Chapter 12
Looking Back on 15 Years of Relational Teacher Education: A Narrative Self-Study

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In 2005, I wrote a self-study in which I presented relational teacher education (RTE) as an approach to preparing teachers (Kitchen 2005a, b). Underlying this work was an understanding that "education is development from within" (Dewey 1938, p. 17) and a belief that teacher educators play a crucial role in fostering "experiences that lead to growth" (Dewey 1938, p. 40) for preservice teachers. In these articles, I identified seven characteristics as important to RTE:

1. Understanding one's own personal practical knowledge
2. Improving one's practice in teacher education
3. Understanding the landscape of teacher education
4. Respecting and empathizing with preservice teachers
5. Conveying respect and empathy
6. Helping preservice teachers face problems
7. Receptivity to growing in relationship.

I then employed narrative self-study to explore how these characteristics informed my practice as a beginning teacher educator from 1999 to 2004.

Fifteen years later, I continue to be active in teacher education and have published extensively on my efforts to live authentically alongside preservice teachers in relationships that lead to growth (e.g., Kitchen 2010, Kitchen and Bellini 2012). In this chapter, I revisit RTE and how it has informed my professional identity and professional practice as a veteran teacher educator.

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In the Tradition of Narrative Self-Study

My work on relational teacher education is situated in the traditions of both the self-study of teacher education practices (SSTEP) and narrative inquiry. RTE fits comfortably within SSTEP because it is grounded in respect for the "authority of experience" (Munby and Russell 1994) and the "craft knowledge" of teachers (Grimmett 1995). In writing about relationship in teacher education, I continuously examine the role of the self in the research project and "the space between self and the practice engaged in" (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001, p. 15). Also, consistent with the tenor of the *International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education* (Loughran et al. 2004), I have "used various qualitative methodologies and… focused on a wide range of substantive issues" (Zeichne and Noffke 2001, p. 305) in order to understand myself and improve my practice. In this chapter, I employ narrative self-study as the primary method for inquiring into my work as a relational teacher educator, while also citing studies framed as narrative inquiry, action research, reflective practice and self-study.

Narrative self-study is a useful term for self-studies that employ narrative inquiry to study the relationship between teacher educators and their practice:

> Self-study is the noun because the focus of narrative self-study is the improvement of practice by reflecting on oneself and one's practices as a teacher educator. Narrative, the adjective, refers to the use of specific narrative inquiry methods to study ourselves and our practices in order to improve practice. (Kitchen 2009a, p. 38)

I have found narrative self-study to be a multi-dimensional means of exploring the participant knowledge of teacher educators within our contexts and practices. Through narrative methods, I have been able to tell and retell stories of professional practice (Kitchen 2009a) that have helped me understand my personal practical knowledge as a teacher (Clandinin and Connelly 2004)., develop critical understandings of my own practice, and share these stories with other teacher educators.

In this three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, the phenomena under study are my experiences as a teacher educator. By composing "a text that at once looks backward and forward, looks inward and outward, and situates the experiences within place" (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, p. 140), I puzzle over the tensions I experience and the broader tensions inherent in teaching teachers .

I begin by looking inward to the development of my personal practical knowledge (Connelly and Clandinin 1988) as a teacher and teacher educator. I then look backward to my 15 years as a teacher educator. I look outward in order to situate my work and the experiences of pre-service teachers in the larger educational context. In doing so, I situate the teaching of preservice in the larger context of my work as an academic and administrator. By inquiring into experience through story, I look forward to re-imagine and recreate ways of being a preservice educator.

Looking Inward: The Development of Relational Teacher Education

Relational teacher education is an approach that emerged from my doctoral research on teacher knowledge and teacher development around 2001. After beginning with three teacher-participants, the focus narrowed to one veteran teacher's dramatic improvement during the first year of my 3 year study (Kitchen 2005c, 2009b). In particular, I puzzled over how the respectful and relational approach I employed as a fellow teacher contributed to Bob Fitzgerald's deep and sustained professional growth and renewal. During the course of several months, Bob's teaching dramatically improved and, over the course of the next few years, he maintained his new positive attitude and effective practices. I inquired into his apparent transformation because there was no apparent cause. As I observed later:

> It was not due to the acquisition of new instructional strategies or curriculum resources, as Bob had attended only a few professional development workshops, and assigned them little importance. The principal's feedback seemed to act as a spur, yet Bob, fairly or unfairly, viewed her interventions in a negative light. The curriculum and instruction support I offered was very limited as I had no experience in elementary schools. (Kitchen 2009c, p. 46)

As our relationship deepened, I realized that the authentic and respectful mentoring relationship that we developed had contributed to Bob's professional growth. As I explored this possibility through an analysis of field texts and discussions with Bob, the relational elements grew in importance. It became evident that I needed to look inward at how my identity and authentic engagement influenced Bob. I drew on a body of scholarship that emphasized the fundamental importance of caring and relationship in student learning. Noddings (1992) wrote:

> Caring cannot be achieved by formula. It requires address and response; it requires different behaviors from situation to situation and person to person … Schools, I will argue, pay too little attention to the need for continuity of place, people, purpose, and curriculum. (pp. xi–xii)

I was inspired by the work of Hollingsworth et al. (1993) who identified "relational knowing" as crucial to meaningful interactions between teachers and students. While subject knowledge, a variety of pedagogical strategies, and an understanding of how students learn are important, "good teachers are centrally concerned with the creation of authentic relationships and a classroom environment in which students can make connections between the curriculum of the classroom and the central concerns of their own lives" (Beattie 2001, p. 3).

It occurred to me that, while teachers were asked to develop classroom relationships, little attention was given to establishing contexts for authentic teacher development. The consequences were evident in the failure of school change initiatives over the years (Fullan 1993). In light of the failure of top-down professional development initiatives, there is a need for research that supporting teachers as they adapt to changing times (Clark 2001). If "the quality of relationship is central to success"

in building a "school-wide teacher professional community" (Fullan 1999, p. 37), a respectful and relational stance needs to be taken when working with teachers.

In pondering the importance of relationship in Bob's professional renewal, I drew on the writings of Carl Rogers (1961): "This book is about me, as I sit there with that client, facing him, participating in that struggle as deeply and sensitively as I am able" (p. 4). I realized that many experts judge the practice of teachers using external criteria rather than as "helpers" (Rogers 1961) celebrating experience and helping teachers discover order in the flowing, changing process of life. The development of this understandings entailed reconceptualising all my experiences (Vygotsky 1962). Looking retrospectively at my personal and professional experiences, I sought to understand Bob's professional development and, as the inquiry developed, how our collaboration contributed to his renewal.

This work led to the identification of the seven characteristics of *relational teacher development* as an approach to understanding teachers as curriculum makers and, more significantly, as a way of helping teachers harness their personal practical knowledge in order to renew classroom practice and improve student learning. As an approach, it is sensitive to the role each participant plays as teacher and learner in the relationship, the milieus in which each lives and works, and the need to present one's authentic self in relationships that are open, non-judgmental and trusting. Underlying such relationships is respect for teachers as curriculum makers who draw on their personal practical knowledge to inform their classroom practices. The seven characteristics were modified slightly to become RTE, which I applied in my practice as a teacher educator, and continue to apply in my practice as a teacher educator and administrator.

Looking Outward: Situating Relational Teacher Education

Loughran (2006) emphasizes the importance of purposefully examining ourselves as teacher educators and the practices we employ in teaching teachers. Developing a pedagogy of teacher education, he argues, involves learning about teaching, teaching about teaching and the "importance of self-understanding and connectness" (p. 2) in becoming teachers and teacher educators. Becoming a teacher educator involves much more than teacher knowledge, skill and ability, as one must explicitly teach about teaching and understand the experiences of preservice teachers (Loughran 2006). Brookfield (1995) articulated the importance of learning to know ourselves, encouraging such learning in others, and developing critical conversations that promote ongoing professional growth. RTE offers teacher educators ways of thinking about these dimensions of teacher education by offering seven lenses through which to think about themselves, practice, and engagement with teacher candidates.

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) recognize that "there is an important relationship between personal growth and understanding and public discourse about that understanding" (p. 15). Relational teacher education helps teacher educators to study their experiences in order to better enable preservice teachers to harness their per-

sonal practical knowledge. In particular, it offers a framework for teacher educators to consider in thinking about their identities, those of preservice, and the importance of identity and relationship in teacher education. In order to move from good intention to effective practice, it is helpful to have characteristics that make explicit what caring relationships look like and stories of experience that illustrate what these characteristics might look like in practice.

The National Academy of Education's vision of professional practice in the United States emphasizes teaching as a profession in which knowledge of learners, teachers and knowledge is situated in a wider social context (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005). In order for teachers to become adaptive experts, able to address the particular needs within their classroom, they need to understand themselves as teachers and draw effectively on their store of personal and professional learning experiences (Clandinin and Connelly 1992). RTE helps teacher educators move beyond offering tips and tricks of practice by prompting them to think deeply about their own practice, draw out the personal practical knowledge of preservice teachers, engage respectfully, and empathetically in relationships that lead to professional growth. By doing so, it addresses several of the core components of powerful teacher education (Darling-Hammond 2006). In particular, RTE explicitly helps preservice teachers confront their deep-seated beliefs in order to learn about the experiences of others, offers them cases of practice, and provides strong relationships grounded in explicit, shared beliefs about practice (Darling-Hammond 2006). It also helps preservice teachers develop a sense of professional identity (Kosnik and Beck 2009) and an understanding that relationships are central to effectively engaging students in learning (Hollingsworth et al. 1993).

By looking back at my experiences as a relational teacher educator, I hope to illustrate how this approach can assist teacher educators in better understanding their practice while preparing preservice teachers to become adaptive experts able to enter into meaningful learning relationships with students in classrooms.

Looking Backward: 15 Years of Teacher Education Practices

In looking back at my teacher education experiences, I have organized experiences thematically according to the seven characteristics of RTE. Within each section, experiences are generally in chronological order.

Understanding One's Own Personal Practical Knowledge

> When I became a teacher educator I recognised that I was assuming a significant level of responsibility for the professional development of others. I looked… to my experiences as a preservice teacher and mentor teacher to situate myself as a relational teacher educator. (Kitchen 2005a, p. 19)

As a new teacher educator, reflecting on my own experiences helped me recognize that teachers enter the profession not as blank slates but as persons shaped by a wealth of past experiences. Through my implicit and explicit pedagogy of teacher education, I sought to value preservice teachers' experiences, model constructivist pedagogy, and bridge theory to practice:

> Inquiry into my experiences as a preservice teacher helped me recognize many of the limitations of traditional approaches to teacher education, while my reflections on my practice as an associate teacher has helped me recognize that much of my practice as a teacher educator was grounded in the lessons learned as I reflected on the theory and practice of teacher education during my graduate studies. Reflection on subsequent experiences has reinforced my perceptions and motivated me to seek the tools necessary to improve my practice as a teacher educator. If one always "teaches the self" (Pinar, 1980, 1981), it is crucial that teachers engage in rigorous self-study in order to develop self-understanding and an understanding of education. This rigorous self-study process helped me become more aware of my formative experiences in order to understand the challenges faced by teacher candidates. It has also motivated me to develop curriculum and establish classroom environments that foster collaboration and reflection on personal experiences in order to address the challenges of classroom teaching. (Kitchen 2008b, pp. 187–188)

Later, teaching courses on professionalism and law, I urged preservice teachers to "draw on [their] moral commitment as teachers to foster classroom environments in which students' intellect and character are developed" (Kitchen 2010). Reflecting on my own moral development as a teacher, I suggested that "teachers are most likely to develop a professional ethic of caring when it is linked to their personal practical knowledge and identities" (Kitchen 2010). While it is important to share one's experiences with preservice teachers, it is equally important on the tension between telling about an experience and letting them grow into their own understandings. When presenting workshops on sexual and gender diversity issues in schools, I had many stories to share as a gay man and experienced teacher. Yet, as my co-presenter and I "had witnessed unreflective presenters share stories that make participants uncomfortable, we made every effort to ensure that personal stories were carefully selected and crafted to contribute to learning" (Kitchen and Bellini 2012, p. 220). Later, after reading participant feedback, we wrote:

> Julian's stories helped convey the sense of vulnerability experienced by LGBT teens and the ways in which words and action of teachers can make a difference… Julian was humble in his manner, thanked them for being open to learning, and modelled the respectfulness he asked them to offer LGBT youth… The personal touch… helped with our goal of instilling ethical knowledge… (Kitchen and Bellini 2012, p. 200).

In recent years, a significant amount of my energy has been devoted to program leadership, as chair of the teacher education program committee and as director of Aboriginal education. In these roles, I continue to reflect on my own experiences in order to guide others. As the project lead in the design of a 2-year preservice program, I wrote, "In order to be meaningfully engaged, I need to feel that my perspective is valued and considered. Therefore, I need to ensure that all voices are heard and that many are included in the recommendations of the committee" (Journal, January 25, 2014). As director of Aboriginal educational programs at my university, I am fully aware of my lack of cultural knowledge relative to my staff and the popu-

lations we serve. In assuming this role, I examined my personal practical knowledge in order to identify what I could offer in this role. Through self-understanding I was aware of my position of privilege as a white male of high socio-economic status and the ways in which my queer identity gave me an outsider's perspective. I was also aware that RTE helped me to be explicit about my strengths and limitations. Drawing on RTE, I committed to using my deep knowledge of teacher education and university processes to move forward the priorities identified by Aboriginal staff, students and communities. While my actions will ultimately define my work, understanding myself as actor helps me to enter thoughtfully into the role and place the interests of others above my own.

Improving One's Practice in Teacher Education

> While understanding my personal practical knowledge is important, so too was my ability to communicate my understanding and to structure meaningful lessons. In examining these challenges, I reflect on my doctoral work in narrative inquiry and teacher development, which has informed my efforts to develop relational teacher education practices. (Kitchen 2005a, p. 23)

The major influence on my disposition as a teacher educator was my graduate studies. Professor Michael Connelly constructed opportunities to reflect on personal experiences while developing a critical understanding of curriculum and schooling. Through narrative inquiries in a safe space, I negotiated personal professional meaning and became more respectful of all teachers as curriculum makers with rich personal experiences. In my first year, as I struggled with the tensions in teacher education, Connelly asked if I was incorporating narrative inquiry into my course. After I replied that I was trying to squeeze it in, he suggested that reflection should be embedded into the course. As I puzzled narratively over issues arising from my experiences, I was able to draw on my experiences to bridge the theory-practice divide with teacher candidates. For example, journaling about a meeting with Rory reminded me of my difficult shift from undergraduate thesis-proof essay writing to critical reflection and prompted me to balance feedback with connections to my own experiences as a writer (Kitchen 2005a).

My commitment to improving practice is best illustrated by my efforts to enhance reflection on personal identity and professional practice by preservice teachers. Each year as a cohort leader, I worked to increase the amount of formative feedback provided during the transition to teaching in schools. In a self-study of my teacher education practices (Loughran 2002), I examined my written responses to the reflections of preservice teachers over 5 years to better understand my teacher education practices and to identify characteristics of effective feedback on reflective practice (Kitchen 2008a). My responses were layered and multidimensional as I joined with them in the struggle to make meaning from experience. In reviewing my written feedback to reflective portfolios, I identified eight categories of response as significant: validation, echoing, questioning, analyzing, cautioning, exploring

possibilities, sharing, and improving practice. In many cases my responses were multidimensional with the interplay among types of response creating a layered effect. The process of analyzing responses helped me to more explicitly consider each category in responding to reflective writing. For example, I might validate (e.g., "you come across as professional and caring), identify themes that I identified across incidents, then analyze (e.g., "this is how I read your story") (Kitchen 2008a, pp. 40–41). This might be followed by possibilities for further reading, sharing of personal stories (e.g., how I dealt with a dilemma of practice), and areas for improvement (e.g., I would suggest that you elaborate more on how you would organize your class to promote a love of learning.") (Kitchen 2008a, pp. 42).

Throughout my career, I have collected data on teacher candidate learning with a view to improving my responsiveness. This has led me to refine my practices to meet identified needs and, in one case, led me to write a textbook that addressed the needs of preservice teachers (Kitchen and Dean 2010).

Understanding the Landscape of Teacher Education

> While understanding one's own personal practical knowledge and improving one's practice are crucial qualities in a relational teacher educator, it is also important to understand the landscape beyond the university classroom, to frame the individual challenge within a larger institutional and societal challenge. (Kitchen 2005a)

As a teacher educator, I have witnessed many changes in the teacher education landscape. During the 1990s, political and cultural changes had a significant impact on schools and universities in Canada. The merger of teacher education and graduate institutions at University of Toronto led to major organizational challenges, especially as it took alongside province-wide curriculum reform and cuts in university funding. The merger, however, prompted major programmatic changes—the establishment of cohorts, an increased focus on reflective practice, stronger partnerships with schools, and opportunities for individual teacher educators to develop authentic professional relationships with students—that gave me the latitude to incorporate RTE into my work as a cohort leader.

When I started teaching at Brock University in 2006, I was eager to change the internal educational landscape. While pleased that practice teaching cohorts were foundational to the teacher education program, I was disappointed at the proliferation of multiple specialized courses rather than a few courses that integrated multiple dimensions of learning to teach. I initially participated in several change initiatives but, disappointed with the results, my attention turned to teaching and research.

In 2012, the provincial government began a consultation process on extending the duration of teacher education programs from 1-year to 2-years (Kitchen and Petrarca in press). At the time, as chair of the program committee, I viewed this change the landscape outside Brock as an opportunity to re-imagine the program and engage faculty in a collaborative program design process. In 2013, we were

informed of details of the new program requirements and of the 2015 implementation date. We had less than a year to imagine the program, and another year to have program changes approved and curriculum developed. The externally imposed changes prompted much internal debate about the future of the teacher education program, while the tight timeline necessitated a level of decisiveness rare in colleges of education.

As the facilitator of the reform process, I applied principles of RTE to the departmental decision-making process. I worked closely with faculty teams to re-imagine curriculum and programming so that everyone felt engaged. In this process, we worked to align the politically imposed mandate with the values underlying the existing program and best practices identified in the teacher education literature. Rich discussion led to more innovative programming ideas. These ideas included more connections across curriculum domains, stronger theory-practice links, and more rigorous refection on practice. The program culminates in a teacher-as-researcher course designed to prompt preservice teachers to become critical consumers of research and practitioners actively engaged in studying their practice. As I reflected at the time, "As a teacher educator, I had become content to make a difference in the lives of my students. Today I am hopeful that programmatic changes will lead to a program that is relational and prepares teachers to be adaptive experts for a dynamic and changing world" (Journal, June 7, 2014).

Respecting and Empathizing with Preservice Teachers

> Relational teacher education is based on respect for adult learners and a genuine belief that each prospective teacher must construct her/his own meaning as a curriculum maker. (Kitchen 2005b, p. 201)

"Each adult learner has his or her own relationship to knowledge, and this relationship is influenced by the social and cultural characteristics of the individual's life history," according to Dominice (2000, p. 83). Thus, all preservice teachers have individual frames of reference that they need to examine and interpret to become successful. While they enter with a rich range of learning experiences, their personal practical knowledge is often juxtaposed with "radically simplified conceptions of teaching" (Scardamalia and Bereiter 1989, p. 37) based on the thousands of hours they have spent in classrooms. When confronted with the reality of practice teaching, these conceptions often cause them to seek basic survival skills rather than deeper understandings of the complexity of learning. I responded to their request for survival tips, while encouraging them to probe more deeply the complexities of classroom teaching and learning. For example, I began the study of assessment with a debating activity through which preservice teachers discussed a range of approaches to assessment. In the role of facilitator, I encouraged all sides to contribute and acknowledged both the ideas expressed and the complexity of the issue. In subsequent debriefing and journal entries, students praised this activity for helping them feel safe in sharing and understanding multiple perspectives. More

importantly, they became aware of the complexity of the issues and drew on their complex experiences as learners in order to develop more sophisticated and nuanced conceptions of teaching. Similarly, in supporting preservice teachers during field experiences, I both provided a resource booklet that outlines effective classroom management strategies and structured opportunities to reflect on the complexity of teaching. By the end of the course, the vast majority described the process of self-reflection as crucial to preparing for a career in teaching. Helena, for example, wrote:

> Thank you for forcing me to reflect for it made me realize that through all the teaching, learning, trials and tribulation, fun and struggle, that the reason I want to teach remains unchanged. What has changed is that it is now richer for me. Teaching is intellectually stimulating, creative and endlessly varied. (Correspondence, April 2003)

Respect for preservice teachers and empathy for the challenges they faced in grappling with the complexity of teaching prompted me to engage them in action research as a means to developing adaptive expertise (Bransford et al. 2005, Page 2005). I noted that "preservice teachers are quite capable of transforming student learning by researching their own practice" (Kitchen and Stevens 2008, p. 26) and that "many of them felt empowered as professionals capable of bridging theory with practice" (p. 25).

Conveying Respect and Empathy

> During the course, I demonstrated my commitment by listening attentively, responding mindfully, praising individual contributions to class, following up on concerns by email, and providing extensive commentaries on their written narratives and critical reflections. (Kitchen 2005b, p. 204)

Crucial to the success of my helping relationship with Bob Fitzgerald was the empathic and respectful manner in which I supported his development. In developing the course of study, planning classroom activities and presenting myself to the class, I made an effort to convey my caring attitude towards them. A letter to preservice teachers proved an effective way of conveying my respect and empathy from the beginning of the course (Kitchen 2002), as it identified the challenges they were about to face, acknowledged their insecurities, recognized their rich experiences and expressed my commitment to building a community of safety and collaboration. During the course, I demonstrated my commitment by listening attentively, responding mindfully, praising individual contributions in class, following up on concerns by email and providing extensive commentaries on their written narratives and critical reflections.

While preservice teachers commended my teaching strategies, the most common sentiment is appreciation for the respect and empathy I display. For example:

> I was inspired by his personal example…the model of a caring teacher.

> Julian is my most open-minded professor…He does not just emphasize equity, he actually practices it.
> Probably the best sensitivity and social tact I've seen in my teachers.

The importance of relationship in the preparation of new teachers is also reflected in the importance of validation as a form of response to reflective portfolios (Kitchen 2008a) and the respect afforded them as action researchers (Kitchen and Stevens 2008).

In addition to respecting and empathizing with each student, I have worked hard to build a cohesive community of learners in cohorts organized around field experiences at both institutions. Aware that building community within a cohort requires effort, I invested considerable time and energy into team building. Each year, inspired by Beck and Kosnik's (2001) work on how faculty can contribute to community building, I began with a range of activities designed to develop trust among students. Over the years, I worked hard to convey acceptance, respect and care to every preservice teacher. The establishment of community within cohorts enhanced the level of respect and empathy conveyed from one student to another. While community building is complex, my decision to take "a stand in the direction of community" (Beck and Kosnik 2001, p. 947) increases possibilities for caring classrooms.

Helping Preservice Teachers Face Problems

> For many of you, the challenge of the outward journey is compounded by an inward journey of understanding. Over the year, as you reflect on your experiences, you may find yourself confronting inner tensions… I will do all I can to aid you on your journey. (Kitchen 2002, p. 37)

While I try to anticipate many of the challenges common to preservice teachers, I recognize that each person has to reconcile her or his personal practical knowledge with practical aspects of teaching. As a relational teacher educator, one of the commitments I made is to offer aid to each of them as they confront these tensions. While my approach to pedagogy, reflective portfolios, establishing relationships and fostering community has helped teacher candidates face problems and reconcile theory with practice, I recognize that individualized attention is crucial in converting personal and professional crises into educative moments. As the practicum experience is one of the most challenging periods in the year, I have found that the debriefing I do with teacher candidates after observing them teach provides an excellent opportunity to face individual concerns.

As a cohort leader, I visit teacher candidates during practice teaching sessions. These visits—which generally involved meeting the associate teacher, observing a lesson and debriefing with the teacher candidate after the lesson—provide excellent opportunities to discuss both teaching strategies and personal practical knowledge. For example, I offered Marta practical suggestions that helped her structure transitions between activities during her practicum. While offering a range of teaching

and learning strategies is an important aspect of practicum supervision, I believe that it is more important to identify the tensions between their personal constructs of teaching and learning and the practical realities of classrooms. By the time I saw Marta teach, I had already identified as one of her central tensions a struggle between a need for an orderly classroom and a commitment to authentic learning through role-playing activities. I began by asking for her perspective on the lesson and listening carefully to the issues that she raised. During the discussion, she noted her efforts to incorporate cooperative learning strategies into her classroom practice while acknowledging that her personal experiences and disposition inclined towards order and structure. I hypothesized that developing effective procedures and transitions was key to reconciling her need for order with her willingness to embrace authentic and experiential learning. After suggesting that experiential learning and classroom management could effectively co-exist, I offered a number of modest adjustments that might enhance her cooperative learning procedures. In my professionalism and law class, we grapple with real world situations, including one's arising from classroom experiences, with a view to identifying responses that are respectful of students while also practical for them as teachers. Situations may not have simple solutions, but making explicit a thoughtful process of working out problems helps preservice teachers to pause, reflect and respond.

Teacher candidates need to be respected as curriculum-makers. By attending to Marta's personal practical knowledge and addressing the specific problems she was facing, I was drawing on the lessons I had learned working with Bob. Marta expressed appreciation for the empathy and respect that I showed. Later in the year, in order to address the tension between experiential learning and classroom management, she attended a cooperative learning conference. I was able to empower Marta as a professional responsible for her own professional development. This approach has been effective with other preservice teachers during practicum supervision. I have also adopted a similar non-judgemental, client-directed approach when they meet me to discuss other professional and personal issues.

As RTE has proven effective in my teaching practice, I have drawn on it to work through problems with staff and instructors in the Aboriginal centre. I regularly sit down with staff to learn more about the issues confronting them in the programs they coordinate or support. For example, one of my coordinators runs a good program but regularly falls short of enrolment projections. I asked her plenty of questions, listened intently to her answers, and puzzled over the problem with her. The coordinator identified the difficulties Aboriginal students had accessing government funding as a major problem. When she lamented that applicants were not eligible for government training funds, I suggested that we shorten the program by 4 months. This proved possible, but was a solution we could not have found without working through the problem together. Also, in meetings with community partners, we learned that our students would be more successful accessing funding if they began their program in May. After checking with the university, I discovered that it was indeed possible to alter the program's academic year to better serve students. This coordinator also thought that the curriculum needed to be renewed, so I advo-

cated successfully for special funding for the development of new resources. While it is too early to assess the impact of these changes, it was our shared engagement with the problem that identified alternative directions.

Receptivity to Growing in Relationship

> I have recognized that the discovery of new meaning and the development of professional practice could be enhanced if the "client" rather than the expert defined the problem. (Kitchen 2005b, p. 206)

My experiences with Bob Fitzgerald led me to wonder if receptivity to growing in relationship might be the most important characteristic in teacher development. Through this collaboration, I recognized that the discovery of new meaning and development of enhanced professional practice can be enhanced if the "client" rather than the "expert" defines the problem to be faced. Through this process, I discovered "order in experience" (Rogers 1961) which, when combined with recognition of the uniqueness of each individual and situation, deepened my understanding and enriched my ability to assist others. Gordon's praise for approaching "students as if you need them to find out more about a subject" and viewing them as up to the challenge (Email, February, 2002) indicates that students are aware of my genuine engagement in the process of learning with them. My receptivity to the personal practical knowledge and distinct needs of each student is also reflected in my responses to reflective portfolios and debriefing of field experiences.

As an administrator, my receptivity to growing in relationship is also appreciated by staff and instructors. In June 2014, at the meeting of the Aboriginal program committee, an instructor publicly thanked me for being a 'cheerleader' for the work of staff and a tireless advocate for new ways of being responsive to community needs. A staff member praised my participation in community events. Another praised my humility as a non-Aboriginal person because I always checked with staff before sending out reports and communiques. As I often said to staff and other stakeholders, "I may be the white guy in charge, but it is your centre and you know what is best for the community." While there are many challenges ahead, as we work to expand much needed programming for Aboriginal learners and communities, receptivity to growing in relationship has made the work stimulating, meaningful and mutually rewarding.

I have recounted my experiences as a teacher educator applying the principles of relational teacher development to the preparation of preservice teachers and to university leadership. The results of this self-study into my teacher education practice suggest that relational teacher development is sufficiently robust that it can be applied across teacher education contexts, from classroom teaching to field experience support to administration.

Looking Forward: Re-imagining Teacher Education

In this chapter, I have explored RTE as a way of re-imagining teacher education as relational. The characteristics offer guidance to teacher educators seeking to explicitly focus on understanding themselves to help preservice teachers become adaptive experts within teacher education classrooms that model relational knowing and community. The examples from my practice over 15 years illustrate what RTE might look like and what it means to be a relational teacher educator. In this final section, I offer advice to beginning teacher educators interested in adopting a relational stance to teacher education.

Developing a pedagogy of teacher education involves understanding oneself and one's practices as a means to purposefully shaping and conducting teaching about teaching and learning about teaching (Loughran 2006). RTE offers a relational approach to the pedagogy of teacher education. It is not a formula, as the most important element is a commitment to relationally knowing one's preservice teachers. But, for those who are predisposed to such an approach, RTE highlights seven characteristics to intentionally and explicitly address in one's professional practice.

At the heart of RTE is commitment to respect and empathy for preservice teachers. Although commitment to respect and empathy requires no specialized skills, it is difficult to achieve because the teacher educator needs to take the time and effort to listen to the each of their stories in order to help them address professional challenges in ways that are meaningful to them. This is achieved not through the application of a formula or well-meaning sentiments, but through in-depth efforts to understand one's own personal practical knowledge and direct efforts to engage preservice teachers so that they appreciate the efforts made on their behalf. Professional knowledge—a solid repertoire of teaching skills and understandings of students, curriculum and context—is important, but mainly in support of empathetic understanding and commitment to facing problems. After understanding one's own personal professional knowledge and identifying the needs of the individual teacher candidates, the teacher educator needs to draw on this deep professional aptitude to select appropriate strategies and teach them to preservice teachers. Crucial to my engagement has been receptivity to growing in relationship. By studying my practice, I constantly work to improve my teaching so that I may become a better teacher educator. Also, by doing this, I contribute to the academic discourse on teacher education and become part of a community of practitioners committed to enhancing the pedagogy of teacher education (e.g., Russell and Loughran 2007).

Parker Palmer (1998) wrote:

> Authority comes as I reclaim my identity and integrity, remembering my selfhood and my sense of vocation. Then teaching can come from the depths of my own truth—and the truth that is within my students has a chance to respond in kind. (p. 33)

Relational teacher education is a path to becoming a teacher educator whose identity and integrity makes a positive difference in the lives of preservice teachers and the students they teach.

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