged in tasks, for

example, or that suggest appropriate ways to provide students with feedback on their work could be effective for teaching students sets of trivial facts, falsehoods, immoral actions, or political dogma. But these surely are not ends to which we would have teachers aim.

Whenever the search for a set of methodological principles is central, reasonable consideration of educational, moral, or other social values are invariably given limited attention, or are ignored completely. It is true that discussions about ends may take place in other arenas such as curriculum debates, but when the discussion of teaching is reduced to questions of effective technique, there is every likelihood (and some would claim evidence indicates it is the case) that educational ends will be distorted or trivialized in the search for effective technique.⁷

The second assumption of the research into technical activity is that technique is primarily valued in terms of its effectiveness. If one were to take this assumption seriously in the context of education, then any technique that proved to be effective for getting

7 McNeil (1986) makes a related point in her work on bureaucratic control and its reductive effect on teaching. Where there is a focus on effective techniques and classroom management, teachers will trivialize the subjects they teach in order to be seen to be effective and in control.

students to achieve some end would be valued. This could arguably include use of electric shock or other physical threats, humiliation or other emotionally abusive treatment, and deprivation or bribes. As ridiculous as this sounds, if moral standards are not considered in teaching, then any such techniques would be legitimate. And, although the examples may sound extreme, physical punishment, humiliation, and deprivation were used until relatively recent times in Residential Schools for Native students in Canada, because such treatments were effective in eliminating certain behaviours thought to be inappropriate by white society.⁸ Furthermore, questions about what constitutes threat, humiliation, deprivation or bribe (as opposed to descriptions of negative and positive feedback, which are common "treatments" discussed in the research, for example) are not raised. Clearly, ineffective techniques are of no value; however, in searching for means that are of value in the context of education, effectiveness is only one condition a technique must meet.

The third assumption is that what counts as achievement is not going to be seriously contested. As I argued in the last chapter, questions about what counts

⁸ For a personal account of such techniques, employed by teachers to "help" students learn English and prevent them from conversing in their own language in a Residential School in British Columbia, see Sterling (1991).

as worthwhile educational achievement, or what is a defensible educational purpose are central to the educational enterprise. Moreover, in contrast to the case of a technical enterprise, questions about what counts as a worthwhile educational end are not easy to settle. On the contrary, educational purpose is passionately contested; to disregard this aspect of teaching practice is fundamentally to misunderstand it.

The fourth assumption, that systematic study can yield generalizable techniques for teaching is, at first glance, more reasonable. The idea that a variety of pedagogical strategies for classroom organization or teacher-student interaction can be identified and taken to be generally effective makes some sense. There are, however, two related problems with this assumption in the case of teaching. The first is that researchers apparently wish, by using scientific methods of inquiry, to raise to the status of laws or rules, what might best be considered very general principles or rules of thumb. The second problem is that even as general and commonsense considerations, they simply do not generalize across all contexts.

So far as the first problem goes, it may be conceded that, other things being equal, students will perform more intelligently if they have had the benefit of well

organized and clear instruction, for example, and if they have spent time engaged in relevant tasks. But, these are not laws comparable to those produced in the physical and natural sciences, valued for their utility for controlling, predicting, and explaining phenomena. At sea level, water will always freeze at 0 degrees centigrade. However, students will not always learn, even if the principles of effective teaching are applied. Some children will achieve without what one might consider clear instruction, and others will not achieve regardless of the clarity of instruction or time engaged in relevant tasks. In other words, while these principles may be generally true, they are, nonetheless, only principles, not laws or rules. Furthermore, questions such as what would comprise clear instruction in any particular subject or for any particular student, and in what a relevant task consists or how much time a particular student needs to spend on any task, are unanswered.

As for the second problem, the principles are not generalizable across all contexts. Take the example of "wait-time", the technique of waiting at least three seconds after posing a question before prompting a student. Researchers claim to have established that this technique is effective for improving elementary school

students' achievement in science.⁹ They further propose wait-time as a routine which should be applicable across contexts regardless of subject being taught, grade level of students, or other particulars. Apart from the question of general applicability, it is quite possible that the routine of waiting a certain length of time has nothing to do with improving quality of student response to a question. The different quality may have more to do with the relationship between teacher and student that "wait-time" suggests (for example, a notion of respect for others) than with its mechanical manifestation. That aside, however, it may not be desirable or even rational to follow the routine at all times. For example, where a student would be made to feel humiliated by the situation, where the purpose of the exercise is to elicit immediate reactions, when students are misbehaving, when the class is about to end, when working with older or younger students, or for teaching subjects other than science, it may be most inappropriate to wait.

This leads me to comment on the final assumption, and that is that principles of teaching can be straightforwardly applied. Teaching requires sound judgement, not routine application of rules. Although teachers may want to consider in the course of their practice general principles that might influence

9 See O'Neil's (1988) review of effective strategies.

students' achievement of worthwhile goals, it is never a matter of simply applying a particular technique in all cases. In spite of the fact that researchers claim they are not advocating prescriptive use of principles outlined, this is precisely what one would infer from a research design that develops a manual to train teachers in the mastery of 22 general principles. And, clearly, this has been inferred by many. One brief look at courses in teacher education programs,¹⁰ typical inservice workshops in many school districts,¹¹ and publications such as *What Works*, produced by the United States Education Department¹² give a clear indication of the use to which such findings are put.

10 An example is the Principles of Teaching course taught at the University of British Columbia. The course outline (Ungerleider & Grauer, 1990) says "we have chosen to emphasize an approach to teaching organized around the research evidence about teaching behaviours associated with student achievement" (p. 6). This comment is followed by lists of principles under four categories (Lesson Organization and Presentation, Practice and Seatwork, Feedback and Corrective, and Classroom Management). Under each of these are principles such as "teacher focuses on academic instruction, actively lecturing, demonstrating or leading recitation and discussion." It would not be surprising if students inferred that these principles could be applied relatively straightforwardly.

11 Many inservice programs have relied on Hunter's (1982) program called *Mastery Teaching*. In the book outlining the program, Hunter says "We now know many cause-effect relationships in teaching and learning. As a result, we can use those causal relationships to promote learning" (p. 3).

12 *What Works* (United States Department of Education, 1987) lists 54 techniques purported to be effective for student achievement, apparently across contexts. The techniques (wait-time, direct instruction, homework, etc.) are gleaned from the literature of those involved in process-product research.

Those who work in the area of process-product research do not argue that teachers should or can routinely apply the techniques. In fact, Good and Brophy (1991) say that teachers' judgement, not routine application, is critical in teaching. They say further:

much of teaching is an art. Successful teachers must be able to observe, comprehend, and respond to the rapid pace of complex classroom behaviour. Ultimately, such teachers must develop and continue to refine their own teaching styles. (Good & Brophy, 1991, p. xvi)

However, the same researchers continue to provide teachers with comprehensive lists of principles of teaching and offer no explanation of what might be involved in judgement. Are we to infer that it is a matter of selecting from among a list of effective strategies, or should we see it as something more complex and not dependent on the lists of techniques they generate? In the absence of further explanations, the work has the effect, even if unintended, of implying that principles generated are both generalizable and relatively straightforward to apply.

When the studies undertaken by researchers contradict claims about the need for a teacher's individual determination, and when models of teaching used in the studies are taught to teachers to be applied

in a variety of situations and for a variety of students, it is difficult to understand just what the researchers mean in saying that teaching is an art or that teaching requires judgement. Mastery of teaching is not at heart about learning how long to wait for answers, or how much homework should be assigned; it is about rational actions in the light of purpose and context. The judgement required has more to do with understanding the purposes of education, theories of learning, ethics, and so on.

In short, the manner in which process-product research is conducted, regardless of assertions to the contrary, in the final analysis is reduced to a conception of teaching as technical practice. As argued in the previous chapter, not only is teaching a complex activity requiring considerable judgement, a notion which cannot be encompassed in a purely technical conception; teaching is also a practice that has social and moral dimensions, and one which involves thoughtful deliberation of purpose. Assumptions appropriate for thinking about technical practices are inadequate for understanding teaching.

Not all those initially involved in the process-product approach to research on teaching continue to be enamoured of its value. Concerns about findings that do not generalize across contexts have led some to look

elsewhere to explain the factors involved in effective teaching. Furthermore, criticism about the decontextualized view of teaching, a view that suggests teachers' actions can be explained without reference to individual situations and decisions, led some researchers to shift their attention to teachers' thought processes.¹³ In these studies, researchers work from the hypothesis that, although teacher behaviour may explain student achievement, teachers' thinking explains teachers' behaviour in particular situations. So, the hypothesis goes, by studying the thought processes of effective teachers, researchers might identify some generalizable thought processes that determine effective behaviour (Clark & Peterson, 1986).

Since my interest in discussing this research is to examine its underlying conception of teaching, I do not intend to critique the research methodology or even the assumption that there are such things as generalizable

13 Clark and Yinger (1977) asserted that early studies which concentrated on teacher behaviour, such as those of Rosenshine in 1971 and Dunkin and Biddle in 1974, did not adequately account for the different contexts in which teachers work. They proposed that simply looking at behaviour did not provide information about how teachers reacted to particular circumstances and said "if research is to be put into practice -- if the general case is to be applied in particular situations -- then we must know more about how teachers exercise judgement, make decisions, define appropriateness, and express their thoughts in their actions" (p. 279).

thinking processes.¹⁴ I will, however, comment briefly on the naïveté of the researchers' premises and conclusions as revealed in the following passages that open and close a review of ten years of work in the area.

The thinking, planning, and decision making of teachers constitute a large part of the psychological context of teaching...Teacher behaviour is substantially influenced and even determined by teachers' thought processes. These are fundamental assumptions behind the literature that has come to be called research on teacher thinking. (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p. 255)

and

our review suggests a number of broad conclusions about research on teachers' thought processes. First, the research shows that thinking plays an important part in teaching, and that the image of a teacher as a reflective professional...is not far fetched. Teachers do plan in a rich variety of ways, and these plans have real consequences in the classroom. (Clark & Peterson, 1986, pp. 292-293)

Looking at the opening comments, it seems strange to think that one has to make it clear that teaching is influenced "and even determined" by thought processes.¹⁵ Presumably the authors mean that teachers' behaviour must

14 Both the flaws in the research and in the notion of generic thinking processes or skills have been discussed elsewhere. See, for example, Court (1990) on the teacher thinking literature, and McPeck (1981) and Barrow (1990) on the notion of generic thinking skills.

15 The authors of this chapter of the *Handbook of Research on Teaching* are both well known researchers in this area and their own studies are liberally quoted throughout. These passages, therefore, cannot be explained as being merely a naïve understanding of another researcher's work.

be understood in the light of their being thinking humans, a sensible but obvious claim. Similarly, the conclusions outlined are so obvious they are hardly worth stating, offering as they do little more than a reiteration of the initial assumptions. Why would apparently sophisticated researchers spend time drawing such conclusions and making such assertions? One might assume that process-product research has a "mindless" view of teaching, thus inviting this alternative set of claims and empirical studies for its proof.¹⁶

But, apart from the apparent naïveté of the assumptions and conclusions of the research on teachers' thinking, the more important point for my thesis is that the underlying conception of teaching continues to be one of a technical practice. Although researchers of this type maintain that their view of teachers is distinct from the view that underlies process-product research, in truth, many have not moved beyond seeing the teacher as technician. And, although in these studies there is a somewhat more complex variation of technician implied, teaching is nonetheless seen as technical practice.

16 Of course, the research on teachers' thinking is intended to show, not just that teachers do think, but to indicate exactly how they think. Advocates of this approach to studying teaching would explain the broad (naïve) conclusions quoted here by saying that although they have as yet been unable to do so, in time they will be able to detail how teachers think and what this means for classroom behaviour. I will briefly address this point later in the chapter.

Evidence for this claim can be found in two major emphases in discussions of the research. The first is that, although there is a greater acknowledgement in the studies of the importance of teachers' thinking and the fact that techniques are not simply and routinely applied, there is a continuing focus on the means of teaching, and a disregard for the question of desirable ends or worthwhile goals. One of the implied premises in the research is that techniques are the central concern of teaching; it differs from the research previously considered only in suggesting that techniques will be more consistently and appropriately applied, only if proper attention is paid to their antecedents, so-called teachers' thinking processes. It follows from this premise, that if generalizable thinking processes can be established through systematic research, then these can be taught for application in the classroom (Clark & Peterson, 1986). This is still a technical view of teaching.

Related to the technical view of teaching is a technical treatment of thinking. Thinking in these studies is not conceived in terms of teachers' thoughtful deliberation of worthwhile goals or desirable educational ends, or of teachers' understanding of central educational concepts, or of teachers' knowledge of

standards and norms of their practice. Rather, thinking is treated as mechanical, couched in technical terms of models and processes, and described and analysed in terms of flowcharts. An examination of one illustrative study conducted by Clark and Peterson in 1978 (cited in Clark and Peterson, 1986) on teachers' decision making will help make the point.

Clark and Peterson developed a model of interactive decision making for their study. The model assumed that teachers most likely will be involved in on-the-spot decisions in teaching when student behaviour (cues) creates a need to change course. For example, if students appear not to understand the material under discussion, or if they misbehave, teachers will likely decide to change their tactics. The model, depicted in a flow chart, allows four different "decision paths" to be followed. In the first instance (path one), the teacher would decide that the cue could be tolerated and thus would make no changes. In the next three paths, the cue would be determined by the teacher to be beyond tolerance. Three possible reactions distinguish the paths. In path two, the teacher knows no other strategy and so makes no change. In path three, the teacher decides not to change tactics although he knows of some alternatives. In the last path, the teacher selects from alternative tactics one that might be effective for

bringing student behavior back to a level he could tolerate.

The researchers videotaped 12 teachers engaged in two and one-half hour social studies lessons taught to a group of eight students from grades seven and eight. Following the taping, teachers were asked to watch segments of their recorded performance and to comment on the decisions they had been making at that time. The researchers then coded the responses and categorized them by the decision paths in the model. These findings were analyzed to determine correlations with such things as students' achievement and teachers' planning. Clark and Peterson found that most of the teachers reported thought processes that could be categorized in path one. Teachers reported considering alternative strategies in only 20% to 30% of the cases. Moreover, Clark and Peterson found that for teachers whose decisions followed path three (student behaviour beyond tolerance, but no change made) there was a significant negative relationship to student scores on achievement tests. On the other hand, decisions in path three were significantly and positively related to the amount of planning teachers did and to their commitment to instructional objectives. There were no significant correlations to student achievement for decisions categorized in the other three paths.

The major conclusion drawn from the research was that teachers who do not change behaviour where (according to researchers) it would be warranted are less effective teachers. In a later discussion of their study, Clark and Peterson (1986) explain that the purpose of this correlational research is to identify teacher behaviours that can be manipulated or trained, to determine if training teachers to engage in 'effective' thinking behaviors leads to an increase in student achievement (p. 280). They suggest that while studies need to be conducted to see if training in certain decision-making skills has a positive effect on student achievement, it may be premature to do so since a particular model of interactive decision making has not yet been shown to be effective.

Consider the account of thinking implied in this study. It fails to acknowledge the extent to which "good" thinking is centrally connected to standards that require an understanding of the norms operating within the practice.¹⁷ Rather, thinking is merely viewed as a process, mechanical and systematic in nature. It is implied that thinking is relatively simple, capable of being mapped out in a two-dimensional diagram. It is

17 See Selman (1989) and Bailin, Case, Coombs & Daniels (1993).

further assumed, first, that it is possible to develop a general model of decision-making that reliably results in student achievement; and second, that this model can then be taught to teachers who subsequently can apply the model in the course of their teaching. It is difficult to avoid seeing these as technically-oriented views of thinking and teaching.

It appears that there is little to distinguish the view of teaching in this study from that of Brophy and Evertson, earlier summarized. In neither is there a substantial discussion about worthwhile educational goals; apparently, these are of less concern than the means. In each case, effectiveness is described in terms of results on an achievement test. Findings from both studies are ultimately intended to have the status of general law-like principles which can be straightforwardly applied in practice.

Reflecting on the features of a technical practice outlined earlier in this chapter, it seems obvious from this illustrative study that they are assumed here as well. The only difference is that the study focuses on variables that influence or determine the technique rather than on the technique itself. A comment made in conclusion to the review of research on teachers' thinking processes by Clark and Peterson reinforces this

observation: "Teacher thinking, as represented in this literature, can be thought of as a set of moderating contextual factors that could influence substantially the outcomes of teacher effectiveness" (p. 292). To return to the comparison with the manufacture of lead pipe, teachers' thinking in these studies, considered as a "moderating contextual factor," has an analogous role to the variables of temperature and pressure in studies of manufacturing techniques.

Although I have criticized the teacher effectiveness and teacher thinking research approaches for their inappropriate underlying conception of teaching as technical, I must make it clear that so far as the question of what teachers might profitably do in their classrooms to achieve their goals goes, the research may have limited value. As I said earlier, it does make sense to suggest that teachers can learn some principles about teaching and eventually develop a repertoire of strategies and techniques which will guide their practice.

The problem is that the underlying conception of teaching in this research distorts its essential nature. Viewing teaching as a technical enterprise mistakenly over-emphasizes means. The view implies that effective teaching strategies comprise the practice of teaching and

in so doing ignores questions about the worthwhile educational purpose of teaching, and the judgement entailed in developing and meeting these ends. It neglects to consider the moral dimension of teaching and what that means in terms of appropriate activities for the practice. Furthermore, it fails to appreciate the socially constructed nature of norms in teaching. Instead, underlying the conception is the assumption that most, if not all, questions about the practice of teaching can be answered, like questions about physical phenomena, through empirical investigations.

CHAPTER THREE

TEACHING CONCEIVED AS A CRAFT

A rival, though equally popular, view of teaching challenges the assumptions of those who see teaching as a technical practice by conceiving it in terms of a craft. Discussions involving this conception focus primarily on the nature of knowledge in the practice of teaching, comparing this to knowledge as it is acquired and used in craft.¹ Researchers claim that teachers, like artisans, acquire knowledge about their practice, not by learning general conclusions from systematic studies, but by thoughtfully engaging in the practice in the particular context. Further, the conception suggests that teachers and artisans use knowledge in their practices, not deliberately by selecting and applying generalized theories, but intuitively by making judgements in the context of their teaching activities. Those who see teaching as a craft refer variously to the tacit, intuitive, or inarticulable way teachers seem to know how to proceed in the day-to-day activities of teaching. Many explain the judgement teachers use in their practice as a seemingly mysterious intuitive response with its basis in teachers' personal knowledge (one's own sense-

1 Clandinin (1986), Schön (1983), and Tom (1984) all present accounts which are illustrative of this view of teaching.

making from experience) and practical knowledge (a tacit, procedural "know-how").

Schön (1983, 1987, 1991), one theorist who sees teaching as craft, concentrates on the ways practitioners acquire and demonstrate knowledge in the course of their practice. Influenced by Dewey's ideas about reflection, he conceptualizes teachers' acquisition and use of knowledge in their practice as "reflection-in-action." This, he suggests is a process teachers engage in as they "converse" with the situation, framing and reframing the problems as the situation "talks back" to them (Schön, 1983, p. 131). He argues that teachers' knowledge should be thought of as "knowledge-in-action," a tacit kind of knowledge that arises out of taking action to resolve problematic situations in context.² Schön believes that it is inaccurate to see propositional knowledge as driving practice. Referring to Gilbert Ryle's well-known explication of "know-how," Schön claims that doing something is not two things: it is not thinking about it and doing it. In other words, intelligent performance consists in thoughtful execution and not in deliberation of antecedent propositions.

² Teaching is not the sole focus of Schön's work, but merely one of several professions to which he refers.

Schön is critical of what he calls the "technical rationality" associated with professions modelled in the fashion of applied sciences. He employs the analogy of design (a species of craft) and argues that it is more appropriate to explain professional practice in such terms. In design work, the artisan has direct control over the product from beginning to end. Linking an understanding of technique and knowledge of the inherent properties of materials, both gleaned from the practice, an artisan proceeds by solving problems as they arise, by "reflecting-in-action." In Schön's (1983) words, a practitioner involved in such reflection

is not dependent on categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case. His inquiry is not limited to a deliberation about the means which depends on a prior agreement about ends. He does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he frames a problematic situation. (p. 68)

There are problems with Schön's description of knowledge-in-action as it might be applied to teaching. His point about ends being "defined" by the "individual" could be taken to mean that an individual teacher is in a position to establish unique educational ends and to change them at will. This is surely not the case. As I will argue in Chapter Five, teaching is a social practice and its norms and expectations, including goals, are established in communities and the social interaction of those engaged in the practice. To a large extent, these

norms define the practice, and thus, set boundaries that may be seen as prescriptive or, at least, proscriptive for an individual. I am saying now that this is a feature of social practices. I am not making a claim that teaching ought to be so bounded, though, in some cases, one might argue it ought to be as well. Recall as an example of the power of norms, the renowned case of Jim Keegstra, a social studies teacher in Alberta who established particular educational ends for his students not shared in the school's community. His teaching that the Holocaust was invented by Zionists in a Jewish conspiracy to establish world government, an extreme variation from societal norms, resulted in his dismissal from teaching. Further evidence that norms of the practice prevent teachers from defining their own ends, though not nearly so sensational, can be found in numerous local cases of censorship of materials selected by teachers, challenges to teaching approaches adopted by teachers, and disputes about what counts as appropriate behaviour for teachers.³

A second problem with Schön's conception is that his explanation of knowledge-in-action as intuitive know-how overlooks what I consider to be an important aspect of

3 For one recent example, English teachers in Vancouver have been told not to use a novel called *Copper Sunrise* (Buchan, 1988) in their classes because it was challenged for its treatment of First Nations people.

what makes performance intelligent--namely, a knowledge of standards.⁴ Although one can see that standards are embedded in the case studies he relates, Schön makes no attempt to draw our attention to this important point. I shall expand on the significance of this omission later in this chapter. I refer to Schön's work here as representative of the kind of writing about teaching as craft that has made the conception so popular.

Schön's view, it must be admitted, does define teaching in ways that appeal to our commonsense. It is true that, caught up in the moment, teachers respond more or less instinctively to the myriad of variables at work in their specific situations. Undoubtedly, despite the fact that teachers do not consciously refer to and apply a set of learned techniques, their actions are effective. Clearly, teaching does involve teachers in making judgements, and at the same time, does not always allow time-out for careful deliberation. The notion that teachers' knowledge is more evident in actions than in careful deliberation of antecedent propositions seems to make some sense.

4 Selman (1990) critiques Schön's account of gate building in which Schon explains his ability to make the gate square and stable, in spite of his lack of knowledge of construction, as tacit understanding. Selman points out, rather, that it was knowledge of such standards as "square" and "stable" that led to the correct construction.

However, closer examination of the idea of teaching as a craft raises three major problems which I will discuss. In brief, there is, first, a danger of "craft" being interpreted in its most technical sense. In this sense, the concept is likely to create problems similar to those associated with its technical counterpart earlier discussed. Second, there is a tendency to emphasize a view of knowledge as personal, tacit and intuitive. When this is the case, the idea of worthwhile purpose and reasonable actions in teaching, or standards of what constitutes good teaching, are taken to be largely subjective, and not open to rational debate. Third, as alluded to previously, when the conception is taken broadly to explain teaching, it represents a limited view of the enterprise, focusing solely on the individual, and ignoring the norms and standards of practice that evolve in social interaction.

Taking the first problem, it is interesting to note, that while conceiving of teaching as craft is meant to challenge the alternative conception of teaching as technical practice, crafts and technical practices are similar in at least three important ways. Each is concerned with a relatively unambiguous or straightforward product or end-result.⁵ Neither is

⁵ Although it might be argued that this is not true of many crafts, where the aesthetic value of a piece of woodwork, for example, may be equally as open to debate

centrally involved with value conflicts or moral standards. Each involves a set of techniques and skills which a participant applies to producing the end. Because of these similarities, some of the short-comings already noted in seeing teaching as a technique will reappear when teaching is conceived of as craft. In particular, given the nature of craft *qua* craft, there is likely to be an emphasis on technique and a neglect of standards other than those directly related to technique (such as efficient, effective, and so on).

Tom (1984), whose account of teaching as craft is among the more carefully conceived, was clearly aware of these potential dangers. He explains how conventional definitions of craft do not adequately represent teaching. He notes, for example, that explicit reference to goals is absent in typical definitions. He also argues that teaching is an essentially moral pursuit, a feature that would be ignored in any ordinary definition of craft. Consequently, Tom adds a moral dimension to his conception. He defines his new moral craft of teaching as a "reflective, diligent, and skillful approach toward the pursuit of desirable ends" (p. 128). Tom is rightly afraid that without reference to desirable

as a painting or symphony, I hold that this feature of ends being relatively unambiguous is generally true when considering the product of a traditional craft such as pottery and basket making, where function and form are more clearly defined.

goals and morals, there will be a tendency to focus on a narrow notion of craft as skillful execution of technique. Potential pitfalls of the narrow concept of craft, according to Tom, are the adoption of simple models of apprenticeship, and knowledge acquisition by trial and error.

While Tom's additions make the conception of teaching as craft more plausible, unfortunately they also make the conception virtually unrecognizable in terms of craft *qua* craft. Tom may stipulate a definition of craft in terms that are appropriate for teaching, but the common understanding of "craft"--what Tom refers to as a narrow conception--is likely to be the more enduring one. This is neither a minor nor a purely theoretical point. Current trends in Britain such as apprenticeship models of teacher education where practitioners are charged with the responsibility for preparing new teachers, and in the United States where alternative routes to certification which involve on-the-job training (bypassing university-based teacher education) are being legislated, signal the general desire to have initiates learn their craft solely from experienced practitioners in the field.⁶ These and other similar trends provide evidence that teaching is

6 See Wilson's (1993) description of Britain's recent drive to take teacher education away from the universities where theoretical pursuits characterize the studies. Additional comments in the preface to the book describe similar trends in North America.

widely conceived as a craft in the everyday (what Tom calls "narrow") sense.

Features commonly associated with craft, such as engagement in recipe-like processes, learning through trial and error, and imitation of current practice in apprenticeship models, certainly do not match the essential features of teaching. If, as I have suggested in the first chapter, teaching is centrally concerned with questions about worthwhile goals; and, if it is a rational enterprise, involving teachers in deliberations about their purposes and effective and moral means for achieving them, then the conventional or narrow notion of craft is inappropriate.

The second problem with conceiving of teaching as craft stems from its focus on personal meaning, intuition, and knowledge embedded in practice. Researchers with this focus appear to hold that teachers' personal knowledge and the expression of their practical knowledge as evident in their actions cannot be understood except in terms of the individual teacher's meaning or experience. Since a teacher's knowledge is intuitive and ineffable or nonpropositional, the need for justification or providing good reason for actions in the light of public standards is not addressed (Clandinin, 1986). In other words, there is no discussion about

warranted beliefs or public standards. The fear is that, given this neglect, anything will pass for good teaching practice if the individual teacher believes it to be so, a position that I will argue is untenable.⁷ I am not suggesting here that the other extreme--the view that what constitutes good teaching is uncontroversial--should be taken. Rather, I suggest that there needs be a notion of rational debate based on the provision of relevant reason, as I proposed in the first chapter.

It could be argued that the problem I am identifying is the fault of the individual researchers or a flaw in the particular research programs, rather than a misunderstanding inherent in the conception of teaching as craft. I maintain, however, that it is a fault with using this conception, in that "craft" lends itself to views of knowledge as ineffable, almost mystical. In fact, in many cultures, the knowledge of certain crafts was kept secret from all but those select few initiated into the practice.⁸ The tendency to view knowledge as tacit, personal, and largely beyond rational debate is inherent in the concept of craft, as it is not, for example, inherent in a conception of teaching as a

7 As Schön (1991) worries in one of his recent writings about reflection and rigour (or in other words, reflection in the light of some accepted standards) "when we fail to take this obligation seriously, 'reflection' becomes an open sesame to woolly-headedness, a never-never land where anything goes " (p. 182).

8 *Encyclopaedia of World Art* (1963).

technical practice. An illustration of the problem can be found in the work of Clandinin, a researcher who has gained a considerable North American following in the last decade.⁹

Clandinin's (1986, 1989) studies of teachers' personal practical knowledge focus on a construct which she calls "image." She defines an image as a unique metaphoric statement that expresses a set of personal beliefs and values held about teaching. Clandinin's work involves listening to teachers' stories or narratives, and from these personal tales, helping teachers discover their unifying images. This image may or may not find verbal expression, but it will be expressed in the teacher's practice as it "minds" the teachers' actions. By this, Clandinin seems to mean that an image is a guiding force, one that provides a sense of coherence to each teacher's practice. For example, Clandinin (1986)

9 Clandinin, for example has been an editor of a special section on "Teachers' Personal Practical Knowledge" in the journal *Curriculum Inquiry*. She is Director of a Research Institute on Teacher Education at the University of Alberta where her studies are well supported by one of the largest faculties of education in Canada. Her individual studies and those done in collaboration with Connelly are widely published. She is sought after as a speaker in both academic and practical arenas in North America and has received prestigious awards from the American Educational Research Association. I have selected her work to illustrate the problem because of her prominence in the field, and because it provides considerable evidence for my point. There are others I could have chosen, however, to make the same point, albeit with less force.

offers a case study of a teacher whom she calls Stephanie. Stephanie's image of her teaching is "the classroom as home" and all of her practices--her tendency to establish a warm environment for children, to engage students in making things, to bake and to grow plants in the classroom, and to display examples of what the teacher and students have made--can be explained, according to Clandinin, in terms of this image.

An image, says Clandinin, has emotional, moral, personal private, and educational professional dimensions and it originates in an individual's experience. The moral dimension, Clandinin says, is evident in the fact that an image is not neutral; it always includes notions of better or worse action, and thus, provides moral guidance. The emotional dimension, evident from the kinds of words teachers use to express their image, is "a moving and cementing force in the image" (p. 139). The dimensions of "personal private" and "educational professional" are linked through the image both in its origin (personal and professional experience), and in the function it serves ("minding a teacher's practice"). Teacher's personal practical knowledge as expressed in Clandinin's notion of image is nonpropositional, situational, embedded in practice, and to a large extent tacit.

It is difficult sometimes to understand Clandinin because of her vague and often impenetrable language. One is not quite sure, for example, what "minding one's practice" means, or what "moving and cementing force" might mean as a description of emotion. Is specific direction involved? And, if so, can one assume the direction is appropriate? The following passage further illustrates Clandinin's opaque language:

the moral coloring of Stephanie's classroom as home image emerges from its origins in her relationships with others and in her judgements of herself within those relationships. The experiences appear to be ones in which the critical moral issue of hurting is involved. (p. 137)¹⁰

Furthermore, quite apart from impenetrable language, the passage points to serious problems with Clandinin's notion of image. Apparently, Stephanie was hurt during her early school experience and, as a result, has consciously decided it is important not to hurt her students. Hurting is the only "moral issue" to which Clandinin refers. In her description, Clandinin says she is attempting to "explain the moral vividness of the image and how this image serves as a guide to Stephanie" (p. 138). But what is her point? Are we meant to understand from Clandinin's account that Stephanie's fundamental comprehension of morals in teaching has to do

10 Word by word, I find this a confusing account; as a passage meant to explain the moral dimension of an image, it is seriously perplexing.

with not hurting students? Are we further supposed to agree that this is acceptable? In other words, are we simply to accept that this understanding is justified because of Stephanie's experience? Are there no standards, other than Stephanie's own, by which we might judge this teacher's notion of moral conduct? One could certainly conclude this is so given Clandinin's further comments: "The moral coloring provides Stephanie with a judgmental standard for her practices. This standard is unique to Stephanie" (p. 137).

This notion of unique standards is extremely problematic. It is not that individuals should not (or do not) have individual standards, but surely, when these concern a teacher's conduct in her practice, they should also be judged according to public standards. In Stephanie's case, the particular guide for moral conduct seems acceptable, but limited. Given society's expectations for teachers charged with the care of the young, "not hurting children" as one principle, would likely meet with public approval. But, what if Stephanie's experience had "morally colored her image" in ways we might look upon less favourably. What if, for example, Stephanie had grown up in a situation where she had learned to cope with physical abuse and, as a result, she is now apt to mete it out herself because she has grown to believe it is good for building character?

Moreover, there would be cause for concern if "not hurting children" were the only moral value to guide Stephanie in her teaching. So, even if it is a principle acceptable on public grounds, it does not go far enough. Yet, there is nothing in the framework Clandinin offers to allow us to question critically a teacher's actions and underlying beliefs. These appear to be the personal property of the individual, and thus, somehow beyond the evaluation of others. There is no place for rational debate about the moral dimension of a teacher's personal practical knowledge.

These same criticisms hold for other aspects of the knowledge teachers are said to have about their practice in Clandinin's accounts. Take, for instance, a discussion about the teaching of language arts. Clandinin says Stephanie's practices in language arts are an expression of her images of teaching: "the classroom as home," "teaching as teaching students to be makers," and "herself as a maker" (p. 160). In Clandinin's account, we read that Stephanie's practice ensured that all language arts activities culminated in a product, a practice minded by her image of teaching students to be makers. Stephanie has a practice of creating a "printfull" environment, full of products created by herself and her students, minded by the "classroom as

home" image. Stephanie decided that the U.S.S.R. program (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading) was unworkable for her, a decision that is explained by the fact that U.S.S.R. was not consistent with any of her images. Stephanie did adopt the Big Books program, however, because it was consistent with her image of herself as a maker. Clandinin ends her description of Stephanie's language arts practices by reminding us that her practices have a unity and a flow, all of which can be understood in terms of images (pp. 160-161).

Once again, the example raises important questions about what Clandinin thinks constitutes personal practical knowledge. It is not clear on what bases one could consider actions to be reasonable or unreasonable. There seems to be no need to discuss what Stephanie might hold to be worthwhile educational goals, for example. There is, apparently, no ground for asking Stephanie to justify her actions in accordance with her view of desirable ends. What if it appeared that the students were more stimulated and engaged by U.S.S.R. than by the Big Book program? Apparently, from Clandinin's view, this is not a relevant consideration; there is no place for discussion of the rationality of Stephanie's decisions in practice. Presumably the only criterion for judging the merit of Stephanie's actions is whether or not they are consistent with her images. Supposedly,

because they are personal, tacit, nonpropositional, and originating in the individual's experience, images themselves, either as appropriate guides or sufficient guides, are not subject to rational debate.

Clandinin's work ignores common understandings of reason and justification of action. The stories of the teachers she studies are not to be judged, either by her or by the story tellers. As is evident from comments throughout her account, this neglect is deliberate. For example, the final comment of her book cautions that we should be careful not to "impose [our] own biases and interpretations on the two teachers [in her study] and, in consequence, to judge them" (p. 182). Seemingly, judgements of teachers' practice or their personal practical knowledge are prohibited by the personal and practical nature of the knowledge.

Grumet (1987), another educational researcher who uses teachers' narratives in her work, writes of the implications of using teachers' stories in one's research. She is concerned that teachers' personal stories might be appropriated in ways that would be harmful to the teachers. She argues that there is a need to develop an ethic that researchers may follow when they take the personal stories of a teacher as the ground for their own work. This is a valid point and one that, in

fairness, Clandinin may be following. It would, after all, be unethical to work with a teacher over time, establish a relationship, develop an understanding of the teacher's situation, and then report on the experience in a judgmental way, demeaning the cooperating teacher and betraying her trust.

I think there is more than an ethical consideration in Clandinin's neglect of notions of reason and judgement, however. She fails to acknowledge another key point made by Grumet who says:

I suspect that the difference between personal and impersonal knowledge, or practical and impractical knowledge is not a difference in what it is we know, but how we tell it and to whom. Personal knowledge in this scheme is constituted by the stories about experience we usually keep to ourselves, and practical knowledge, by the stories that are never, or rarely related, but provide, nevertheless the structure for improvisations that we call coping, problem-solving, action. (p. 322)

If Grumet is correct, and I suggest she is, then one would expect questions raised about justifiable or warranted belief and reasonable actions. Just as claims of "impersonal" and "impractical" knowledge are judged, so too, one would expect, would claims of personal and practical knowledge be judged. After all, Clandinin (1986) claims to be proposing a new epistemology. Yet, in proposing a notion of craft-like knowledge that is nonpropositional, tacit, and embedded in practice, she

seemingly believes these questions to be improper. She attempts to avoid the issue by having teachers tell their stories solely to discover metaphorical statements as expressions of their beliefs and values about their practice. She claims this will empower teachers and their knowledge and that it will avoid the previous tendency to privilege the propositions and theories of experts. What she appears to be doing, however, is attempting to privilege teachers' knowledge by cloaking it in mystery and by suggesting that because it is personal, tacit, and embedded, it cannot be judged. What she fails to see is that her conception of teacher's knowledge undermines what it is they know. Instead of using their stories as points of departure for understanding and critique, she enshrines them as complete and accurate representations of a teacher's knowledge. It is not that Clandinin necessarily ought to stand back and judge the stories of teachers, but surely she has some obligation to ask teachers themselves to be critical of their own assumptions and beliefs in light of theoretical propositions, societal expectations, or other norms of the practice.

In response to these criticisms, Clandinin might well say that her intent is to describe what is and not to judge what ought to be. But additional points made in her work contradict this explanation. While Clandinin

does not judge the teachers she works with, nor ask them to be self-critical, she is prepared to make recommendations based on her work. The conclusions she draws from her studies, she says, have "entailments" for teacher education:

Programs of teacher education must find ways to support beginning teachers during the first critical years of teaching. It is clear that the form in which this support is offered must be characterized by features that allow for the reflective reconstruction of the novice's narrative experience. (Clandinin, 1989, p. 139)

This kind of recommendation is surely inappropriate, if not inconsistent, if her only purpose in her work is to describe what teachers know and do in their practice.

This leads me to the third serious problem with conceiving of teaching as craft. This problem relates to the focus on the individual and, in particular, to the notion of individual construction of knowledge. It is related to the previous discussion in that both problems concern the neglect of standards or norms. In this case, however, it is neglect of the role of social norms in a practice such as teaching.

As I have already suggested, in a social practice the rules or norms are constituted by and constitutive of the practice. They are established over time in the interactions of those engaged in the practice. To focus

exclusively on the individual's role in constructing knowledge is to misunderstand the role of history and social context in the development of norms in the practice. Conceptualizing teachers' knowledge as personal, may result in the loss of an important perspective for understanding one's own knowledge in a broader historical and social context.¹¹ Lortie (1975) describes a culture of teaching into which new teachers are socialized and this culture includes isolation and individualism. I think that lack of consideration of the social context associated with teaching ignores such norms, and places considerable pressure on teachers to work individually, sometimes in ways that would conflict with social norms.

Clandinin's teachers are not challenged to understand their knowledge in the light of the social context. They are no doubt intelligent people who are capable of discussing their goals and considering how such goals are established. They could have examined how these goals explain and justify much of their practice. They might have had the opportunity to thoughtfully debate their purposes in the light of socially acceptable values, to rationally decide upon means for achieving desirable ends, and to understand and justify their

11 Willinsky (1989) develops this point in his article on personal practical knowledge called "Getting Personal and Practical."

actions in terms of good reasons, including social context. This seems to me a more empowering approach to take. Rather, for reasons that are unclear to me, these teachers were asked only to discover a unifying metaphorical image for their practice. I am reminded of a question posed and answered at a seminar I attended at a Teacher Development Conference.¹² The group of teachers who conducted the seminar "shared" their journal entries with the audience. No evaluative comments were provided or sought. Someone in the audience finally asked the pointed question: "Does this exercise improve teachers' practice?" The answer was that it "made the teachers feel better about their practice." As if to suggest the original question was not an appropriate one to ask, the answer was delivered in a somewhat chastising tone. Surely, educational research and the conceptions that underlie them are not meant merely to make teachers feel better about their practice. Although Clandinin claims in her work to have "given teachers reason," I believe she has denied them just that. And, as I said at the outset, this is characteristic of much of the literature that conceives of teaching as craft.

To summarize, conceiving of teaching in terms of a craft, because a craft is similar to a technical

12 Teacher Development: The Key to Educational Change, held in Vancouver, British Columbia, at the Hotel Vancouver, February 14-16, 1991.

enterprise, raises analogous problems. In addition, the idea that individuals involved in craft generate their own knowledge and standards, fails to recognize the social nature of the enterprise. It fails, as well, to provide a helpful view of standards for judgement in teaching as anything other than individual intuition, or of morality as anything more than individual belief, neither of which is open to criticism or justification.

This view of teaching does attend to some of the limitations I noted about the conception of teaching as a technical enterprise. It does acknowledge the extent to which teaching involves judgement. It does recognize the need to consider the specific context. The conception I consider next, namely, teaching as political activity, corrects some of the limitations noted in this conception of teaching as craft. In particular, as I point out in the next chapter, viewing teaching as a political activity does recognize the degree to which teaching must be seen to be a social enterprise.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEACHING CONCEIVED AS POLITICAL ACTIVITY

The third prominent account of teaching conceives of the practice in terms of political activity. Advanced by those who call themselves critical pedagogues or social reconstructionists, the view holds that the aim of teaching is to empower students with the ability and desire to change the social order. In a preface to Giroux's work, McLaren describes the overarching project as meant to "formulate a critical pedagogy committed to the imperatives of empowering students and transforming the larger social order in the interests of a more just and equitable democracy" (Giroux, 1988, p. xi). Conceiving of teaching as a political activity has, in many ways, considerably richer possibilities than conceiving it as a technical enterprise or a craft.¹ The view of teaching as a political activity is centrally concerned with educational ends. It affords a major role to questions of right conduct and other moral issues. It acknowledges the role of socially constructed norms. I

1 Some educational literature includes this critical approach in discussions of teaching as craft. Grimmet and MacKinnon (1992), for example, include a section on the "critical stance" in their overview of craft knowledge. I believe that critical pedagogy is significantly different from the ordinary craft conception and that it needs to be considered on its own terms.

will return to these potentially positive aspects of a general view of teaching as political activity and to the rather serious limitations of the particular view as it is advanced in current discussions. But first, I will briefly describe the critical pedagogues' view of teaching as it is advocated by Giroux and his colleagues.

Like the Marxist view from which critical pedagogy has developed, its goal is to liberate the oppressed--in this case, teachers and students. Giroux and colleagues (1988, 1989) and Smyth (1987, 1988) advocate that teachers should engage in a political battle with intent to take control. This can be done by establishing a critical agenda of educational issues. For example, critical pedagogues distinguish themselves in their positions on such points as: What counts as knowledge? Whose power is at stake? What are the important ends for education? What role do other social and political institutions play in the practice of teaching?

Answers to these questions essentially set out what Giroux refers to as the "programmatic vision" of critical pedagogy. A sketch of the answers, therefore, is helpful in describing the overall program and its premises. I will attempt to provide this sketch in the language of those who hold the views, and reserve my own criticism for later in the discussion.

Critical pedagogy rejects the epistemological stance of researchers who seek to find universal truths to guide practice or who provide technological solutions to problems of teaching. Their critique denies that there is objective truth -- for them, knowledge is socially constructed, and thus relative to social context. Smyth (1988, quoting Simon) says:

[Critical pedagogy] first, views knowledge as socially produced, legitimated and distributed and seeks to make explicit the ways in which such production, legitimation, and distribution take place. Second, knowledge is apprehended as expressing and embodying particular interests and values, implicating issues of power and ethics in all expressions of knowledge. Third, seeking to negate the 'objective' nature of knowledge and forcing the educator to confront the relation between knowledge, power and control requires action that would alter the distribution of power. (p. 31)

According to critical pedagogues, making claims about the legitimacy of certain kinds of knowledge, such as academic or scientific knowledge, is a tactical move employed by the dominant class in their struggle to maintain power. To this point, so the argument proceeds, the dominant class has been largely successful in this struggle. Its members have privileged their knowledge and standards and have, thus, marginalized others, in particular, non-white races, women, and the poor. If the oppressed are to be empowered, they must understand that there is no official knowledge, that rules are mere social constructions of the dominant class. So-called

lived experience, popular culture, and cultural differences will be valued in the new social order, thus emancipating the oppressed.

Related to the idea of knowledge and power is the answer to the question: whose power is at stake? Critical pedagogues maintain that, in the old order, the intellectual elite hold and maintain power through the bureaucratic imposition of rules. This, they say, is evident in various institutions, and specifically in schools, where a curriculum consisting of the privileged knowledge of the dominant class is imposed on passive students. In the words of Giroux and McLaren (1989) describing work by Carnoy, "schools have become the product of ... 'reproductive' forces -- attempts by the dominant class to impose its concept of the world on the mass of students" (p. xxviii). As Smyth (1988) says, "there is a growing realization that specialist claims to knowledge, including those people outside of classrooms purporting to know what is best in teaching and learning ... are really claims to power" (p. 34). The critical pedagogue's view is that if the oppressed engage in the conflict, the elite stand to lose power. In the new order, the oppressed will be empowered by understanding that their experiential knowledge is equally privileged, that they have authority in their own right, and that they may win the struggle to gain control over their own

lives. They will do so through the exercise of critical reflection. In a book of essays on critical pedagogy (Giroux & McLaren, 1989), the editors claim,

what these essays collectively achieve is to rescue the term *culture* from its New Right and liberal status as a Platonic time capsule of elite knowledge or a community register of statistics and facts, and situate the nexus of power and knowledge and the contextual relations of class, gender, and race. (p. xxxvi)

In answering the question about worthwhile educational ends, according to critical pedagogues, the only worthwhile educational goal is emancipation, meaning freedom from oppression by the dominant class. They argue that this cannot be achieved in schools that teach an official curriculum which ignores the "lived" experience of students and teachers. Emancipation can only be achieved when teachers and students critically examine their social conditions with a goal to transform their own lives and society in general. Giroux and others advocate using popular culture as the avenue for this reformation.

As Giroux and Simon (1989) say, "a critical pedagogy examines with care and in dialogue how social injustices work through the discourses and experiences that constitute daily life and the subjectivities of the

students who invest in them" (p. 244). Popular culture is

constituted not just by commodity forms but by practices which reflect a creative and sometimes innovative capacity of people. Popular culture may contain aspects of a collective imagination which make it possible for people to surpass received knowledge and tradition. In this sense popular culture may inform aspects of a counterdiscourse which help to organize struggles against relations of domination. (Giroux & Simon, 1989, p. 245)

In his preface to Giroux's work, McLaren voices the critical pedagogue's view on what role other social and political institutions play in teaching and vice versa. He writes that educators must understand how the "dominant school culture is implicated in hegemonic practices that often silence subordinate groups of students as well as deskill and disempower those who teach them" (Giroux, 1988, p. xi). Critical examination of various social forces begins from an understanding of power and conflict. Social context is not merely a backdrop for schooling; it represents the prevailing forces. Apple (1989) says that in order to understand education, you must understand "society's already unequal cultural, economic, and political dynamics that provide the centre of gravity around which education functions" (p. 34). Giroux and McLaren (1989) argue:

the debate over education [must be] part of a wider struggle for democracy itself. This wider struggle for democracy and social reform calls for an ethical

conversion to the priority of labor over capital and to the elimination of economic and social injustices. (p. xxii)

My criticism of the conception of teaching as a political activity has three major points. First, to accept the conception, one has to accept each of the underlying premises as outlined, and there are not sufficient grounds for doing so. Second, in adopting this view of their practice, teachers would have to embrace the "programmatic" set of assumptions as the foundational understandings of teaching. Third, the conception does not begin to exhaust what it is important to understand about the practice of teaching. Consider first the claims outlined above and whether there are grounds for accepting them.

If, in saying that knowledge is socially constructed and, thus, relative, critical pedagogues mean that knowledge acquisition is affected by our current knowledge, beliefs, and values, then it is neither a particularly profound nor contentious point. Equally, if the claim that there is no objective knowledge simply means that knowledge is subject to correction, then, again, it is neither very important nor contentious. However, the claims of critical pedagogy appear to be more extreme than these, suggesting that knowledge is entirely relative to a given community, and, further, as

quoted above, that "issues of power and ethics [are] in all expressions of knowledge." On this view, questions about what counts as knowledge cannot be answered by appeals to familiar and traditional tests of truth. Rather, as Smyth (1988, quoting Inglis) suggests, "freedom, fulfillment and self critical awareness are the epistemes (or given grounds) of epistemology which vindicates the knowledge produced by critical theory" (p. 32).

First, as many others have pointed out, to say that all knowledge is relative is a self-defeating claim. In other words, if all knowledge is relative, it is not clear on what grounds we should want to adopt the critical pedagogue's view or abandon our own. Apart from this logical problem, however, there are others. If all knowledge is relative, then claims in the context of any social group must be taken as valid on their own terms. Does that mean, for example, that we should then merely accept the view of Seventh Day Adventists that having blood transfusions is forbidden by the Bible, and sit idly by while a helpless child dies for lack of such treatment? Would we have to accept the belief of Nazis that Semites should be eliminated? Would we have to believe a group claiming that the world is flat, that sacrificing animals brings good luck, and that certain races of people are naturally inferior? Each of these

claims seems to be true for the group making them, but does that mean there are no grounds upon which to refute them? Certainly "freedom, fulfillment, and self critical awareness" do not seem to be adequate grounds upon which to challenge such claims.

Furthermore, to say that all knowledge is socially constructed is to ignore some very important distinctions. The rules of etiquette are a social construction and these vary from culture to culture as a result. If a gentleman doffs his hat in a movie set in Victorian England, I can say I know, because I understand the social context, that this is meant to be a symbol of respect. That this is no longer the custom in England, and in other cultures never was a custom, attests to the fact that such rules vary with context and are relative to that context. But in saying I know that an apple thrown out the window will fall, that black clouds generally forebode stormy weather, and that, if one ingests sufficient cyanide, one will die, I am making quite different claims. Whether in Victorian England or contemporary Brazil, these claims remain valid; they are not relative to a social context. Whatever "socially constructed" means, this phrase obviously cannot be used to deny a distinction such as that between "it is polite to doff your hat" and "an apple thrown out of a window will fall." Explanations for physical phenomena

described in terms of universal laws may be constructed by people and may necessarily arise in particular social settings. And, over time, we have come to modify our explanations, and will likely change them again. However, explanations of physical phenomena, viewed as social constructions, do not resemble rules in respect of manners, language, or child rearing viewed as social constructions. The former are claims that can be empirically tested; the latter are not. The former claims refer to physical phenomena that will remain unchanged regardless of what we believe about them; the latter will change as we change our beliefs about them.² I recognize that I have selected a clear and simple case and have confined myself to empirical claims to make the point. However, I offer no apology for my choice, since those who suggest categorically that all knowledge is merely a social construction do not even make these simple distinctions.

To accept this first premise of critical pedagogy, then, is problematic on several counts. The second related premise--namely, that a dominant class is deliberately claiming power by privileging its own knowledge and "imposing its own concept of the world on

² Scientists such as Wolf (1994), who study quantum physics, would challenge this statement. They argue that the observer actually changes the nature of the phenomenon in the course of observation.

the mass of students"--is equally dubious. It is at least simplistic to interpret all interactions from this narrow perspective. Social conditions are complex matters and to reduce them to contests of power will not likely lead to greater understanding or transformation of the social order.

Furthermore, the pedagogical implications are problematic. It is no doubt true, as the critical pedagogues maintain, that if students are considered passive receivers of knowledge, they will not likely have opportunities to enhance their power in society, let alone their rationality. However, given their assumptions, how can it be reasonable to assume that a curriculum that "examines with care and in dialogue how social injustices work through the discourses and experiences that constitute daily life" is likely to lead to student's empowerment or intellectual development? On their own terms, this is not a realistic assumption. As Ellsworth (1989) points out:

dialogue in its conventional sense is impossible in the culture at large because at this historical moment, power relations between raced, classed, and gendered students and teachers are unjust. The injustice of these relations and the way in which these injustices distort communication cannot be overcome in a classroom no matter how committed the teacher and students are to overcoming conditions of suffering. (p. 316)

Though the critical theorists speak of engaging students in critical reflection, they apparently mean engaging

them in a critique of the so-called dominant culture based on a specific view of the world, searching for inherent injustice in all interactions. Where critical reflection commonly is associated with an open mind and reasonable deliberation, from the perspective of critical pedagogy, it is rather a singular search for oppression.

That there is a self-proclaimed elite and that its members are deliberately seeking to maintain their power at the expense of several oppressed groups is an unsubstantiated claim.³ In fact, the premise resembles in all ways a conspiracy theory that has the potential to victimize both the so-called oppressors and the oppressed. As with all conspiracy theories, if you disagree with the charge, you are deemed either to be allied with the oppressors or duped by them.

The last two foundational premises of critical pedagogy--that the goal is emancipation and that social forces are in league to create inequities--again centre narrowly on notions of conflict and power. As an educational goal, emancipation is not unique to critical pedagogy.. Notions of liberal education have long

3 There are, of course, many examples of people in power (by virtue of political position, intellectual advantage, financial means, and so on) who shape our view of society. It is not, however, necessarily merely their whim that is at play, as the critical pedagogues imply. Nor is their direction necessarily only in their self-interest.

advanced the idea that education ought to liberate students in the sense of opening up opportunities by leading them out of a state of ignorance. However, emancipation in terms of critical pedagogy is entirely concerned with notions of conflict, power, and oppression. As with the premise upon which it is based, this notion of emancipation is simplistic. It reduces all social interaction to a struggle for power. Stated in such stark terms, it is difficult to understand why anyone would accept this. Is there not a complex of dynamics involving love, respect, compassion, curiosity, admiration, and so on that may have little to do with power?

Finally, the idea that it is important to consider the socially constructed norms and forces outside of the institution of schooling is an important one. However, in the case of critical pedagogy, the reference is not to the interdependent nature of societal influences. Specifically, the premise demands that social forces be critically viewed, and "critical" here is used in the sense of critiquing from a particular point of view. What is being asserted is that one needs to look for oppression in all one's social interactions in schools and beyond. This premise, then, is merely an extension of the notions of conflict and power outlined in other aspects of the program.

There is insufficient reason to wholly accept any one of the definitional tenets or foundational premises. However, even if aspects of each of the tenets are reasonable, they are in Giroux's words "programmatically," by which he seems to mean, they should be taken together as a definite plan for action. This creates a problem of its own. As it is with religion, so it is with critical pedagogy or any ideology: to be a follower generally means wholly accepting all the basic tenets and this sometimes leads to dogmatism. The danger is that teachers may make all their decisions about their practice on the basis of this programmatic vision in a doctrinaire fashion. If they encourage their students to interpret all their interactions from this same single frame, denying them the chance to rationally examine other explanations or to rationally choose other interpretive frameworks, then they are not engaged in education; the teaching-learning relationship in this instance would be more appropriately termed indoctrination.⁴

Giroux would argue that an unquestioned vision is not the goal of critical pedagogy. In fact, McLaren,

4 I am using the standard dictionary distinction between indoctrination and education here, where to indoctrinate is to teach to accept a system of thought, and to educate is to develop powers of reason.

specifically notes that Giroux's work is unfettered by doctrinaire certainty. Nevertheless, it would seem that critical pedagogy and other programmatic visions are prone to doctrinaire certainty. Certainly, the work of Smyth, a well-known critical pedagogue, shows evidence of this flaw. He merely asserts that adoption of critical pedagogy demands a certain unquestionable moral and intellectual stance. The moral stance is to take "an attitude toward those who would dictate content, and to combat the claims of those whose power in the world demands the capacity for moral discourse be atrophied" (quoting Pagano, 1987, p. 31). As has already been shown, his intellectual stance is to accept that all knowledge is socially constructed and that it involves expressions of power and ethics.

A study that provides a particularly striking example of this doctrinaire characteristic of critical pedagogy is found in Popkewitz's (1987) collection of critical studies in teacher education. Ginsberg reports on an ethnographic study he undertook over two years at the University of Houston. The study involved 17 secondary-education students who agreed to be interviewed about their perceptions of professionalism. The purpose of the study was not, as one might assume, to question how teachers construct meaning for "professionalism," nor to examine how perceptions of professionalism relate to

individual practice. Rather, in Ginsberg's words, the study was "designed to illuminate the contribution of the ideology of professionalism to the reproduction of inequities in wealth and power characteristic of capitalist and patriarchal structures" (p. 86).

Ginsberg explains his purpose further, developing his hypothesis that a teacher's notions of professionalism--an elitist concept--would be played out in the power struggle of the classroom. Beliefs about knowledge and classroom management would be related to beliefs about professionalism and the dominant class. These, in turn, would reproduce the inequities of a capitalist society.

The study is biased to find what it seeks. One would assume that a search for a relationship between elitist perceptions of professionalism and class structure, given the fact that the search begins with the assumption that the relationship exists, would produce adequate supporting evidence. It is much like starting a therapy session with the therapist saying your depression is a result of your dysfunctional family and asking you to reconstruct examples of the problem. There is apparently no intention to look for any disconfirmation of the assumption. In other words, the only evidence Ginsberg sought was that which confirmed the original

tenets of critical pedagogy. One might argue that this is merely an example of bad critical pedagogy, and not representative of the view itself. However, if a central tenet of critical pedagogy is that power and oppression are present in all interactions, then it follows that studies would necessarily be designed much like this one.

If there is any doubt that the initial stance represents doctrinaire certainty, then Ginsberg's conclusions provide further evidence. A series of questions were asked of the students in interviews held over the two years of the study. Responses from students indicated that the majority considered teaching to be a profession and saw professionalism in terms of status in a legitimate hierarchy of occupations. Themes drawn from the interview data indicated that the students related education, remuneration, power, and individual attitudes and behaviour to their notions of professionalism. Furthermore, according to Ginsberg, the students' perceptions were relatively resilient to critique. Ginsberg discusses each of these themes, showing how they are related to class structure and gender relations.

In his conclusion, as one would expect, Ginsberg confirms his original assumption, noting the cases in which the ideology of professionalism masked and mediated the inequities of class and gender found in a capitalist

society. Interestingly, though, he also adds that, in some cases, this same ideology was drawn upon to criticize these structures. This second conclusion, though it flies in the face of Ginsberg's original assumption, does at least present the opportunity to discuss and reconsider his earlier hypothesis. Instead, however, in true doctrinaire fashion, Ginsberg concludes that though a critical use of professionalism may have surfaced, one must continue to be wary of "those who employ the ideology to keep the proletariat (and the 'professional') in her or his place" (p. 120), since the dominant groups already have numerous resources for maintaining class and gender inequities. In his closing sentence, Ginsberg notes "[t]he ideology of professionalism may in the immediate struggle help the cause, although in relation to other people's concurrent struggles and in one's own future struggles the one 'success' may translate into major victory for those who seek to benefit from the reproduction of unequal class and gender relations" (p. 120).

As I stated earlier, to engage in critical pedagogy is, by the terms of the theory, not to be open-minded about all problems and their causes and solutions. It involves accepting certain basic tenets about the insidious role of power in all social interaction. The view does provide insight into important aspects of

teaching. For example, the view points out that teaching is never value-neutral, that social interactions might involve power struggles, that injustices are sometimes inadvertently perpetuated by uneven power relations, and that many aspects of schooling which we take for granted ought to be seen as problematic. Nonetheless, the view, as it is presented, is a limited view of teaching. To say teaching may involve the political is true. However this is a far cry from saying, as the critical pedagogues do, that teaching is exclusively a political activity. Finally, even to admit that teaching has a political dimension does not commit one to a particular political stance, such as neo-Marxism, as the critical pedagogues would have it. To conceive of teaching in terms of the limited sense underlying critical pedagogy misrepresents its nature.

I opened this section by referring to the positive possibilities of conceiving of teaching in terms of political activity. I suggested that teaching viewed in these terms is centrally involved with consideration of educational goals, it has accompanying concern about moral conduct, and it appreciates the role of social norms. Unfortunately, as should now be clear, the rich possibilities are not realized because of the narrow construal of each of these aspects.

The conception does not consider educational goals to be open to question, but rather prescribes a particular goal. Although a moral point of view is central to the concept, again it is not one that is open to rational debate. Rather, as Smyth points out, critical pedagogy demands a particular moral point of view, one that is censorious of those who would dictate content. In other words, morality is seen only in terms of the conflict over power as it affects the oppressed and the dominant groups. Similarly, it is not the role of social norms in the practice *per se* that is an issue in critical pedagogy, but instead a particular view of the social forces in effect which favour the dominant class and oppress others. Although the concept considers aspects of teaching as a social practice constituted by the interactions of those engaged, it falls short of making use of this concept to explain the variety of norms that constitute teaching (which I will discuss in the next chapter), choosing instead only those that confirm the power relationship. In short, the doctrinaire nature of critical pedagogy militates against a richer view of teaching.

Suggesting that teaching is a political activity, in the case of critical pedagogy, means interpreting all the activities of teaching through a particular political framework. Adopting the doctrine means eschewing open-

minded rational debate about worthwhile educational ends. The view misconstrues judgement in teaching, incorporating instead adoption of a set of tenets to guide action. This creates the potential for doctrinaire application. Finally, notions of moral conduct and the norms of teaching are limited to those that are related directly to power and conflict.

To summarize the argument to this point: I have identified three dominant conceptions that currently underlie many, if not all, discussions of teaching. The first conceives of teaching in terms of a technical enterprise, the second as a craft, and the third as a political activity. I have argued that each of these provides a limited account that leads to a distorted sense of the practice.

It is important to emphasize that these conceptions of teaching are limited, but this is not the only problem. That is to say, it is not good enough to explain the limitations by saying each of the conceptions is intended only to look at one aspect of teaching, acknowledging that there are other aspects which must also be examined. By ignoring questions about or limiting views of such things as educational ends, moral conduct, and the social nature of the enterprise, these

conceptions of teaching actually distort and misrepresent the practice.

Certainly, teachers can and should learn to use techniques, but to study these in the absence of questions about worthwhile ends is to fail to understand the essentially purposive nature of teaching. The view is not simply limited; it is a distortion. Teaching does involve an individual learning about the practice through engagement. Nonetheless, teachers do not individually construct knowledge of the practice in a social vacuum. To speak as though they do is, again, a serious distortion. To the extent that teaching implicitly imparts a set of values, it clearly has a political aspect. However, if everything teachers and students do is interpreted through a framework of struggle over power, the view of the practice is too narrowly construed. Such misrepresentations subsequently lead to distorted and misdirected ways for conducting research about teaching, for preparing people to be teachers, and for evaluating the practice.

In the next chapter, I outline a conception of social practice and argue that we should view teaching in terms of this conception. Seeing teaching as a social practice does not limit or potentially distort the essential features of teaching. Instead, the view

provides insight into the features which we understand to constitute teaching practice in schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

TEACHING CONCEIVED AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE.

I have claimed that teaching is best understood as a social practice and have briefly explained this claim. I will now elaborate on the conception of social practice and endeavor to show how much richer and more representative a conception it is than those just reviewed.

Before I begin my account, it is important to note that I am not falling into the trap for which I criticized other conceptions of teaching--namely, finding one more analogy or metaphor to illuminate the concept of teaching. "Social practice" is not a metaphor or analogy, but rather a general category of practices which share certain broad characteristics, such as their origin in social purpose and their production and reproduction in common behaviours guided by a variety of norms. Yet, each species of this general category is unique in its purpose and in the form and function of its definitive norms. The category includes, for example, language, etiquette, law, religion, morality, and democracy. Indeed, political activity, as discussed in the previous

chapter, might be considered a species of social practice.¹

Describing teaching as a species of a more general category is different from claiming that it is analogous to some other specific activity. In the latter case, one has to tie teaching to something that it is not, possibly distorting its essence in the process. Viewing teaching as a species of a general category (providing it is an appropriate category) allows one to see its unique features, while understanding those in the light of important general features of the category. It is the difference, for example, between arguing that schools are like hospitals, and arguing that schools and hospitals must both be viewed in the light of their being public institutions.

In the next sections, I will define social practice and describe three major features that characterize the conceptualization. I will explain how these broad features vary from practice to practice, allowing for the uniqueness of each, while providing a framework useful for understanding the conception generally. This discussion paves the way for the final section, where I

1 Crafts, too, especially in the days when artisans shared patterns of conduct and standards for their practice through their guilds, can be understood as forms of social practice.

will argue that teaching is more richly understood in the terms of a social practice, and that the view illuminates the role and nature of judgement and rationality in teaching.

Social Practices

In the first chapter, I suggested that it is important that we look at teaching as it is conducted in schools, rather than as the specific and individual act of attempting to get someone to learn something. The "act" of teaching is a logical notion which lends itself to conceptual analysis. In this kind of analysis, we likely would ask what it means "to teach." We would, among other strategies in this analysis, examine how the concept is used in ordinary language to determine what "to teach" means. From this analysis, we would be able to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate uses of the concept, and make distinctions, for example, as Scheffler (1960) does, between "teaching" and "telling," as Cochrane (1982) does, between "teaching" and "entertaining," and as Stewart (1993) does, between "teaching" and "facilitating learning."

Teaching, as it is conducted in schools, is a "practice;" that is to say, it involves customary ways of

acting. Analysing a practice involves consideration of those customs, routines, norms, and so on. In addition to logical considerations implicit in the concept of teaching, then, we need to consider what contingently describes the practice and how this historically has come to be the practice. This process, as Case (1993) points out, is analogous to conceptual analysis. In this kind of analytic process, among other strategies, we would look to the ways competent practitioners explain their practice. Through the analysis, we would be able to distinguish between accepted and acceptable behaviour in the practice. For example, sociologists have shown that teachers often favour boys in instruction by asking them more questions, listening more to their opinions, and generally paying more attention to them. However, while this may be common behaviour, teachers would not cite the norm to justify their actions, as it is incompatible with fundamental values involved in education, such as equality of educational opportunity. We can determine through such an analysis, then, that while it may be accepted behaviour, it is not acceptable behaviour in the practice. The distinction between teaching conceived as a practice and as an act is important for my argument.

"Practice" presupposes common patterns of behaviour. Of course, the degree to which these patterns are common, or formalized and fixed, varies widely. There is a

continuum between a highly formal and fixed practice such as chess, and a more informal, and hence, dynamic practice such as etiquette.² A "social practice" is a normative enterprise--that is, the actions of the participants are governed by socially-generated and enforced norms and standards. Though often not formalized or coded, these norms and standards have authority, and they are created and recreated in the interactions of those involved in the practice.³

Three major and related characteristics of a social practice are important for my discussion. The first is that a social practice is a form of activity that has grown out of common needs in a community to accomplish certain purposes. A social practice must be understood in terms of its social context and purpose. The second is that a social practice involves shared ways of behaving or acting. This is not to suggest a complete conformity; however, social practices involve patterns of

2 While I have here called "chess" a practice, it is probably more accurate to think of "playing games" as the social practice, and chess as one variety of that social practice. Nonetheless, the point stands.

3 MacIntyre (1984) conceives of moral theory in terms of practice in much the same way as I have just described social practice. Taylor (1983) also uses a similar notion of "social practice" in his explanation of social theorizing. Case (1990), referring to law, similarly defines social practice as "a public, relatively organized activity undertaken to pursue a set of shared goals" (p. 29). Selman (1989) argues similarly that critical thinking is a social practice.

action and these are at least partly constituted by and constitutive of the practice. Thirdly, the patterns of action are guided by a complex array of norms, such as rules, standards, principles, precepts, and policies. All social practices are somewhat like games in this way; they are largely defined by their norms or rules.

Social Practice, Context, and Telos

As I have said, social practices are commonly defined forms of activity that grow out of needs in a community to accomplish human or social purposes. Two points necessarily follow from this: first, social practices are human constructions, and social context is an essential element when coming to understand them; and, second, and this is a related point, social practices can only be understood in terms of the purpose to which they are directed or from which they arise.

Taking the first point, consider etiquette, or the practice of engaging in polite behaviour, as a social practice. The conventions of etiquette in a community grow out of a tacit understanding of the need and desire for orderly social arrangements. These conventions are consciously and unconsciously created by people in a community, and are based upon beliefs about respect,

relationship, and consideration for others. In the case of etiquette, it is unlikely that a group of people would meet to agree upon what behaviours would serve the purpose of social order. However, through their interactions and over time, a community constructs particular patterns of behaviour to meet the need for orderly social arrangements in their specific circumstances.

Consequently, etiquette must be understood in terms of this social context. By social context, I refer, in part, to the values and beliefs of the particular community. It is this social context that explains why, for example, the requirements of polite behaviour differ from community to community, though the purpose for the practice is similar. To contrast this with a physical phenomenon such as erosion, polite behaviour is not something that can be understood universally in terms of underlying mechanisms, or explained in terms of cause and effect, or studied in order to find ways to predict or control it. The practice cannot be broken down into individual actions, independent of the beliefs and values fundamental to the social context, for study and explanation. A specific recent example is illustrative.

The act of removing a hat (or keeping one on) when entering a building can be understood in many ways--for

example, as a reaction to the temperature of the building, as a means to ensure recognition, or as a meaningless habit. However, long-standing tradition in Canada requires men to remove their hats when entering a Legion building. The tradition has a history which is tied to the military background of Legion members, and the action is understood in the context, as a symbol of respect for that background.⁴ This norm conflicts with the customs of Indo-Canadians who maintain their Sikh tradition, which requires that they wear their turbans whenever they are in public. In the context of Sikh culture, the wearing of turbans is a requirement as a symbol of devotion to the religion.

When Sikhs enter Canadian Legions, they expect to keep their heads covered. Many Legion members see this as offensive, as an insult to their Canadian beliefs and values, and to the military which fought to uphold the values. The Sikhs are equally offended in being asked to remove their head wear. Clearly, wearing or not wearing hats does not constitute, on the face of it, cause for serious controversy. The behaviour becomes an issue because of the different social context and meanings that

4 In the military, removing hats allows a more informal exchange among the ranks. Personnel remove their hats when they are "at ease." Enlisted personnel no longer have to salute officers, for example. This tradition followed to the Legion and is now seen to be a sign of respect for the military itself, and for the country the military serves.

arise from the context--the values and beliefs of the Legionnaires on the one hand, and of the Sikhs on the other.

Because of different beliefs and values, it is inevitable that the precise form of a social practice such as etiquette should vary from culture to culture. The practice may also vary over time within a culture. When we shift our values or beliefs, the actions based on those beliefs often change. For example, at one time Western society held women to be the "weaker" sex; women were widely believed to be soft, defenceless, and unworldly. Requirements of polite behaviour in interactions between men and women meant men were to act as protectors of women: opening their doors, offering them seating, paying their way, insisting they be accompanied in public, and so on. As our beliefs about the capacities of women and their roles in society have changed, so, too, have the requirements of etiquette. In most circles, a man is no longer required to rise to offer a woman a seat, for example. A man may buy a woman dinner today, but not because it is a requirement of etiquette; in many circles, it would be equally in order for the woman to pay her own way or, indeed, to pay for herself and her male companion.

Social practices vary in the degree to which behaviours differ between contexts and over time. This is largely a result of the relationship between the purpose and the behaviour. Behaving politely can manifest itself in any number of ways. In some cultures, it is considered polite to show appreciation after eating a meal by belching; in others, this is the height of bad manners. In the case of other practices, however, because of a logical relationship between the purpose and activities, what would count as appropriate behaviour is more finely circumscribed. The practice of deciding questions by majority vote, for example, demands certain kinds of behaviour, such as, exercising free will and being accurate in recording votes, and prohibits others, such as, coercing voters and falsifying the count.⁵

While one necessary condition for understanding a social practice, then, is knowledge of the social context, a related further condition for understanding is knowledge of the purposes of the practice. Social practices are defined, determined, and driven to a large degree by social purposes.⁶ Purposes in social practice

5 I have borrowed this example from Taylor (1983) who uses "deciding by majority vote" in his discussion of theory as social practice.

6 Though it is true that as social practices evolve, the actions and guiding norms sometimes seem at odds with what is held to be the purpose, this purpose remains the significant force of the practice. Even to be able to say that an action is at odds with the purpose is to

vary in their complexity and in the degree to which people agree about their specific form. When we say that our speaking a language has the purpose of facilitating communication among members of a community, we are not likely to be contradicted; yet, the notion of communication in communities is an extremely complex one. Purposes in practicing law are neither straightforward nor simple. Some would have it that law is meant to seek justice, while others argue it is intended to preserve and interpret stipulated rules, and these two purposes may be contradictory. Stating purposes for moral behaviour would raise even more complex questions and would inevitably be contested. Nonetheless, consideration of purposes, regardless of their complexity and the degree to which they are contested, is essential for understanding a social practice. All social practices are like games, in that it is the purpose or ultimate aim of the game, which directs the individual moves or actions and gives them significance. Take a game such as chess. Moving the various pieces on the board is comprehensible only if we understand that our ultimate purpose is to take the opponent's king.⁷

indicate that purpose is the standard by which one can make such a judgement.

⁷ It is true that whether convention requires that the knight move once space in one direction and two spaces in another, or four spaces in any direction, does not have anything to do with the purpose of the game. In other words, the purpose of the game is to take the king, and in relation to this purpose, the exact movements of the various pieces are somewhat arbitrary. Nonetheless, if a

Similarly, if we were to watch two people signing (a language for the hearing impaired) without knowing that the signs were a way to communicate with each other, the gestures would seem extremely odd.

Because the purposes are the defining element of a social practice, they are most significant when there is confusion or conflict over behaviours and norms within a practice. In other words, when there is conflict, we can often resort to the point of the practice to adjudicate between what is and is not proper. For example, take the practice of deciding questions by majority vote. The purpose is to provide opportunity for widespread and *bona fide* participation in decision-making. This purpose requires that there be structures for participation, allowance for free will, and so on. In countries where majority votes are newly introduced, the purpose is sometimes overlooked or deliberately distorted. In such cases, people may be denied access to necessary information or prohibited from expressing views, and voting procedures may be corrupted to influence results. In that they are inconsistent with or distort the purpose, the actions are clearly inappropriate;

person were to move the knight in a direction that would clearly not be directed ultimately to taking the opponent's king or protecting her own, then it would not be comprehensible as a proper chess move.

consequently, the practice being described is not what we know as decision-making by majority vote.

Now, there is a possibility that someone could entirely misunderstand, or be unaware of the purpose of, a set of activities, yet, up to a point, conform to the patterns of behaviour. Consider, again, the case of etiquette. By simply mimicking the actions of others in the community, removing hats, shaking hands, and standing when being introduced, a person could meet the requirements with some consistency even though he might not understand the purpose for the activities. It is highly unlikely, however, that in any unfamiliar situation, he would be able to understand another's behaviour or to anticipate what appropriate behaviour would be. Nor could he appropriately explain behaviour without reference to the purpose. The point is that to understand, and so to engage knowledgeably in a social practice, one must understand its *telos*.⁸

8 Hart (1961), in a discussion of law and the role of rules, makes a similar point by speaking of the internal aspect of rules. It is the fact that insiders recognize and can refer to the rule as a standard for their behaviour, and understand that deviations from the rule will be open to criticism, that distinguishes between a social rule and a "mere group habit" (p. 56).

Social Practice and Common Patterns of Behaviour

To say that a social practice must ultimately be understood in terms of its social context and purpose is, perhaps, the most important point to be made. Indeed, the other points are largely dependent on an understanding of this fundamental one. The second feature I have noted about social practices--namely, that they are characterized by common ways of acting or behaving--is a closely related point. Language offers a good example.

The reason we can communicate within our language communities, to the extent we can, is that we understand common patterns of behaviour in language. We do not necessarily proceed uniformly in this behaviour, but anything that is completely outside the general patterns would not immediately be recognized as part of the practice. Cockney rhyming slang, the pattern of rhyming ("apple and pears" to mean stairs, "holy ghost" to mean toast, for example), is not generally understood in other English-speaking communities, even though the actual words are familiar. It is the common patterns of vocabulary and grammatical structures, in part the use of cryptic rhyme in the Cockney community and the specific noun in others, that comprise a language. In other words, common ways of behaving in language (and in other

social practices) do not just characterize the practice; they, at least partly, constitute the practice.⁹

Other social practices, too, such as law, morality, and democracy are constituted, at least in part, by common ways of behaving. Within the Canadian system of democracy, for example, citizens who reach the age of majority share in the decision-making of the country through elected representatives. Such actions as freely choosing representatives for government, attending public meetings where representatives share and debate positions, lobbying representatives to change policies of government, and so on, are not just characteristic of Canada's democratic government, for these actions constitute the practice as we understand it. Different patterns of behaviour (for example, having government representatives buy their positions instead of being elected, not being able to voice views that oppose the government's, not having access to important information)

9 I say "partly constitute" here because of the reciprocal relation between rule and action. As Taylor (1992) notes, "the latter does not just flow from the former, it transforms it" p. 181. So, rules or norms, as well, are constitutive of social practice. By this I mean that an action, such as saying hello when we meet another person, is in itself constitutive of language as a social practice. However, the fact that we say hello on these occasions is, we say, norm-governed, and this norm is constitutive of the social practice. Patterns of action (such as saying hello) may change as a result of interaction of practitioners over time. At that point we can identify a changed norm.

would not simply signify a change in the democracy; they would constitute a different practice altogether.

Practices tend to evolve over time, however. Participative decision-making at one time involved community meetings where majority positions were made known through a show of hands. Now, it is more likely that secret ballots are used, and sometimes this includes mailed-in votes. It is conceivable that votes may soon be cast by some electronic means of telecommunication. Such modifications do not contradict the purpose of the practice and they generally arise in response to changing conditions of the social context over time.

Social practices change over time through the interactions between and among community members, their activities, and their goals and beliefs. An example from language, one of the most dynamic social practices, illustrates the point. Expressions which represent nonconforming patterns of language behaviour are sometimes introduced in a community. Some time ago, for example, teenagers began to use the expression "he's toast" to mean that the person is "finished" or "done for." Initially, the expression did not fit recognizable patterns of language behaviour. Eventually, though, as the expression was used more frequently and in different circles, the meaning became more accepted. If the

expression becomes widely used, it may have official status conferred by being recognized in dictionaries.

Not all social practices are as dynamic as language, however. Changes of behaviour in practising law, for example, generally require formal changes of the rules of practice. Mechanisms are created in order to change the rules, and, thus, the behaviour. Similarly in practising religion, where customs and expectations are codified, changes generally require formal agreement. Other practices, such as engaging in the polite behaviour of etiquette, are more informal, fewer norms are codified, and they are subject to change more spontaneously.

Social Practice and Norms

Behaviour in a social practice is guided by a complex array of norms. As just indicated, one way in which social practices are distinct from other types of practice or forms of human activity that are not practices, is in the types of norm that guide them, the ways norms are established, and the degree to which the norms are codified and articulated. In this discussion of norms in practices, I will make three major points: there are different kinds of norm and they guide conduct in different ways; because norms are not always codified,

one must make a distinction between following a norm and being able to express it; and, in addition to guiding conduct, norms play important roles in criticizing, justifying, and teaching a practice.

There is a danger of presuming all norms to be of one kind--namely the kind that are stipulated and intended to regulate conduct. Traffic rules which set out speed-limits may be taken as illustrative of norms in this sense. Such rules are deliberately imposed by an authority whose intention is to prescribe or proscribe certain activities. Individuals are expected to sacrifice judgement and autonomy to obedience. However, not all norms are of this kind, and norms do not necessarily play precisely this kind of role.

Consider the difference between two major kinds of norm, namely, formally stipulated rules and informal norms such as social customs.¹⁰ The first kind, which I will call stipulated rules, includes such examples as thou shalt not kill; one cannot consume alcohol until reaching a certain age; one must not exceed the speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour; and, everyone with an

¹⁰ Baker and Hacker (1984) categorize rules of five kinds: those stipulated as law, those that exist as custom, those that have an evaluative role, maxims or precepts, and prescriptive regulations or directions. I distinguish between only two major kinds because I see the others as being subsumed under these two.

income from any source must annually submit a statement of personal income to Revenue Canada by April 30. Examples of the second kind, which I am calling social norms, abound in the sphere of etiquette: men should remove hats in Legions, one should keep one's elbows off the table during a meal, children should address adults with a title (e.g., Mr., Mrs.), and people should queue for the bus in an orderly fashion.

Stipulated rules are formulated by an authoritative body and they have the effect of a mandate, typically with sanctions specified for cases where they are breached. Social norms are generally not codified, published, or enforced by formal sanction. They are embedded in the practice rather than abstracted as formulated rules and they are understood through example and followed by convention of habit and social pressure. In other words, although social norms are generally not stipulated, they nonetheless guide action.

These are not the only kinds of norm one could describe. Some informal norms are actually codified, but they are not authoritative in the same way as stipulated rules. Norms such as maxims, for example, which a person might choose to follow, provide guidance for conduct. Many people guide their behaviour by the maxim "never put off until tomorrow what you can do today." Principles,

as well, may be thought of as norms in that they may provide general guidance for behaviour. One often hears people say that as a matter of principle they must protest a matter, for example.

Some stipulated rules establish directions for particular people engaged in particular activities. Whereas a law or statute on the use of firearms, for example, is broadly directed to the public-at-large, a set of regulations on the use of firearms may be targeted specifically to the police. Similarly, other prescriptive types of rule, such as directions or instructions, are stipulated to have authority in certain circumstances and, thus, are slightly different from what we generally think of as laws.

The point here is not to be comprehensive about the kinds of norm that exist, but to illustrate first, that there are many kinds of norm, and second, that all norms possess some common general features. Clearly, all norms guide conduct--in other words, they set out what is legal or illegal, moral or immoral, acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, and so on. Second, this guidance is authoritative. By authority here, I mean more than the typical sense of authority associated with governance and regulation. Authority is also exerted in social practice in the customs of the group or the historical use of a

norm. Individuals can also invoke norms on their own and, in this sense, are "governing themselves."

It is clear that norms in social practices range in the extent to which and the way in which they are codified or formulated (explicitly articulated in law, stated as expectations in morals, and existing as custom in etiquette) so that it is important to make a distinction between following a norm, and stating or formulating a norm. You can follow a norm, that is, your conduct can be guided by a norm, without necessarily being able to express the norm you are following. Competent practitioners of a practice such as writing poetry follow certain norms, conventions, and standards. Yet, if you were to ask them how to write poetry, they might be unable to formulate the conventions they follow, even though they could surely identify instances of good poetry. If a person had not followed the conventions of writing poetry, competent practitioners would recognize the poetry as flawed. But this does not mean that they would necessarily be able to invoke the formulation of the norm that was or was not followed. When I refer to "norm," then, I refer to the guidance provided by that norm, not its abstracted formulation. This point is particularly important for understanding how one can be considered to be following norms in a social practice,

since many of these are neither formulated nor codified.¹¹

Norms have their primary role in guiding conduct in practice, but this is not their only role. Norms have a role in defining practice. They can be invoked to criticize action and to justify it. And, they can be employed to teach others about a practice or to introduce prospective members to a practice.

Norms are definitive of social practice in that they indicate what the expectations for the practice are and what counts as appropriate behaviour in the practice.¹² The defining role of norms in the case of a social practice can be seen best in the role rules play in games. In baseball, for example, the rules are not something in addition to the game; they largely constitute the game. They set out how the game begins and ends, what it means to win, what counts as scoring,

11 Taylor (1992) is particularly concerned to make this point in his discussion of rule-following. He, however, takes the extreme position that rules, at times, cannot ever be abstracted as formulation. I believe that in saying this, he ignores the distinction between habit and norm following behaviour. In the latter case, one must ultimately be able to refer to the norm to explain one's behaviour.

12 It is important, again, to note the reciprocal relationship norms have with actions. Baker and Hacker (1984) put the point this way "When certain patterns of behaviour obtain then we are justified in talking of a rule as existing. It is a convenient *façon de parler*, an ontological fiction" (p. 263).

what procedures are correct procedures and what are not. If you were to change the rules so that you did not have to run the bases or you were not allowed any strikes, or everybody on the team had a chance to bat before the inning changed, then you would not be playing baseball, but some other game. In just this way, there have come to be variations of baseball called slow pitch and softball.¹³

Norms also provide a basis from which action can be justified or criticized. In a social practice like law, one could criticize another's failure to introduce adequate evidence by referring to the rules that set out what counts as evidence. Similarly, one can justify actions by referring to the norm one is following. For example, one might justify the fact that she is driving on the left hand side of the road by stating that this is the norm followed in the particular jurisdiction. In other words, norms provide a basis from which one can measure conduct as right or wrong, good or bad, moral or immoral, and so on. One follows a rule of conduct in

13 It is possible to change a game, without it amounting to a changed game. In Canadian football, for example, there is talk of changing a rule which now states there shall be three downs, to one that allows four. This change is not considered sufficient to constitute a new game. While some changes would obviously change the game significantly (change in the goal of the game, for example), there is often a fine line between what constitutes a change of such significance that it actually changes the definition of the game (procedural rules, for example).

traffic by driving within the speed limit of 50 kilometres an hour; one's conduct in traffic can be evaluated by invoking the same rule. A child follows a norm of etiquette by addressing his elders with a title, and will be evaluated in this conduct by invoking the same norm. Norms in this way constitute standards for proper or correct behaviour.

It is to this role of justification that we look to determine what are acceptable norms as opposed to merely accepted ones. Case (1993) makes this point about accepted and acceptable behaviour in his discussion about law. The norms of practice to which competent practitioners would refer can be used to differentiate between accepted and acceptable. In the case of law, Case points out an absurd example to make the point:

Cardozo's theory of sentencing known as 'gastronomic jurisprudence' holds that judges' satisfaction with breakfast determines the severity of the sanctions they are likely to hand out that day. This may be an accurate descriptive generalization of judicial behaviour, but it is not a legally accepted standard for judicial decision making and thus judges are unlikely to cite it officially as a reason for sentences. (p. 124)

One important feature of norms in a social practice is that they are not fixed; that is to say, norms may change and are subject to criticism and revision. The degree of formality of the social practice has a bearing

on this aspect of norms. In some more formal social practices, such as law, where norms are codified as rules or laws, mechanisms for changing rules are also codified. In less formal social practices such as etiquette, norms are more fluid and change as a result of tacit agreement.

Finally, norms may prove useful as a means for teaching a social practice. Teaching someone how to speak a language involves, in part, teaching them norms of grammar and vocabulary. Teaching someone about morals largely involves teaching them the norms of morality. I say "in part" and "largely" here because norms play a limited role in teaching a practice. This limit is connected to the earlier discussion which made the distinction between norms and their expression or formulation. Just as being able to follow a norm is not dependent on knowing or being able to articulate the formulation, so being able to express the norm is not necessarily sufficient for knowing how to follow it. It is the difference between, for example, knowing that one ought to treat other people with respect, and being able to decide what action that would imply in any particular case. "Judgement" is the word we use to characterize this latter aspect of norm following, and judgement is learned largely through engagement in the practice. In other words, simply learning the norms as formulations

will not necessarily result in someone being able to engage successfully in the practice.¹⁴

One final point about the distinction between norms or rules and their formulations must be made. The previous comments are not intended to suggest that in most circumstances a competent practitioner would not be able to formulate a rule. Indeed, it would be hard to conceive of any norm or rule as I have been discussing them, which could not be expressed in some form. Moreover, being able to express the norm or rule would be important for teaching the practice and it would be a necessary condition for invoking a rule to justify one's actions, or to criticize someone's conduct.

Before leaving this discussion of norms in social practices, it should be added that it is not necessarily the case that social practices can be understood easily in terms of their norms, or that the norms of any given practice can be listed exhaustively in order to describe or explain the practice. On the whole, social practices are immensely complex, as are the arrays of norms which guide them, the relationship between the norms and the

14 Taylor (1992) puts the point this way "The ability to formulate rules will not in itself be enough. The person of real practical wisdom is not so much characterized by an ability to formulate rules as s/he is by the knowledge s/he ably demonstrates in determining how to act in each particular situation" (p. 182).

actions, and the variety of roles the norms play. The words of Baker and Hacker (1984) emphasize this complexity:

What it [speaking of rules] conceals is that the sole reality of which we speak consists of interlocking patterns of actual and potential justification and explanation, actions and reactions, uses of rule-formulations in guiding conduct or evaluating it. What it misleadingly suggests is that rules are kinds of objects, which exist or can exist independently of what we do with them (by invoking, using, their formulations), and which can, independently of us, determine what we do. (p. 263)

To summarize the points made thus far, a social practice arises from a need in a community to accomplish certain purposes and is, thus, understood in terms of a *telos* and social context. A social practice involves common patterns of behaviour which are guided by a variety of norms. Social practices, while sharing these general features, differ in the extent to which purposes are contested and complex, in the rigidity of the patterns of behaviour, in the degree to which norms can and do change, and in the types of norms that guide the practice. By looking at features of social practices generally, and by explaining how they manifest themselves in various practices, I have prepared the way to consider these features in relation to teaching.

Teaching Conceived as a Social Practice

Context and Telos in Teaching Practice

The first feature of a social practice is clearly consistent with what has already been said about the purposive nature of teaching. Teaching is an activity that has grown out of the need in a community to accomplish certain social purposes. Teaching is fundamentally defined by its social purposes and in public schools these are formulated as goals of education. The goals have their origin in the desire to preserve the cultural heritage of a community, to prepare the next generation to be knowledgeable and responsible members of the community, or in other words, to ensure the continuation of the community and its beliefs and values.¹⁵ To view teaching as a social practice is to acknowledge, first and foremost, the expectations society has for teaching, or in other words, the particular purposes.¹⁶ One might say, then, that the overall goal of teaching is to promote the educational goals and standards of the community. This is not to suggest that

15 The goal of preserving cultural heritage is challenged by those with a social reconstructionist agenda. However, there has not been much success in changing this predominant goal.

16 Society-at-large is not the only source or influence on goals for teaching. As I have previously noted, there are a number of communities, possibly with conflicting values, which exert influence in these matters.

the purposes of teaching are easy to identify and agree upon, however. The purposes of teaching are extremely complex and passionately contested.

Similar to activities such as those that constitute etiquette and democracy, the activities of teaching are inventions, or social constructions. The activities have been created and recreated over time to accomplish their educational purposes. They are, thus, only understood in the light of the values and beliefs fundamental to the social context. In a community where it is believed that children are persons who deserve respect from the teacher, teachers will consider the interests of the children in the course of pursuing educational purposes. Teachers might, for example, include children in decisions about what they will learn or how they will proceed in class. In a community where children are believed to have an inferior status, teachers may feel authorized to pursue educational purposes with little attention to children's interests or supposed needs. Teachers in this context might direct the class in a relatively autocratic way, making all decisions and seeking little but passive behaviour from children. In other words, just as removing hats or keeping them on have meaning only within the particular social context, so it is with many of the activities of teaching.

Furthermore, to engage knowledgeably in the practice of teaching in either of the communities envisaged, requires an explicit understanding of the purpose and social context. Of course, people could be highly trained to engage in a number of teaching activities for a specific context and purpose such that a lack of understanding would not interfere with their ability to teach in that context. However, such training would not prepare a person to deduce novel activities appropriate for the purpose or to respond appropriately to any changes in the specific context. Nor would such a narrowly-trained person be able to justify activities in the light of purpose and context. For example, if a teacher is trained to teach reading by instructing students in the rules of phonics, how would he respond to students who were unsuccessful in achieving the end? How would he respond to changes in the context which included beliefs about reading being the response to meaning? On what bases would the teacher justify activities undertaken? Just as the person referred to earlier was only able to mimic a range of behaviours to meet the requirements of behaving politely, the narrowly-trained teacher would be unable to respond knowledgeably in unfamiliar circumstances or to criticism.

Understanding teaching as a social practice, then, first focuses attention on the paramount importance of

understanding the role and nature of purpose in the practice. The view also emphasizes the need to understand the various contextual factors that must be considered in teaching--the range of values and other specific factors we need to understand in order to teach intelligently in any specific circumstance.

Common Patterns of Behaviour in Teaching Practice

To refer to common patterns or constitutive behaviour is not a typical way to speak of teaching. Yet, the practice actually does involve common patterns of action or behaviour. Indeed, a cursory examination of the practice over time and across cultures indicates a remarkable degree of common patterns of acting in teaching, and this is not merely a contingent point. That these common behaviours actually constitute the practice is a logical conclusion. In the same way as freely choosing representatives of government is not just characteristic, but is constitutive of democracy, the activities of teaching are constitutive of the practice. In other words explaining, showing, questioning, justifying, judging, correcting, and other typical activities of teaching are not simply characteristic of teaching, but rather, as activities directed toward getting people to learn, they are constitutive of

teaching.^{P17} If people were to be engaged in quite different activities, they could not say they were teaching.

Teaching does not, for example, merely involve a custodial role, although the teacher may be charged with the care of children. Persons other than teachers may be charged with the care of children. These care-givers might feed the children, play with them, put them to bed, and generally look after them, but we would not understand the care-givers to be engaged in the practice of teaching. Just as different patterns of behaviour, such as coercion, would constitute a practice different from deciding by majority vote, so patterns of behaviour that merely included giving care to children would constitute a practice different from teaching.

As noted in the first chapter, a range of activities might be chosen as a means for explaining, or questioning, or demonstrating, just as a number of methods in a democracy might be employed to find discover the majority view. But activities that contradict the purpose, that are inappropriate given the social context, or that are unfamiliar to the participants of the practice, would not, at least initially, be accepted as

17 The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1985), for example, under "teaching" reads, in part, "to explain, show, state by way of instruction."

constitutive of the practice. In speaking a language in my community, a particular pattern of words, say, "she book for is dress build," would simply not make sense, because it does not conform with common patterns of speaking our language and does not appear to be directed towards communication. In teaching, merely taking custodial responsibility for children is not a familiar pattern of behaviour, and it does not aim toward the purpose of education.

As is the case with other social practices, some activities of teaching have changed over time. Changes of view concerning the role and treatment of children have, for example, resulted in some changes. The passivity required of children during an explanation in the days of Dickens' Mr. Gradgrind is no longer expected in most North American schools. Greater respect for children as persons has resulted in somewhat changed expectations about the degree to which children should be treated as individuals, included as active participants in decisions about their own learning, and encouraged to challenge claims made by the teacher and other students. Advances in technology mean that books are now available to all students, and, thus, are more widely used in teaching activities; and the same is true of video equipment, computers, and other electronic devices. As with the changing nature of polite behaviour and

speaking, these changes in teaching activities have evolved over time, as values and technology change, in the course of the interactions of teachers with each other and with their students.

In the context of individual schools, as well, the practice of the members of the school community may change. A staff may examine and question the purpose or expectations for their teaching and try out new patterns of behaviour for achieving the purpose. They might, for example, agree that it is important to develop students' ability to think critically about scientific claims, and include more critical questions in their laboratory exercises. In cases like this, just as a new expression in language begins to be used and understood in the interactions of a community, the new teaching activity may eventually begin to be acceptable as an expectation of the practice of teaching in the school community.¹⁸

Thus, the activities of teaching can be viewed as constituted by, as well as constitutive of, the practice. The implications of viewing teaching as a social practice, and seeing the shared behaviours as constituting the practice, are considerable in respect of

18 Several case studies report on the ways behaviours tend to become part of the practice in that community. One particularly insightful example is The Peel Project (Baird & Mitchell, 1990).

changing or improving the practice generally and changing the practice of an individual more specifically. It helps explain why some activities, such as lecturing, are enduring even when other methods may be more appropriate. It helps explain why introducing new activities is often met with resistance. It has implications, therefore, for activities aimed at improving practice, such as the way we engage in research about teaching and the way we conduct preservice and inservice education for teachers. More will be said about this later.

Norms in Teaching Practice

One can see from even a superficial examination of teaching in public schools that the kinds of norm described in the previous section are evident in the practice of teaching. A number of formally stipulated rules mandate certain kinds of action in teaching. Certainly, some social norms, by custom and social pressure, exert considerable authority on teaching behaviour. If one is to understand teaching, how it is currently practiced in schools, and how it might be improved or refined, it is important to understand what role these various norms play in the practice.

The context of teaching in schools is to a considerable extent established by formally stipulated rules and these significantly guide the practice. In British Columbia, for example, laws and regulations promulgated by the Ministry of Education set out the length of the school day and year, prescribe the ethical responsibility of teachers for their students, and proscribe certain disciplinary measures such as corporal punishment. Codes of ethics enforced by the professional association outline the correct relationship teachers should have with each other and the responsibilities teachers have to their own professional development. Curriculum "guidelines" established by the Ministry of Education outline what content is to be learned by students in each grade. School policies set out behaviour expected within the school in terms of reporting on student progress, using standardized tests, and the day-to-day administrative functions of the teacher.

These rules establish the educational context, and do not necessarily directly guide teaching behaviour. However, it is reasonable to assume that the context in which one engages in the practice of teaching will have an effect on the practice, at least indirectly.¹⁹ A

¹⁹ McNeil (1986) argues this is the case in her thesis about the effect of bureaucratic control on teaching. She found evidence to support her thesis in case studies

timetable setting out the rules for school organization, by breaking up the day into five separate periods, limits the amount of time a teacher has to explain new material and to assess the degree to which students are gaining an understanding of it. If students are organized into cohorts which the teachers see only twice a week, and if they have two hundred students working through the timetable in this way, their ability to judge and correct any misunderstanding is even more severely curtailed. Similarly, curriculum guides that prescribe what it is the students should know or be able to do by the end of the grade, and standardized tests for which teachers have to prepare students, establish rules which teachers are expected to follow. Sometimes these rules guide behaviour in ways that conflict with what competent practitioners consider to be proper or good teaching.

For example, in some jurisdictions, formal rules have established a minimum set of competencies students are expected to achieve in each grade of schooling. Studies, such as those conducted by McNeil (1986), indicate that this rule tends to limit teaching activities to those that merely accomplish such

of several schools in the United States. McNeil maintains that administrative control resulted in common behaviours: teachers lecture with oversimplified explanations, employ lists of facts rather than complex propositions, and ask for little engagement of their students in order to meet the demands for classroom management and minimum competencies.

competencies. Teaching trivial lists of facts, testing for retention of these facts, and drilling in minimum skills have become accepted practice. As I have previously explained, it is important to distinguish between "accepted" and "acceptable" practice. While teaching trivial lists of facts may be accepted as the norm, it is certainly not an acceptable practice. As we have already noted, one way to make this distinction is to refer to what competent practitioners would identify as the norms of proper practice. If they would not, for example, justify their actions by citing the norm of teaching lists of trivial facts as proper practice, then it would clearly not be acceptable. Norms of the practice which set out what counts as good teaching behaviours, those which competent practitioners would invoke, are the standards by which actions can be determined as acceptable or merely accepted. Furthermore, where there is a conflict between norms invoked as justification for action, then purpose must be considered to adjudicate between these. If the accepted behaviour is in conflict with the purpose of teaching, then it is not acceptable behaviour.²⁰

20 A teacher may invoke the rule of minimum competency as it is stipulated to justify her actions. However, we might then refer to purpose in order to adjudicate between the conflicting rules and norms.

Formally stipulated rules are readily recognized in studies of teaching. New rules are sometimes promulgated as means for improving practice. Often these strategies for change fail because of the authority of social norms that create resistance to change attempted through the formal ones. Perhaps even more importantly for understanding the practice, then, are the informal social norms that guide the activities of teaching. The fact that lecturing is a common activity in teaching; that teachers tend to teach new information to the whole class and then work individually with students who need help; and, that teachers commonly use the lecture as a strategy for explaining new material, suggests that rules exist. These are not codified, and are not mandated to prescribe or proscribe behaviour, but they nonetheless exert authority in their guiding behaviour. Furthermore, teachers invoke such norms in justifying their practice.

Consider a teacher entering the profession. Perhaps the teacher has recently completed a preparatory program where she may have learned about cooperative learning. It is very likely the teacher has plans to try to incorporate cooperative learning activities into her teaching. Common models of cooperative learning involve students and their teachers in activities that are quite different from those traditionally used in teaching. The teacher's role is to facilitate the process in which

students are engaged, rather than to provide direct instruction; there is typically a limited role for the teacher to explain new material, demonstrate skills, question and reason with students. Students are expected to teach and learn from each other and to seek minimal guidance from the teacher.

What happens when it turns out that the new teacher hoping to incorporate cooperative learning in her teaching finds herself in a school where all the other teachers are lecturing their students, where students are encouraged to be competitive in their achievements, and where the parents have expectations that their children will learn from the teacher and compete with other students for grades? No formal rule says that a teacher may not engage in activities different from the predominant ones in the school. It is very likely, however, because the norms of the practice (some of which are unexpressed) exert enormous authority, that the teacher will not persist in incorporating cooperative learning in her teaching. This is one example where it is clear that the norms of the practice, as defined by teachers in this hypothetical school, guide a teacher's behaviour and it is indicative of the ways such norms work to direct the practice of teaching generally. To ignore norms in the culture of teaching is to misunderstand the practice. The role of norms in

teaching have consequences for how one prepares teachers for the practice and how one attempts to improve and refine the practice.

The same teacher referred to in the last example will be judged by the standards held (by parents, other teachers, administrators, and so on) for what counts as good teaching and this will be related to what is the purpose of the enterprise. Perhaps the commonly agreed purpose of teaching is the intellectual development of students; then, what counts as good teaching is likely to involve being able to explain new concepts to students, to question students as they study the concepts, to judge the progress students are making, and to justify and expect students to justify claims made. These, then, are the standards that will guide the new teacher's conduct. Cooperative learning, which typically designates the teacher's role as guiding and facilitating the students' natural tendencies to learn, would likely not meet the prevalent standards and expectations. Consequently, the teacher's conduct would likely be guided in different directions that would meet the standards. Attempts to introduce new teaching strategies in the practice, without consideration of overriding purpose, fail to acknowledge the roles such norms serve.²¹

21 Many debates about methods such as cooperative learning currently centre on means, with little attention paid to ends. While empirical questions about means (is

Other norms guide teaching, as well. Precepts or maxims, such as "be tough at the beginning of the year, then relax when it is clear you have control" guide the conduct of some teachers. In some communities, specific regulations may prescribe certain teaching activities. In the State of California, for example, cooperative learning was mandated for teachers teaching mathematics in all elementary schools.

Principles also have a role in guiding teaching behaviour. This is where some of the principles outlined in the effective teaching research may be considered. Principles, for example, that suggest that praise is generally important for motivating students to learn, that students should be treated with respect, and that classrooms should be well organized are ones that teachers should generally follow. In these cases, however, knowing the formulation is not sufficient for being able to follow the norms. The importance of judgement in applying these principles cannot be overemphasized. In other words, principles are not universal prescriptive rules that must be applied in all cases. They are, rather, general guidelines to which an

this an effective method?) are important, I maintain they cannot meaningfully be considered in isolation from questions about ends.

individual may refer when deciding on appropriate action in particular cases.

One more dimension of this view of norms is important. Just as some norms for schooling establish the context for teaching, so others exist as part of the larger community in which teaching is engaged. These norms are part of larger social practices such as the moral and political practices of the community, and these, too, guide the activities of teaching. Teaching does not exist as a practice unto itself, but as part of the social fabric of the community. The rules, norms, and standards of the community in which teaching is practiced, thus, also need to be considered. The fact that North Americans generally have changed some of their values about the role and place of childhood, for example, changes the way teachers engage in their practice. Similarly, expectations for what children will learn held generally by the business community, exert influence on the conduct of teachers as they engage in their practice. To understand teaching, therefore, one needs to be cognizant of norms of the practices in which teaching is embedded.

It is clear that the complexity of teaching can be characterized in terms of the immense array of its norms, which often conflict with each other and with the purpose

of the practice. The stability of the practice indicates that the norms are not nearly so fluid as those of language and etiquette. Yet, neither are they as formalized as those in law or religion. Since practice is guided by these norms, efforts to understand, to improve, or to change teaching must begin with an understanding of their nature and source.

Norms and Judgement in Teaching Practice

Once we see that teaching is a social practice and that it is governed by certain kinds of norm, we can more fully capture the notion of judgment in teaching. In the course of their day-to-day activities, teachers are often unable to explain why they acted in certain ways; they clearly are applying judgement in these circumstances, but they are not necessarily readily able to express reasons for the judgement. When asked, for example, why he repeated his directions for the next exercise students were to complete, a teacher may not be able immediately to say it was a matter of this student asking a question, or that student looking confused, but might say, instead, it just felt right to do it.

The explanation teachers often use for this experience is that they operate on intuition. The

researchers who advocate that teaching should be conceived as craft may say, as Clandinin (1986) does for example, that it is a kind of intuitive nonpropositional knowledge that is embedded in the actions of teachers. On the other hand, those who see teaching as a technical enterprise maintain that teachers deliberate about alternative courses of action, weigh the merits of these, and chose the best possible course to follow (Clark and Peterson, 1986). In either of these cases, one is left with an unsatisfactory explanation: either the conduct is beyond explanation, ineffable, somewhat mysterious; or we have to accept that teachers somehow find time to deliberate in the course of split-second decisions. In the first case, there is no way to conceive of correcting or criticizing a teacher's judgement. The second case challenges our common sense understanding of what it is possible to do in the midst of a teaching episode.

Because teaching is a purposive activity with a range of behaviours that meet that purpose, where decisions must, to a large degree, depend on specific context, judgement is an important concept for understanding teaching. Judgement is unlike guessing in that a guess ("mere guess" is a telling phrase) has no relevant grounds.²² If a teacher says she "hazarded a

²² See a discussion employing distinctions between guessing, knowing and judging in Green (1971).

guess" that it was a good idea to explain a concept in mathematics using a concrete example, surely no one would be satisfied with her explanation. We expect teachers to proceed in their practice on a more reasonable basis than guesswork. Judging is also unlike knowing, however, in that to say you know something means you are able to provide adequate evidence for the truth of the claim. One might not expect a teacher to know, in that she could provide evidence, that explaining the mathematics concept with a concrete example was the correct thing to do. Judgement is more like knowing than it is like guessing, however. If you are asked to offer a judgement, you are expected to be able to provide some relevant grounds or reasons for your judgement. The teacher might say she used the concrete example, because, given the way students had misunderstood a similar concept previously explained in abstract terms, she judged that this would be more effective. Judgement requires standards and relevant grounds.

The view of teaching as being guided by a variety of norms provides an alternative to the unsatisfactory explanation of judgement being merely intuitive or its technical alternative which suggests teachers would be able to deliberate on the spot about possible courses of action. In this explanation of teaching practice, the norms of the practice provide the grounds for judgment.

In other words, a teacher could articulate the norms to which his actions adhered as the grounds for his judgement.

In my previous discussion on norms, I noted that a person can be following a norm, yet be unable to express its formulation. If this is the case, then, a teacher's judgement that students required a concrete example for understanding the mathematics concept might suggest that the teacher was following implicit norms about what constitutes good teaching (good teaching involves assessing students' understanding and being sensitive to students' reactions). Standards are involved in the judgement even though the teacher may not be able to express them. The teacher who decides to do a science lesson even though mathematics was scheduled might say he was acting on intuition, but it is very likely that he was following a norm that suggests the purpose would better be served by this action. A teacher who asks a student if she is feeling well, might say she just had a feeling something was not right. But it is more likely that the teacher recognized a student's behaviour as being unusual and was following an ethical norm about caring for the children in her charge. In other words, in exercising the judgment in each of these cases, a teacher was following a norm which, in turn, provides the grounds for the judgement.

Judgement, then, is not something in addition to knowing the norms, rules, and standards and being able to follow them. Instead, it is knowing the norms and being able to follow the appropriate norms or to satisfy the requirements of the norms in a given situation.²³ A teacher can demonstrate good judgement without being able to articulate the array of norms which she is following. This view means that we need not try to explain actions in terms of conscious deliberations about the problem and alternative courses of action. Nor do we have to resort to the explanation that teachers seem to act intuitively. Rather actions can be explained as a matter of appropriately following norms, rules, and standards that one understands as constituting the practice.

Norms and Rationality in Teaching Practice

An important point follows from this view of norms in teaching: if teachers are going to be able to do more than simply follow the norm or rule--that is, if the rule is to be invoked to criticize or justify conduct, or to teach about the practice, then it is necessary for teachers to know the rule formulation. We may identify

23 Selman (1988) also makes this point in a critique of Schon's notion of reflective practice.

teachers as competent practitioners when we observe them engaging intelligently in the activities of teaching in relation to purpose and context, and so on. If, however, they are going to be in a position to justify their activities, criticize the practice, or teach someone about the practice, then they must be able to invoke the appropriate rules, norms, or standards. This raises another point about viewing teaching as norm-governed. The view offers insight into the essential feature of teaching that I have called its rational feature. In the first chapter, I argued that because teaching is a purposive activity, it has to be rational, in the sense that teachers have to have reason for their actions. Given that teaching is essentially a rational activity, norms, acting as reasons for conduct, play a crucial role in the practice. In other words, the acceptable norms of the practice provide the grounds for judging what is good practice.

The rationality I am conceptualizing contrasts with the technical rationality disparaged in recent times for its pretensions to objectivity, value-neutrality, and detachment from emotions. The rationality I am here referring to is dependent on the social purpose of the practice, community values, the norms of the practice, as well as the knowledge of particular situations, knowledge of the subject being taught, knowledge of learning, and

so on. That is to say, there is both a normative and a factual element in this rationality. It is largely teleological reasoning in that teachers ought to be able to explain their actions in the light of their purposes and the constitutive norms of the practice which guide them.²⁴

Consider the range of norms which a teacher might satisfactorily invoke as explanation: I did that (explained the concept of sustainability) because "sustainability" is an important concept students need if they are to become responsible citizens (a normative claim about purpose) and because students need this prior knowledge before they can properly assess environmental policies (citing a principle of learning). I did that (changed the time when social studies was scheduled) because it is important for students to learn how to debate the issues in the text (a normative claim about purpose) and because as a rule, on Friday afternoon, the students leave early leaving less time for discussion (citing convention and informal norms of good teaching). I did that (held a formal debate) because I want students to value the need to provide good reason (a normative

²⁴ This sketch of rationality bears a resemblance to Fenstermacher's (1986) conception of practical reasoning in teaching. Fenstermacher uses the model of a syllogism to explain the reasoning, with normative claims and factual claims as premises which lead to reasonable action.

claim about purpose) and they learn this best through the course of engaging in debate (citing a principle of learning). These explanations are teleological. In other words, the action taken by the teacher was authorized or required by the purpose and the norm, and the action can thus be justified by invoking the purpose and the norm.²⁵

Summary

In the introduction to this thesis I argued that there are five features essential to understanding the practice of teaching. The practice is purposive; it involves a wide range of activities; it is rational; it is social; and it has a moral dimension. My position is that popular conceptions of teaching distort the enterprise by focusing on one or more of these features to the exclusion of the others. This distortion was evident in the conceptions of teaching as a technical enterprise, as a craft, and as a political activity. The conception of teaching as a social practice provides a

²⁵ This is not intended to be a full account of rationality in teaching. I only wish to show how a view of social practice does provide insight into this feature of teaching. Of course, teachers must engage in debates about conflicting norms, and about values in the community which conflict with good practice. They must also engage in debates about purpose. It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss the aspects of normative reasoning involved in these kinds of debate.

more robust characterization of teaching than do these alternative views, and the conception does justice to the five essential features.

From the previous discussion, it is clear that recognizing that teaching is a kind of social practice necessarily draws our attention to the fact that it is a purposive activity, since that is in part what we mean by a social practice. Furthermore, the view of teaching as an activity that has grown out of a social purpose in a community properly places understanding of the practice in a social context, where community norms form part of the norms of the practice. The fact that teaching conceived of as a social practice emphasizes the degree to which patterns of behaviour are shared and norm-governed, offers insight into the judgment exercised in the day-to-day activities of teaching. It also provides an appropriate way to conceive of the rational nature of the practice. Moral conduct, as a set of norms guiding practice in which teaching is embedded, is also accounted for in this conception. Thus, the essential features of teaching are accounted for and insight into their nature is provided in the conception of teaching as a social practice.

It is worth noting that features of teaching captured in conceptions of technical practice, craft, and

political activity are accounted for in the conception of teaching as a social practice, without the attendant distortions evident in these conceptions.

The techniques or routines studied in conceptions of teaching as a technical enterprise are better understood, not as discrete activities of teaching, but as activities which, in part, constitute the practice. In this latter view, plans to introduce a new activity are properly understood in terms of the beliefs fundamental to the social purpose and context, and the rules and norms that guide and have guided behaviour in the practice over time.

The view of teaching as craft, which emphasizes the need for teachers to engage in their practice and learn from the engagement, is supported in the view presented here. It is understood, for example, that some norms can only be learned through practice. The view of social practice expands upon the notion by providing a means for making distinctions between accepted and acceptable practice. This view also provides a more adequate explanation for the so-called intuitive judgement of teachers by viewing judgement as knowing and understanding the norms of the practice. Seeing teaching as a social practice means that judgement can be enhanced by greater understanding of a broad range of norms and

their roles. It also provides an important view of judgement as being open to criticism and justification based on standards of the practice.

The critical pedagogues' view that teaching has to be seen as part of the larger social, political and economic context is also accounted for in the conception I have outlined. Teaching is a practice that exists as part of communities where other social practices involve rules, norms, and standards that guide behaviour. Conduct in teaching as a practice embedded in the social, moral, political, and economic practices must, therefore, be seen to be guided by the norms of those practices.

As I have said from the outset, the implications for understanding teaching as a social practice are significant, and they affect the ways one would approach research into teaching, preparation of new teachers, ongoing professional development of teachers, and evaluation of teaching. Each of these areas is currently guided by conceptions of teaching that distort the practice. In the next chapter, I elaborate on the implications and explain how conceiving of teaching as a social practice would more adequately guide these other activities.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS FOR CONCEIVING OF TEACHING AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

Our understanding of a practice influences our understanding of activities and issues related to that practice. If, for example, we think of reading and writing primarily as matters of decoding and coding, then we are likely to teach and study the activities in ways that focus on symbols as representations of sounds. A reading series used in the sixties was based on this view of reading (Burnett, 1965). Content was chosen to isolate certain letters and sounds (e.g., "a cat sat on a mat") in the belief that these were the "building blocks" for learning to read. An alternative view sees reading and writing principally as means for communication among people who share a language. Such a view might influence related activities in different directions, with focus more on the expression and comprehension of ideas. Whole language reading programs, for example, are based primarily on this view. In such programs, children are encouraged to compose stories about their experiences (with the help of the teacher) and then to read these stories, learning vocabulary

and phonetics within the meaningful context of their own experience.¹

As I have asserted throughout this thesis, the same point can be made more generally about teaching: whatever view we have of the practice will influence activities related to it. It is critical, then, that we have a clear and appropriate conception of teaching, not only because we will be able to proceed more competently in the practice, but because we will also be able to engage more appropriately in related activities. Three significant related activities are: research and theorizing about teaching, evaluation of teaching, and teacher preservice and inservice education. In this chapter, I illustrate the implications of conceiving of teaching as a social practice in each of the three areas. In particular, I argue that this conception provides insight into and has potential to resolve many of the central conflicts and dilemmas that beset these aspects of teaching.

Research and Theorizing about Teaching

If studies of teaching were predicated on a recognition of teaching as a species of social practice, basic decisions

¹ This is not a simple dichotomy, of course, though it is often reduced to one in discussions about phonics and whole language approaches to teaching reading. See, Smith (1992).

about what questions should be asked and how studies should proceed would be influenced in certain specific directions. Consider, again, the characteristics of a social practice in respect of teaching: teaching grows out of a need to promote the educational goals and standards of a community, and, thus, must be understood in terms of purpose and context; it involves common patterns of teaching behaviour, and these are at least partly constitutive of and constituted by the practice; and the patterns of behaviour are guided by a complex array of norms.

Such a view would have four consequences for research into teaching. First, one of the goals of research into teaching would be to study the range of norms that guide the practice and to make these explicit. This would involve both empirical studies designed to determine what are the norms, and normative studies to determine what the norms ought to be. Second, as I shall explain, it would be essential that teachers engage in inquiry into their own practice. Third, teaching activities would need to be studied, not simply as discrete techniques, but rather in the light of the constitutive activities of the practice, which have a history, and which are guided by a complex array of norms. Fourth, studies of teaching would clearly need to consider the purposes to which it is supposedly directed, and the social context in which the practice is situated. I shall explain and illustrate each of these

implications in turn, starting with the last and working through to the first.

Consideration of Purpose and Context

Let us agree that the major goal of all research into teaching is to understand better the practice in order to improve it. Given that teaching is a social practice, one thing that is immediately obvious is that we ought to be concerned with research into the nature of the purposes that govern the enterprise. We also ought to be concerned to examine teaching behaviour in view of the social context.² It is precisely on these points that the research focused on technical aspects of teaching come under criticism from those who hold to other views of the practice. Those who see teaching as a craft criticize the technical focus for its neglect of understanding of purpose or context because it disregards the "situatedness" and personal and practical nature of teachers' work (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Schon, 1983). Researchers in the

2 Of course, these are not novel ideas that arise only from a conception of teaching as social practice. Attending to the purpose and context of teaching, at least ostensibly, is acknowledged even by those who focus on technical concerns. Nonetheless, researchers continue to conduct studies with little attention to these factors, perhaps believing the questions can be dealt with separately and belong in the domain of philosophy of education. I suggest that a conception of teaching as social practice will raise these issues to the forefront of all inquiry into teaching.

political category have the same criticism, but also attack the motives for such technical research, saying that it is ultimately intended to control teachers (Apple, 1990; Giroux, 1988; Smyth, 1988).

As I pointed out in previous chapters, however, because of their own limited views of teaching, neither of these critical positions take the view of purpose and context in teaching that is implied by a conception of social practice. In craft conceptions, the focus for study is the individual teacher's construction of knowledge in context. Such studies as Clandinin's (1986) work on teachers' images and the work of Butt and Raymond (1989) on teachers' biographies, for example, explore individual teachers' beliefs about teaching. While personal beliefs may be important for understanding one's own place in the practice, they do not necessarily lead to greater understanding of the nature of the practice *per se*. Inquiry into personal beliefs may provide a place from which to begin inquiry into the social practice; researchers who hold the view that teaching is a craft, however, do not explicitly take the next step. They, thus, fail to provide the broad perspective that would add to the individual teacher's understanding of how their own patterns of behaviour are guided by norms of the practice and influenced by other social forces. Without this greater understanding teachers

will not be in an optimum position to understand or criticize the practice or to justify their own behaviour.

Studies that conceive of teaching as a political activity assume certain purposes for teaching--namely, emancipation of students and the reconstruction of society. Consequently, studies do inquire into the social purposes of education accepted in a community, albeit for the specific purpose of searching for the roots of inequity. Because of their focus on social influences, they also examine other features of the context in which teaching is situated, and conclusions have contributed to a better understanding of this aspect of teaching practice. For example, Oakes (1985) provides reasonable and helpful explanations of the effects of streaming students, the practice of sorting students by ability. Her thesis calls streaming into question because it appears to be directly related to preconceived expectations based on students' socioeconomic backgrounds. Her conclusions, that such practices serve to replicate the social order, provide grounds for reexamining the complexity of school organization. Nonetheless, as I argued in Chapter Four, by focusing on predetermined ends and examining the context primarily to identify instances of power and oppression, the view is limited.

Studies which recognize teaching as a social practice would focus directly on notions of purpose and context as

matters necessary for understanding teaching practice. This would mean that descriptive studies of teaching strategies would include these considerations. Consider how the proceedings and findings of Evertson and Brophy (reported in Brophy and Good, 1986), described in Chapter Two, would differ if this point of view had been adopted. Rather than searching for generalizable principles for effective teaching, the researchers would seek to richly describe teaching activities intended for specific purposes in a specific situation. Rather than systematically observing teachers' behaviour in isolation, researchers would describe the context in which the teachers were working: the nature of the students, characteristics of the teacher, the student-teacher relationship, the values and beliefs generally held in the various communities of interest, educational norms, and other social and historical forces at work. They would study the proximate immediate community to determine what educational purposes and expectations were prominent. They would ask teachers about their immediate purposes and how these related to, or possibly conflicted with, other community expectations. Consequently, the researchers would be in a position to consider the teaching practices they observed in light of these richly described contextual factors. Conclusions of such studies, instead of attempting to prescribe strategies for general application, would be aimed at clearly reporting on teaching in specific situations. Those who study the research findings would not

find specific suggestions for application in their classrooms, but rather, rich descriptions of practice from which they might gain insight into their own situations and practice.

The proposal I have outlined is very different from the one that generated the recent work of Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993), although both consider a wide range of variables. The Wang *et al* study, searching for a knowledge base, employed research experts, research reviews, and meta-analyses to isolate over two hundred variables that influence achievement. They grouped these into six categories (home and community educational contexts; school demographics, climate, culture, policies, and practices; design and delivery of curriculum and instruction; classroom practices; and student characteristics). Analyses were then conducted to determine relationships among the groups, and to identify those which have most influence on achievement. From these results, they report on which categories exert the greatest influence on school learning. While the variables identified might provide a useful framework for investigating a specific context where specific practices are situated, I maintain that taking the results from disparate studies, employing statistical analyses to identify relationships, and generalizing these to produce a knowledge base for school learning will not substantially change teaching practice.

In the case of both approaches to studying teaching, teachers would need to consider findings in respect of their own teaching situation. In the Wang et al study, teachers would have general principles associated with achievement, but little knowledge about the judgement involved in their application in a specific context. In the study where findings would be described within a rich context, teachers would have an idea of successful activities and the conditions in which teachers exercised judgement in their use. I suggest that this latter report would be more helpful for teachers in understanding the practice.

An appreciation of teaching as a social practice would mean that Clandinin's study of teachers' images, reported in Chapter Three, would be seen, not as the end of the inquiry, but as a point of departure for teachers' inquiry into purposes for education generally held, social forces at work in the context, and other important considerations. The purpose of such inquiry would be for teachers to better understand their own beliefs and practices in the light of community expectations and other social and educational norms. The norms and standards of the practice provide individuals with a means for understanding and mediating their idiosyncratic understandings, for criticizing current standards, and for justifying their actions with respect to standards. How much more beneficial Clandinin's research

would have been for the teachers had the inquiry been extended to include purpose and context of the practice.

Ginsberg's study on professionalism, reported in Chapter Four, would not have assumed a) that the purpose of teaching is to address inequities, and b) that the view of professionalism would play itself out in power relationships in the classroom. Rather, the study would have more openly considered what purposes were held for teaching in that community, what features of the context were important for understanding the teachers' view of professionalism, and perhaps, how those aspects related to the teachers' practice in the classroom. The purpose of such a study would not be to confirm that societal inequities reproduce themselves in power relationships in the classroom, but to understand how the practice of teaching is influenced by other social norms. This broader focus would have permitted a more complex understanding of the norms and their influence than did the more unidirectional search reported by Ginsberg.

Recognizing teaching as a social practice would mean that some studies would focus entirely on questions about purposes for teaching. What should they be? What are they, in fact? Do they differ from place to place? Should they differ? In all of the cases just described, and in research generally, I argue that the findings would more appropriately contribute to our understanding of the complex

nature of the practice of teaching. Furthermore, by conceiving more richly of the practice in the initial instance, there would be less possibility of distortion in the interpretation of findings by others, a problem, which in Chapter One, I identified as being associated with studies based on other conceptions.

Teaching Activities Constitutive of Practice

In relation to what I have suggested to be the third implication of acknowledging teaching as a social practice, it would be more profitable to study teaching strategies, not as discrete activities, or "acts" of teaching, but rather as activities which need to be considered from the perspective of constitutive activities of the practice. In part, this means considering the activity in relation to purpose and context, but I mean more than this. As I explained in Chapter Five, norm-governed patterns of behaviour, are, in part, constituted by and constitutive of the social practice.

This point has implications for the potential of research to improve practice in two different ways. First, implementation issues, those factors which influence whether teachers will take up an idea, are raised. A second issue arising from this point concerns the complex array of norms

that operate in any specific context, and considerations about whether, given these factors, we would conclude that we should implement a particular activity. If research is meant to lead to greater understanding of teaching, and ultimately, to improve practice, then consideration must be given to how findings might be and should be used in practice. Studying an activity such as cooperative learning as a discrete activity may lead to conclusions about the general effectiveness of cooperative learning in the teaching of social studies to adolescent students. But we cannot assume that this conclusion from research will then be applied in practice, nor that it should be.

First, consider the implementation issues. If cooperative learning has not yet been seen to be a part of teaching practice, how would such findings find their way into the classroom? Would mandating the use of an activity actually change the practice? In other words, would a change in rules change practice? If not, where would one start to introduce such a strategy so that it eventually came to be seen as constitutive of the practice? How does cooperative learning relate to what competent practitioners currently understand to be the common patterns of teaching? What norms of the practice are present and how would they be affected?

Studies which are guided by conceptions of teaching as a technical enterprise, a craft, or a political activity, do not explicitly deal with teaching activities in relation to norm governed behaviour in the practice. The studies do not directly address the complex questions just posed. Techniques are chiefly investigated as though they were independent entities which can be learned or selected for use by individual teachers in their day-to-day activities. If it were the case that teachers simply can or do adopt new strategies gleaned from the research, one would expect to see considerably different techniques used from class to class and from community to community. Clearly, these conditions do not exist. The various activities in evidence in teaching practice, rather, are remarkably stable and the behaviour patterns of teachers quite uniform.³ Indeed, the common lament, that research does not inform practice may, in part, be a result of this misunderstanding of the nature of the activities of teaching.⁴ Studies intending to add to

3 See, for example, studies by Goodlad (1983) and Cuban (1984) which indicate the remarkable consistency of teacher behaviour from community to community and over time.

4 I recognize that the relationship between theory and practice in teaching is a complex one and do not intend to imply that this one factor is in itself explanatory. Others have analysed the problem and argued, for example, that it resides in the fact that many educational theories are simply not good theories (Barrow, 1984), that the notion of theory as scientific explanation is too narrowly construed for teaching (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), or that the reliance on theories designed to study psychological phenomena is misplaced (Egan, 1983). The well-known O'Connor-Hirst debate (see discussion of the debate by Carson, 1982), explores the question of whether educational theory is a possibility (i.e. does theory allow for the consideration of values?). And, so on.

the understanding of teaching and to improve the practice should consider this important fact. In most current studies about teaching practice based on technical, craft or political conceptions, however, little account is taken of the strong authority which norms have in guiding activities in the practice. A considerably richer set of findings would result if the questions posed above were part of the inquiries into teaching practice.

Considering the issue of whether an activity would be appropriate for a given context, another set of questions needs to be answered. For example, introducing the findings of a research study which concludes in general that integrating studies in the humanities increases the grade eight students' understanding of literature and history, may or may not lead to the conclusion that this strategy should be adopted in any given context. As Werner (1991) points out in a study of secondary teaching and curriculum integration, several very powerful norms work against such a change in practice. Teachers currently see their roles defined by their own subject area expertise. Is this, in the context of secondary schools, a valuable norm, or one that ought to be challenged? The schools are organized into departments and around timetables which foster the individualization of subjects and of teachers. Whether or not this norm could or should be changed would need to be considered. Teachers' own ideas of autonomy often work against the kind of

collaboration that would be required, and again, questions about the acceptance of such a norm deserves considerable attention if something like integrating studies is to be suggested for the context. Findings from current research, then, regardless of how convincing they are in general, do not necessarily mean that the strategy should be adopted.

If a study on integration were to be based on a notion of social practice, however, these very norms would be studied. Integrating curriculum as an activity of teaching would be studied within a school community. Teachers would be asked to consider the activity in the light of their current practice, to examine where it relates to or conflicts with beliefs they currently hold about teaching. Researchers, and the teachers they work with, would examine the purposes of their work, the students they teach, their relationships with other teachers, and other features of the context in which they work. The norms that fostered, or alternatively hampered, teachers as they attempted to integrate curriculum would be noted and questioned. Rules that established timetables or other organizational features would be critically analysed for their effect on the activity. Expectations and beliefs held about cooperation and competition, in the school community and its proximate community, would be identified and critically analysed. The result would be a report which acknowledges the complexity of the relationship between a teaching activity and the

norms of the practice through an in-depth look at one school's attempt to adopt a particular activity. Such findings would increase the understanding of those reading about the study and could increase the likelihood of other teachers examining and changing their own situations by asking the same kinds of question. Ultimately, as well, teachers would be able to determine whether, all things considered, integrated studies should be adopted.

Teachers Engage in Inquiry

All research and theorizing is aimed at understanding a phenomenon. Theorizing about a social practice, however, is different from theorizing about phenomena in the natural and physical sciences.⁵ Although the point of each is to find a satisfactory understanding for a phenomenon or, in other words, to find out what is really going on, the specific goals and results of each are quite different. In natural and physical science, the goal is to discover underlying processes or mechanisms that explain the action, often to provide us with more effective ways of controlling, predicting, or using the phenomenon. The phenomenon that is studied is not itself changed by this discovery, although our way of understanding it may change. Theories in

⁵ Taylor (1983) makes this important distinction when arguing that theory is a social practice.

astronomy have not changed the number and motion of the planets, but our understanding of the phenomenon has changed (and may change again). Geological theories have not changed the process of erosion, but our changed understanding has changed our ability to curb it, and so on.

Theorizing about a social practice, however, is directed to a better understanding of the practices in which we may be engaged, and about which we have implicit or unformulated understandings. The better and more explicit understanding is meant to lead to better practice. By theorizing, we may question and change our beliefs about the practice, its purpose and guiding standards. We may challenge and change the activities which constitute the practice. In other words, theorizing may change the very nature of the practice. Feminist theorizing has had this effect, for example. Partly as a result of theories about the oppression of women in families, practices such as parenting have changed. Furthermore, it is important to note that, for the women who have engaged in the theorizing, practices have changed most.⁶ Because of the reformative

6 Social norms have changed generally, so there are changed expectations for women, generally. However, it is clear by comparing the circumstances of women in general, with women who have theorized about their own roles and the source and nature of the forces that have prevented them personally from attaining equal status in society (celebrated feminists such as Germaine Greer, for example), that the latter have been able to change, to a greater degree, the nature of the practices in which they engage (parenting, working in and outside the home, etc.).

nature of theorizing about social practices, and because of the importance of context and purpose in teaching, it is essential that practitioners engage in inquiries into their own practice.

The legitimacy (reliability and validity) of practitioners' theorizing, or so-called "teacher action research," has been questioned by those involved in what they deem to be more "scientific" studies which are based on a conception of teaching as a technical enterprise. Those who view teaching as a craft or as a kind of political activity, on the other hand, advocate that teachers must engage in research into their own practice. In the case of those who view teaching as a craft, this point follows from their notion of the personal construction of knowledge and the concomitant need for individuals to reflect on their own practical situations. In the case of those who view teaching as a political activity, the point is related more to the notion of empowerment: if teachers are to prevent the inequities in society from shaping their classrooms, then they must take control, investigate, and transform their own settings. If teaching is recognized as a social practice, the need for teachers to engage in their own inquiries is essential, but the reasons for this claim differ from the others.

The first reason for saying teachers must engage in their own inquiry relates to the nature and purpose of theorizing about social practices. If several social studies teachers were to begin to inquire into their practice, for example, they might see from studying the results of students' work, a general lack of ability to analyse issues, or to support positions taken in debates on contentious matters. The teachers might begin to question their own practice. They might realize from discussion, observing each others' activities, viewing tapes of their own teaching, and so on, that they have implicitly understood teaching as the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the student, with the major purpose being accuracy of recall from students. They might begin to believe that the development of critical thinking, a generally shared goal of education, is being hampered by their focus on recall of facts. It is likely that they would question some of the activities they had been involved in, such as encouraging recitation. They might begin to see their practice in terms of activities such as thoughtful questioning of students, focusing on the provision of reason for positions taken. Ultimately, the result of their theorizing about teaching would be to understand the practice differently and, thus, the practice would change.

This example raises a question about individual inquiry as opposed to collective inquiry into practice. To what

extent is it possible for an individual teacher who gains insight into her practice to change the nature of her own practice? In other words, is individual insight sufficient to change the way a teacher conducts herself in the practice, or would the shared governing norms create resistance for her to change? This is an empirical question that undoubtedly would produce different answers depending on the nature of the individual, the context, and the norms being challenged. However, given the authority of norms generally, I suggest that change is more likely if a community of teachers engaged in the inquiry. Collaborative inquiry could result in shared insights and these may have more potential to recast norms and behaviours.

The second reason for saying that teachers need to theorize about their own practice arises from the purposive nature of a social practice, and the degree to which decisions in the practice depend on particular circumstances. If teachers are to be able to proceed intelligently in the variety of situations that arise in teaching, to engage in activities that have a logical relationship to purpose and that are appropriate in the given context, then they need to be concerned to question their own activities in relation to purpose and specific context. This is an important kind of theorizing that can only be done by practitioners (or collaboratively with

researchers working with practitioners) in that specific context.

As I explained in Chapter Five, teachers' judgement and rationality are related to their knowledge of and their ability to follow the norms. Moreover, for teachers to be able to criticize and justify their actions in practice, they must be able to invoke the norms and standards. It follows, then, that teachers must study their own practice, the purpose, the context, the activities, and the norms that guide them, all in the light of broader goals of the practice and community standards so that they can a) improve their judgement, b) be able to judge individual norms against broader goals of the practice and the community standards, and c) be in a position to criticize and justify their actions in particular and the practice in general, including its standards.

As is the case with many of the points made here, these are not original points that arise only from a conception of teaching as a social practice. However, given the conception, the points are made from a slightly different perspective and for slightly different reasons. In particular, the conception recognizes the need to articulate the vast and complex array of norms governing the practice, with the understanding that such exploration has potential to change the norms and, thus, the practice. Projects which

already focus on collaborative inquiry may prove a useful beginning basis for examining the possibilities of this perspective. The work of Warren Little (1994), for example, on collegiality and its effect on professional growth, may be a starting place.⁷

The work of Schon (1983) and others who work with teachers as researchers, although they do not view teaching as a social practice, might provide another entry point for the kind of work I am suggesting here (coming to understand how teachers might be encouraged to examine their own practice to understand the rules of their practice). Fenstermacher's (1988) notion of practical argument may also be a valuable one to take up in a view of teaching as social practice. As Erickson (1988) points out, practical arguments "may serve as useful analytic devices by which teachers might examine their own practice more carefully" (p. 197). Carr and Kemmis (1986) argue for teachers' engagement in theorizing and suggest a program for action research. In spite of their political agenda, some of the work may prove useful for following through on the present suggestion.

⁷ Warren Little (1994), for example, suggests that teaching practice changes more when a culture of collegiality exists in a school. Teachers in such a situation are able to take advantage of even the weakest form of professional development (one-shot workshops) because of their collegial professional relationships. This may be because they are in a position to change the norms in that culture.

None of this is to say that research or theorizing about teaching ought to be limited to practitioners, or that one source of knowledge has privilege over others. In fact, there is a very important role here for researchers who have time, experience, and expertise, by virtue of their engagement in theoretical undertakings, to examine and make clear the range of rules that guide teaching. Researchers, too, have a contribution to make in criticizing the practice, articulating standards for the practice, suggesting what ought to be the purposes of the practice, and so on. However, their proclamations may not always be seen to be relevant to practitioners who are engaged in quite different undertakings. In short, theorizing is not the privileged domain of either researchers or practitioners, but is an important activity for each. And, importantly, each, given their particular perspective of working within or observing from without, have complementary roles which would best be realized through collaboration.

Norms of the Practice

Finally, as has already been indicated in the preceding discussion, research which appreciates that teaching is a social practice would be aimed at the study of the range of norms that guide the practice and would seek to make these explicit. If the practice is to improve, then its norms and

standards must be subject to criticism and justification. It is chiefly this kind of study that will enable us to distinguish accepted from acceptable practice.

Other sociological studies which consider the role of norms in a community may provide some perspective on this aspect of social practice. Liston and Zeichner (1991) have done some initial work on the influence of social context on teaching and its importance for teacher education. Although they have a political stance, their work--especially since it looks at teaching as "situated practice"--may provide cues for the kinds of study that will increase understanding of teaching viewed as a social practice. Sociological studies of teaching, starting with Lortie's (1975) study of the norms in the profession, may prove fruitful for looking at the kinds of norm that guide teaching practice. Other studies of teaching "culture" conducted more recently may also be valuable starting points for the work I am here suggesting (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1988).

In summary, the studies that would be undertaken if teaching was conceived as a social practice would be both descriptive and normative. Some would focus on investigations of the kinds of activity teachers are engaged in, the purposes to which they are aimed, the context in which they are employed, and the norms that guide them. Other studies would question what purposes ought to be, what

activities under what circumstances might be considered good practice, and what norms ought be changed. In every case, knowledge of the features of a social practice would guide the design and purpose of the study.

Evaluation of Teaching

A second major area for which there are implications for viewing teaching as a social practice is evaluation of teaching. Public discussions about the quality of teaching in schools are common, and lately they have taken the form of criticism of the current state of affairs. "Standards have dropped," we hear, or "efforts must be taken to raise the standards of teaching."⁸ Measures of student achievement from standardized tests are often provided as the meagre evidence for these claims. Sometimes the tests include international comparisons, in which case the rhetoric focuses on how much higher standards are in countries other than our own. Those who criticize the education system based on such reports quote alarming statistics about the decline in educational standards and the dire consequences a country might face as a result of

8 Starting with *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, reports of the decline of educational and teaching standards in North America have proliferated.

corresponding economic decline.⁹ Spurred on by these claims, education officials are asked to take hard-line decisions about teacher qualifications and requirements for requalification, examinations and other measures of student evaluation, and curriculum materials and learning resources, in efforts to maintain or raise standards.¹⁰

This view of standards for evaluating teaching is problematic on two counts. First, it centres on a very limited view of educational achievement. Second, it concentrates on achievement as the only standard by which we may want to evaluate teaching. This narrow focus on a limited view of achievement as the standard of teaching is not surprising given the persistent and powerful influence of the conception of teaching as a technical enterprise.¹¹

9 See, for example, the recent Canadian publication by Andrew Nikiforik (1993) in which he criticizes Canadian education on the basis of results on achievement tests.

10 In many of the States in the US, legislation requires that teachers recertify their qualifications on a regular basis. Some states have minimum competency examinations for entering teachers. Calls for national standards for education have been heeded by both Republican and Democratic Governments (Bell, 1993). In Canada, less extreme measures have followed. Nonetheless, national standards are under review and accountability is a watchword in all jurisdictions, with major studies of the educational system being conducted in almost every province over the last ten years. Most recently in British Columbia, for example, in response to criticism about falling standards, the Ministry of Education has changed policies on reporting and evaluation of student achievement and is reexamining reform measures implemented in the primary grades of schooling because they apparently neglect the basics.

11 Kliebard (1993) traces this persistent focus on technical concerns and scientific control in North America back to the late 1800s in the work of Rice.

When effective techniques rather than desirable ends are the emphasis of the enterprise, and when effectiveness is equal to the measures of student achievement on standardized tests, it is understandable that teaching should be evaluated primarily on the basis of that achievement and the techniques that evidently lead to it.

One of the central flaws with this notion of evaluation is that it treats achievement narrowly and as though it were unproblematic. Yet, we know that the range of knowledge, abilities, and attitudes stated as goals of public school systems is enormous. Furthermore, what counts as achievement in education is highly contentious. Is it a liberally educated person or a technically prepared citizen we are aiming for in education? And are these goals mutually exclusive?

Even if we were to agree that achievement ought to be seen in terms of intellectual and moral autonomy, we would have difficulty in agreeing upon what counts as evidence of such achievement. Current debates about authentic, alternative, or performance assessment, norm or criterion referenced tests, and standards or standardized outcomes attest to the fact that there is little agreement about what kinds of measures should be used with respect to achievement. To suggest, then, that we can judge the value

of teaching from the basis of typical standardized achievement tests is too simplistic.

Teaching behaviour which leads to achievement is evaluated in schemes that focus on technical concerns. Teachers are expected to have a repertoire of effective techniques, to know the generalized rules for application, and thus, to be able to effectively teach and manage a classroom of students.¹² However, this picture of teaching, equating good teaching with effective technique, is clearly limited. Effective techniques are not necessarily moral, educationally valid, nor intellectually sound. They do not necessarily lead to the ideals most citizens of a democracy think of as important for education. In other words, techniques may be efficient in terms of success on achievement tests, but other essential standards of teaching are neglected as a result of this position.

To take the point to an extreme, it could be said, for example, that Mr. Brown, who regularly berates his students, is a good teacher. Or, Ms. Kashmir, whose arguments are noted for their lack of logic, is a good teacher. Or, that Mrs. Jones, in spite of the fact that her students' achievements are limited to the skills tested on standardized tests, is a good teacher. Indeed, when a

¹² Darling-Hammond, Wise and Pease (1986) suggest that teacher evaluation with these characteristics focuses on teaching as labour.

convicted pedophile was sentenced in the United States for having sexually abused his students, a professional journal (Foxfire: Bigger Than One Man, 1993) stated that he was "a symbol of all that is best in American education" (p. 745). In deciding to go ahead with publishing an interview with the man in question, the editorial says that it wished to encourage readers to "separate the personal in Wigginton's life from the professional" (p. 745). While we know at one level what is intended by this statement, the fact that someone who betrayed the trust of his position so gravely could still be considered a valued educator is of serious concern. If "effective" or "ineffective" represent the legitimate standards of "good teaching," then judgements such as moral or immoral, or rational or irrational, proper or improper are given scant, if any, attention.

Moreover, as has already been suggested in this thesis, the relationship between teaching and learning cannot be viewed as a simple causal one. While it is true that I can teach someone something that he learns, it is also true, by definition, that I can teach someone something but he will not learn it.¹³ And, someone can learn something he has not

13 This is partly a logical point. Teaching is like fishing, in that to say you are teaching does not require that someone be learning, any more than to say you are fishing requires you to be catching fish. Teaching is a task concept rather than an achievement concept, meaning that it does not necessarily result in the product or other defined end. As Pearson (1989) points out, teaching may cause learning; however, it is not a sufficient condition to cause it, and it may be a redundant condition.

been "taught" (by observing, reading, and so on). There are considerable variables outside the influence of the teacher (student background, physical, emotional and intellectual health; school organization and resources; and so on) which have an impact on student achievement. So, while student achievement is an important measure of teaching (it would be ridiculous to say "he is a good teacher but his students rarely learn anything"), it is not a sufficient one.

How, or even whether, teaching ought to be evaluated is a contested issue in education. Critics of the technical conception of teaching have long identified the problems associated with focusing on effective technique as a basis for evaluating teaching. Indeed, one of the major attacks from educators who advocate conceptions of teaching as craft and as political activity is on the technical view of standards. In the case of craft, the conception focuses on means, not viewed as skillful techniques, but rather as largely intuitive judgements.¹⁴ In the case of critical pedagogy, the conception of political activity focuses on the role of power and control in teacher evaluation based on technique.

¹⁴ The logic of craft would indicate that the end "product" would be the source for standards. However, teaching conceived as craft has been focused almost entirely on means. See, for example, Darling-Hammond, Wise and Pease (1986) for an analysis of teacher education approaches based on conceptions of teaching as craft or art.

Although the view of teaching as a craft suggests that standards of effectiveness and efficiency are not appropriate, they do not suggest alternative standards, apparently because understanding one's craft is largely tacit. As has already been explained, the notion of craft as ineffable implies that teachers are the ones who are in a position to exercise judgement. We must assume that it will be good judgement, or that teachers will be self-critical in light of some tacit and personal standards. This view is not, however, compatible with a notion of teaching as a social enterprise in which public (as opposed to private) expectations comprise one source of standards.

An example of the work on personal and practical knowledge is illustrative. Clandinin (1989) worked with a beginning teacher in order to understand how novice teachers develop a personal practical knowledge of their practice. Clandinin, after a considerable period of observation and sharing journal entries with Stuart, the novice teacher, concludes that Stuart's metaphorical image for teaching is "relating to students." She provides as evidence for this, Stuart's wanting to work with Kindergarten children because there was no content "to interfere with his work with children" (p. 125), and his choosing not to cover planned content because, for Stuart "it was important that teaching continue" (p. 127). Further discussion about Stuart and his growing knowledge of school rhythms is pursued in the

article, but absent are any considerations of whether or not his "image" is defensible, or by what standards his learning about teaching might be judged or criticized.

One might reasonably ask, and expect reasonable answers to, questions such as what does "relating to students" mean? Is it an acceptable way of thinking about teaching? What is Stuart's view of "content?" What does Stuart think teaching is if he is not interested in "content?" However, those involved in studies such as these do not ask such questions. Because the view of teaching as a craft means that knowledge is personal and nonpropositional, teachers are not required to be able to justify their beliefs or actions in light of standards other than their own. In other words, the major problem arising from the conception of teaching as a craft is that there are no public standards articulated by which teachers' actions might be criticized.

Those who argue that teaching must be conceived as political see teacher evaluation in terms of power and control. Evaluation schemes which involve judging teachers by reference to public standards are criticized for being bureaucratic means of controlling teachers. Advocates of the political view argue that such procedures should be eliminated, and instead, teachers should evaluate their own practice. As Smyth (1988) suggests, "the evaluation of teaching would involve teachers themselves in a critique of

existing practices that could be transformative" (p. 29). Further in the same discussion, Smyth, quoting Giroux and Freire, says that the critique involves "unmasking lies, myths, and distortions that constructed the basis for the dominant order" (pp. 29-30).

To say, as Smyth (1988) does, that the goal of teacher evaluation should be to see "more clearly how [teachers] and their students might better resist the incursions by state, and its influence in shaping and structuring what is defined as knowledge and pedagogy in schooling" (p. 48) is to challenge seriously any ordinary understanding of "evaluation of teaching." At best, Smyth's suggestion, that evaluation of teaching should focus only on challenging "the rules, roles and structures within which teaching occurs" (p. 48), is a very narrow focus which limits the range of norms which interested communities would generally use to judge teaching.

While it makes eminent sense for teachers to be engaged in self-evaluation in the light of the norms that guide the practice, and even that this should involve challenging some of these norms, the view of evaluation arising from the conception of teaching as political activity appears to neglect the fact that teaching is a social enterprise. Teachers are responsible for their actions, not merely as individual agents, but as members of the proximate community

charged with the education of children, and as members of a professional community with collective standards of practice.

Given the critical pedagogues' position on evaluation and their goal to emancipate students, the only "public" standard of good teaching for consideration is the degree to which teaching is successful in this goal. This also creates problems. The goal may not be shared in the school's community, a problem in itself, since other norms would conflict with this one. And, even if it were shared, "emancipation" of students is an extremely high expectation. If emancipation is not achieved, are we then to assess the teaching practice as not meeting standards? Even advocates of the political approach recognize this flaw. Ellsworth (1989), noting the societal norms that create injustice around race, class and gender, argues that the "injustice of these [power] relations and the way in which those injustices distort communication cannot be overcome in a classroom, no matter how committed the students and the teacher are to overcoming conditions that perpetuate suffering" (p. 316). Overcoming oppression is a gradual and ongoing battle and it is not necessarily achieved as a result of a greater awareness or knowledge of what is involved in the struggle. If oppression is not overcome as a result of the teaching practice, are we to assume that the

teacher is not competent?¹⁵ Furthermore, since teaching clearly does not cause learning in a straightforward way, evaluating teaching only on the basis of ends is a major problem.

A conception of teaching as a social practice focuses attention on a range of norms that guide the practice. This range of rules necessarily constitutes, at the same time, measures for its correct conduct. Correct conduct in this sense can mean a full range of normative evaluations--reasonable or unreasonable, moral or immoral, legal or illegal, valid or invalid, safe or unsafe, effective or ineffective--depending on the nature of the norm. This view of norms also provides a basis upon which we can distinguish between accepted and acceptable practice. Consider what this would mean for understanding and developing standards for teaching.

It is relatively easy to identify and examine the formally stipulated rules contained in such documents as legislated acts, regulations, formulated directives and codes, curriculum guides and examinations, and negotiated contracts. The rules found coded in this kind of document generally have more to do with administering schools as institutions than with educating persons in the sense to

15 See similar arguments about the liberatory goal for feminist research in Thomson (1993).

which our ideals refer. Nonetheless, they provide one set of standards by which one might evaluate teaching. If articulated in an evaluation of teaching, they may also be subjected to criticism and revision. If, for example, there is a rule that student assessment must be based on standardized tests, and if this appears to conflict with the goal of developing students' intellectual autonomy, then, revision of the rule may be justified.

Other kinds of norm framed in the form of canons or models of what is considered good teaching guide the way teachers act, and should be used as another set of standards for judging teaching.¹⁶ These tend to be more widely contested than are those dealing with the efficient management of schools. It is perhaps this difficulty in reaching consensus which explains why the former set of rules currently dominates any discussions about standards of teaching. Teaching conceived as a species of social practice would provide the basis for evaluation from this point of view of a much broader range of the norms. Again, the evaluation of teaching based on these norms would likely raise issues for debate and through such debate possibilities for revision are created.

16 For example, these are implied in norms such as "focus on the learner," in constructivist theories of learning, and in historically affirmed methods such as Socratic questioning.

It should be obvious that approaching the task of establishing standards for teaching is more than simply formulating a range of norms. It is not possible in a practice as complex as teaching to simply formulate rules or standards as straightforward direction. And even if it were relatively easy to get agreement on a few clear rules, it should be clear that it would be virtually impossible to do so in any exhaustive way. Because teaching involves contentious fundamental values (what ought to be the purposes of education?) and different views of instrumental norms (what means will achieve the purposes?), there will typically be conflict about what constitutes the standards of teaching.

Such conflict will arise in the course of establishing purpose, in decisions about the best way to achieve purpose, in questions about what counts as evidence of achievement, in questions about what it is moral to do in particular circumstances. Other areas of friction will be a consequence of the practice being undertaken in a public institution where administrative exigencies may conflict with educational ideals.

No doubt, conflict is as fundamental to teaching as are the values that underpin these conflicts. But such conflict and debate, as long as it is not merely arising from

confusion, should be seen as healthy for the practice. Conflict and debate are the means by which the norms and the purposes can rationally be improved and prevented either from conservatism or capricious change. Resolution of conflict will not be simple. Most conflicts do not involve arguments about effective technique which might be settled through empirical study. Nor, however, are they merely different individual opinions. The view of teaching as social practice gives a unique perspective to such conflict. The view acknowledges that norms and standards are human constructions and that criticism and justification are essential for changing the rules and improving the practice.

There are standards of rational debate which would prevail in such conflicts. One would expect clarity, coherence, and internal consistency in an argument. Obviously false claims or contradictions would not be accepted. Admittedly, these are formal criteria. Critics of my position might be inclined to point out that the precise nature of these criteria could be contested, or to argue that such criteria are not in any sense universal. Nonetheless, my point is that any debate can, and should, proceed in a rational fashion and should not be decided on purely relative terms. This is an important distinction. (Obviously, much could be said on this matter, however, it is not in the scope of this thesis to sort out the standards of rationality.)

Preservice and Inservice Teacher Education

A final major area for which there are implications arising from a view of teaching as a social practice is preservice and inservice teacher education. Conceiving of teaching as a species of social practice would not necessarily direct teacher education to include components different from those in programs now offered. As is the case with programs based on current conceptions, teacher education would include classroom instruction through which new teachers would have opportunities to discuss educational concepts and theories. It would have practical components where students would have opportunities to engage in activities of teaching, learning some of the norms of the practice through the engagement. Part of teacher education (or a prerequisite to teacher education) would include advanced knowledge of subject areas in which the prospective teachers intend to teach. None of these aspects of a program are necessarily directed by any particular conception of teaching.

However, teacher education based on a conception of social practice would suggest different emphases in these various areas of study. One of the goals of a teacher education program would be to have students better

understand the nature of teaching conceived as a social practice. Such an approach would help students appreciate the complex and diverse norms that guide teaching, their role in guiding the actions of teachers, and their importance in judgement and reasoning in teaching. Students would better appreciate the central role for, and would investigate the nature of, educational purposes and expectations, their own, and those generally held in the various communities of interest.

Of course, teacher preparation based on any conception of teaching is meant, in part, to help would-be teachers understand the practice. In the case of teaching conceived as a technical activity, however, understanding teaching primarily involves learning about techniques, and this limits understanding of the practice. Models of applied science, where theories generated from systematic study are taught for application in the practice setting, logically form the basic approach when the focus is on the technical.¹⁷

One course in the teacher preparation program at the University of British Columbia is an example of this

17 Liston and Zeichner (1991) suggest the growth of teacher education programs focused on technical expertise is related to the need for faculties of education to legitimate their place in the university. They characterize such programs as having prespecified objectives (based on research about effective teaching), performance criteria, and goals of mastery of technique.

approach. The course is called "Principles of Teaching."¹⁸ The text used for that course, called *Strategies for Effective Teaching* (Ornstein, 1990) is based on the process-product research of teacher effectiveness. As one might expect, lists of effective teaching strategies fill many pages of the text. Students preparing to teach in any subject area and for any grade level are required to take the course. Lectures are presented twice a week for two large groups: all students preparing to teach elementary school, and all students preparing to teach secondary school. Strategies, such as effective questioning, lesson and unit planning, classroom management techniques, and so on are introduced in the lectures. Subsequently, students break into smaller groups (cohorts of 20 to 30) where they discuss the lectures, are presented with more information, and engage in micro-teaching, lesson plan writing, or other activities to try out strategies introduced. These trial activities are sometimes videotaped and then critiqued. The

18 I am not criticizing the developers or instructors of this course, and furthermore, I recognize that the course is only one in a comprehensive program that includes others such as Analysis of Education (in which students analyse aspects of education and teaching). Students entering teacher education feel huge pressure to quickly gain "survival skills" or recipes for their practical work, and little pressure to learn about what they see to be theoretical pursuits. This, in turn, places pressure on program developers and instructors alike to provide courses such as "Principles of Teaching." Nonetheless, I contend that courses which focus on mastery of technique misrepresent the practice of teaching and may even foster students' dependence on recipes.

goal is to master the techniques in simulated settings so they can later be applied in classrooms.

What is it student teachers will understand about teaching practice as a result of such a course? Consider a lesson on questioning techniques, for example.¹⁹ First, the lecture outlines principles of good questioning, generalized to all students regardless of the subject area or grade they will be teaching. Among the points covered are the importance of questioning, criteria for evaluating questions, pitfalls to avoid in questioning, planning questions, question sequences, and interpretation of student responses to questions.

Is it reasonable to assume that these points can generalize across all grades and subject areas? Are the criteria for a good question in English literature, for example, the same as criteria for a good question in mathematics? Surely the differences between these disciplines, the nature of claims and supporting evidence in each case, are so different that criteria for good questions could not possibly be generalizable. Similarly, is a good question for kindergarten students also a good question for grade seven students? Knowledge of the development of children and their capacities to engage in different kinds

¹⁹ This example is taken from a detailed course outline of The Principles of Teaching Course, compiled in 1990 (Ungerleider & Grauer).

of questioning is ignored by generalizing across the grade levels. On the other hand, general points about questions such as, "don't rely on yes-no questions," "avoid guessing questions," and so on, are of limited use in planning questions for a lesson in physics on the gas laws.

Instructors in the lecture and in the smaller groups attempt to attend to these kinds of issue, but it is not possible to do so in any detail (the lesson on questioning is scheduled for one lecture and one tutorial). Even though the course is meant to be seen as providing one source of information new teachers might use in making decisions, it would not be surprising, given this approach to teaching about the practice, that students would think that it is a relatively straightforward matter to apply such strategies in any context in which they may be teaching. It is possible that the understanding about teaching they would gain is that the practice is largely a matter of building a repertoire of strategies to apply in classroom situations. I have already noted that this is a limited view of teaching.

In the case of teaching conceived as a craft, an apprenticeship model--where students learn many of the activities of teaching by working with an experienced teacher--is one model upon which teacher education programs

are based. Such programs are becoming common in some parts of the United States and in Great Britain.²⁰

While it is true that teachers will learn about the practice by engaging in it and by observing others so engaged, it is also true that this kind of learning, unless there is specific emphasis on understanding the complexities of the situation, runs the risk of having student teachers learn by imitation. Furthermore, experience across institutions indicates that students begin their preparation for teaching with the notion that they will learn "how to teach" (as opposed to learning "about teaching").²¹ Their concerns are the practical, what they call "survival skills": What do I do to keep the class under control? How do I communicate my position? When should I put students in groups? In an apprentice situation, students may simply look for answers to such questions and misunderstand the complex nature of practice. Their understanding as a result of their experience, then, may be that learning to teach is largely a matter of getting answers to these practical questions. Perhaps even more dangerous is the potential for

20 See, reports on such alternative programs in the United States in Uhler (1987). Wilson (1993) criticizes the trend to apprenticeship programs in Great Britain, and in the preface to his book, Gutteridge and Milburn speak about the same problems creeping into Canadian teacher education institutions.

21 This problem is identified and addressed in various ways by teacher educators from institutions across Canada in a volume called *Becoming a Teacher* (Holborn, Wideen, & Andrews, 1986).

students to learn what might be accepted (but bad) practice, when they have no solid grounds upon which to make a distinction between the accepted and acceptable.

Clandinin (1989) says that "learning to teach involves much more than learning and applying skills" (p. 137); however, her conclusion, that "learning to teach involves the narrative reconstruction of a teacher's experience as personal practical knowledge is shaped through its expression in practical knowledge" (p. 137) is not particularly enlightening. Grimmet and MacKinnon (1992) provide more concrete suggestions for incorporating a conception of teaching as craft into teacher education programs. They offer possibilities for encouraging student teachers to reflect on their practice, which they see as key to developing craft knowledge, by using more teacher research in classes, having students write their own "credo for teaching", having students develop metaphors for teaching, using imagination, visualization and guided fantasy, and undertaking the teaching of methods classes in school settings.

As with my previous comments on the conception of teaching as craft, I suggest these points are useful to the degree that they engage teachers or potential teachers in thinking about teaching. However, they fail to put the personal beliefs and values of the teacher in the larger

perspective of the practice, its purpose, norms and standards. It would not be surprising, then, if students leaving a program with such a focus would understand teaching to be a highly individual engagement, and would fail to recognize the degree to which it is a social construction.

In the case of teaching conceived as political activity, understanding teaching necessarily involves understanding that there is systemic oppression, that empowerment is the goal of teaching, and that this involves critical analysis of the social forces in which the oppression is embedded. Liston and Zeichner (1991) concluded from their search for teacher education programs that had a social reconstructionist view of teaching, that no programs are totally based on this conception. They note several which have components that can be considered to promote the view of teaching as political, however, and identify characteristics of these. Not surprisingly, the most important characteristic from their perspective is an acknowledgement that teaching is fundamentally political, and this underlies all other features, such as collaboration, inquiry, reflexive curriculum, and so on.

Such characteristics as working collaboratively, engaging in inquiry about the practice, and using teaching experience to learn about aspects of the practice, also form

part of the recommendations of those who advocate incorporating a conception of teaching as craft into teacher education. Furthermore, many of the recommendations, including investigating the social forces that might shape the nature of the practice, would be included in a teacher education program that recognized teaching to be a social practice. However, by focusing on a particular political perspective, one that views the all relationships as essentially involved in power, a limited understanding of the practice of teaching would be provided. The limitations associated with a programmatic view of teaching have already been discussed. They demand that teachers unquestioningly adopt a set of contentious tenets.

Those who have tried to change their approaches to teacher education based on such agendas have met with problems because of this limitation. In the case of teacher education students, generally understood to be traditionally conservative, the problem takes the form of passive resistance (students refuse to engage in inquiries as assigned) or even angry resistance (students and sponsoring teachers have rebelled).²² It seems, though, that this kind

22 Liston and Zeichner (1991) report that in one instance at Lewis and Clark College, students were not even advised about a feminist focus for a course in teacher education because the course developers, knowing that people in education are traditionally conservative, "did not want to alienate the program participants from the start" (p. 155). In other cases at Knox College and Cornell, where political agendas were pursued, program developers reported meeting with open resistance.

of resistance might be anticipated. The program demands that participants either have prior commitments to these tenets, or be converted to the fundamental values of the program within the time constraints of a teacher education course. Ellsworth (1989) has pointed that even students with prior commitments to emancipatory engagements have difficulty in courses with these political agendas.²³ Students whose values conflict would undoubtedly see this opposing view as limited and would not be prepared to accept them without question; there would be little time for this in a typical class. Given the time constraints, it is not surprising that students would resist the instructor's attempts to convert them.

Recognizing that teaching is a social practice would avoid the limitations inherent in these other conceptions by providing students with a more comprehensive understanding of teaching. Particular dilemmas of teacher education are also addressed from this point of view. Questions about when to plan for students' practical experience (before or after learning about teaching from discussion and theorizing) and what form it should take, for example, are addressed.

²³ The course upon which Ellsworth bases these comments was not a teacher education course. However, the experience is instructive for courses using any curriculum based on the political agenda of emancipation. She says her students, committed though they were, all lived lives in which they were cast as the oppressed or the oppressor, and they were unable, as a result, to engage in responsive dialogue.

When teaching is understood to be a species of social practice learned, at least in part, by engagement in its constitutive activities, we recognize that it is very likely that new teachers learned much of the practice as students engaging with teachers. In other words, new teachers enter the practice with an implicit understanding of its constitutive activities and its standards of performance. Furthermore, early experience may have created misunderstandings and these may be enduring if left unexamined. It is essential, therefore, that very early in an education program, new teachers are provided opportunities to examine the beliefs they bring to teaching. It is important that students articulate their understanding and view their, possibly, idiosyncratic understandings in the light of prevalent, and ideally, more acceptable expectations and standards.²⁴ It is essential that they understand teaching to be a human construction which changes as a result of different understandings about its intentions and definitive norms. It is most important that initiates have early opportunities to theorize in this way about teaching.

24 It is in this latter point, "in the light of prevalent expectations and standards," that this suggestion differs slightly from what was suggested by Grimmet and MacKinnon (1992).

In my discussion of norms in social practices, I noted that coming to understand and being able to follow norms, involves, in part, learning through engagement in the practice. Understanding this aspect of learning a social practice, teacher education predicated on this conception would require early and lengthy sessions where initiates spend time engaging in the practice with competent practitioners. Having a practical component to teacher education programs is, of course, common regardless of the conception upon which they are based. One requirement that arises specifically from a conception of social practice is that it would be essential that students work with practitioners who are able to invoke the norms in order to explain, criticize and justify their actions. In other words, it would not be sufficient for students to work with a teacher who is competent but whose understanding of the practice is tacit. Teachers working with initiates must be able to judge the actions of the new teacher, explain their judgments, justify them in the light of standards of good teaching, criticize and correct the new teacher's actions where necessary, and ask for justifications by invoking the norms. It is only in this way that new teachers would begin to gain the language for explaining and justifying their own actions.²⁵

25 This is not entirely different from practical components recommended by other views of teaching. In fact, "reflecting" on experience is advocated in both craft and political views. However, as Liston and Zeichner (1991) point out, "reflection" is used to mean so many different

In addition to a practical component with emphasis on understanding, not just the how, but the why of teaching practice, a classroom component would be required. Theorizing about teaching in the sense of considering its purpose, how it gets meaning in social context, how norms of the practice guide action, and how other social norms, including moral norms, shape teaching, would be the emphasis in these classes. Collaborative work, inquiry into the practice, and critical reflection on practice would characterize teacher education programs based on a conception of teaching as social practice.

One group of studies that might prove useful for understanding how teachers learn from experience and how practical experience in teacher education programs might be designed, is conducted by Lave and Wenger (1992). The researchers have studied various different kinds of apprenticeship models, and from their studies argue that learning as an apprentice is a social practice that takes place in a participation framework in a community of practice. Lave and Wenger's understanding of community and practice from these studies may offer insight into how new teachers may learn about and refine their teaching in the

things, that it has become almost meaningless. The kind of reflection I am proposing here involves an understanding of the role of norms in practices, a feature not explicitly promoted in other views.

practice setting. Studies about learning to teach could be modelled after these studies about other practices.

Studies have shown that after student teachers leave their education programs and enter the profession, most gradually begin to teach the way others in the school teach, regardless of the kind of program they have taken in preparation (Hollingsworth, 1990). The force of the norms in the community have already been discussed as a feature of teaching. If the effects of teacher education are going to go beyond the years of initial preparation, some of the suggestions already made in this chapter will need to be implemented. Research will have to acknowledge the influence of norms, evaluation will have to articulate norms and standards for debate, and students leaving teacher education programs will have to understand the nature of teaching as a social practice. In addition, ongoing professional development will also have to recognize that improving practice involves changing norms.

Current programs of professional development have not proven to be altogether successful in changing many norms of teaching practice, perhaps because they are built upon conceptions of teaching that are limited. They fail to understand the importance of purpose, context, and the nature of judgement and rationality. They ignore the force of social norms, and they rarely entertain moral issues in

teaching. They do not see activities as constitutive of the practice and constituted by the practice.

Programs which emphasize technique generally attempt to introduce new activities to teachers from a variety of contexts, grade levels, and subject areas in isolated sessions. Some teacher inservice adopts a craft model in such activities as peer coaching. In this model, teachers are teamed up together. They observe each other and work together to critique and improve their own practices. Other models such as cooperative learning, keeping and sharing journals, sharing stories of teaching, also appear to be based on notions of craft knowledge. Few models of teacher inservice adopt a political conception of teaching. Teacher organizations which espouse similar ideologies present some forms of inservice intended to have teachers more critically reflective about power relationships in their roles as teachers and in schooling more generally. Clearly all of these models of teacher inservice would suffer from the same limitations as other activities based on the limited conceptions.

Ongoing professional development for teaching as conceived as a species of social practice would involve teachers engaging in theorizing about their practice, and about the other social practices in which teaching is embedded. Given that activities of teaching are constituted

in the course of the practice, teachers from the same community, working with the same norms, would engage in professional development together. Professional development would not be an event in the lives of teachers (as is currently often the case because of limited understanding of the nature of the practice); it would be an ongoing matter of questioning and getting clear about purpose, engaging in activities and explaining, criticizing and justifying these in the light of purpose and context. Individual teacher's judgement would improve, not because they learned a new strategy, but as a result of their understanding a wider range of norms. Teaching practice would improve, not as a result of prescriptive rules being invoked to mandate certain actions, but because teachers better understand the purpose and the activities that achieve that purpose. To reiterate, rules and norms, as social constructions, can be changed, but only when they become subject to criticism.

Conclusion

My intention in this thesis has been to contribute to the debate on teaching by explicating an alternative conception for understanding the practice. I argued that teaching should be recognized as a species of social practice, that this view accounts appropriately for the essential features of teaching, and thus provides insight

into all dimensions of the practice, including judgement and rationality. In presenting my argument, I have identified three dominant conceptions of teaching which largely represent contemporary thought in the area. These conceptions, as I have argued, are at best limited. First, it is generally not a good idea to speak of teaching as analogous to any other thing, because it is simply not that thing. But, second, technical enterprise, craft, and political activity, are pursuits so different from teaching, as to distort its essence. Finally, I have argued that approaches to research on, evaluation of, and education for teaching based on the limited conceptions that inform them, are problematic. A conception of teaching as social practice provides a richer view of the practice and has potential to cast new light on central dilemmas and conflicts.

I would anticipate that research, evaluation, and teacher education programs, if designed on the basis of understanding that teaching is a social practice, would ultimately result in improvements in teaching. However, these activities are not currently approached from an appreciation of the features of a social practice, so there is much to be learned. My suggestions only begin to sketch out some new directions and agendas for the work. Initial plans may benefit from studies of other social practices, or from work done in teaching that deals with characteristics

shared by the new conception and currently popular ones. To this end, I have referred to some particular studies which may be helpful. In the final analysis, whether teaching practice will improve as a result of a clearer and richer conception of the practice is, of course, an empirical question. My contribution has been to point the way.

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