

Chapter 4

On Deconstructing Folk Theory While Developing as a Teacher Educator: A Disorienting Transition as a Reorienting Opportunity

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I am a newly minted associate professor who has devoted a great deal of energy over the last 10 years to examining the roles assumed and played by classroom teachers as they become teacher educators. The emphasis I have placed on this line of inquiry is evident in the following paragraph from my recent application for tenure and promotion:

I use my teaching and research as opportunities to inquire into the roles assumed by teacher educators, and to interrogate the relationships between teacher educator beliefs and practices. As a former classroom teacher involved in the process of becoming a teacher educator, I recognized that teaching a subject and teaching others how to teach a subject share much in common but are not the same. Instead, becoming a teacher educator requires former classroom teachers to modify their professional identities, and to develop pedagogies that account for the different emphasis of their university-based instruction. Teacher education research has not addressed how teacher educators acquire the competencies deemed necessary for their work in teacher education, and leaves unexamined the degree to which teacher educators' beliefs about what they should be doing mesh with their actual practice. These are important issues to consider because of their potential influence on the preparation of teachers. Much of my research draws on my experiences as a beginning teacher educator to address these gaps in the research. (tenure and promotion packet, 2013)

Following this rationale for why examining the transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator is a worthwhile endeavor, I describe what I understand as my role and purpose as a teacher educator:

As a faculty member charged with the task of preparing future teachers, each one of whom has the potential to teach thousands of children over a long career, I believe my work carries with it a certain moral imperative. I frame this imperative in terms of better understanding social studies teaching and learning as a process of critical inquiry capable of fulfilling the democratic mission of schooling in a pluralistic society. As a result, I use my teaching and

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J. Williams, M. Hayler (eds.), *Professional Learning Through Transitions and Transformations*, Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices 15, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-22029-1_4

research as sites to wrestle with questions of what is worth knowing and how to best teach that knowledge and/or those skills and values in ways responsive to the moral and ethical dimensions of education. (tenure and promotion packet, 2013)

While this represents a reasonably clear and concise statement of how I now understand my work as a teacher educator, my early thinking and practices lacked similar conviction. Like others who came before me, I found the move from teacher to teacher educator disorienting. This chapter aims to further shed light on this transition by detailing how my professional learning and development as a teacher educator evolved over the course of the last 10 years.

In what follows, I first provide some background to describe my upbringing and formal schooling experiences, as well as to serve as a backdrop for the remainder of the narrative. In the section after that, I explain cultural psychology as the theoretical framework in which my professional learning and development as a beginning teacher educator can be situated. Cultural psychology offers insight into why my evolution as a teacher educator involved the deconstruction of folk theory and pedagogy. After a brief methodology section is presented, I spend the remainder of the chapter describing the transformational ‘turns’ that seemed to most influence my developing identity and practice as a teacher educator. This discussion includes a focus on explaining what prompted each of the turns, and why they were significant in my process of becoming a teacher educator.

Living the Dream: A Personal/Professional Background

My grandparents were all immigrants, or the children of immigrants, from Europe who moved to the United States in pursuit of better lives for themselves and their families. Although none of my grandparents were formally educated beyond grade school, they worked hard in their blue-collar jobs to make advanced education a possibility for their children. Part of their stance on education involved pushing their children, including my father and mother, to “Americanize.” Their focus on assimilation can be understood as a tactic for increasing the chances of their children finding success in the future. This proved effective when my parents became the first in their families to graduate from college. After college, both went on to enjoy successful careers in their respective fields. My dad worked his way up to being an executive in finance, while my mom proved herself as an accomplished school teacher for more than 30 years. In this way, by embracing the American way of life, and I suspect by not looking different from the mainstream population, my family was readily assimilated into American culture and my parents were able to secure a comfortable lifestyle for themselves and their five children.

Owing to some combination of my parents’ backgrounds, professional trajectories, and shared understandings around the importance of education, it quickly became an expectation that all of their children would similarly do well in school and find success in their own lives. My parents attempted to make decisions for our

family that would most help each of us fulfil their expectations. For better or worse, these decisions resulted in us living in predominantly white middle-class neighborhoods and attending predominantly white middle-class schools. As such, my personal and public life as a child were dominated by same-group interactions that were grounded in white middle-class values. From my earliest days in the suburbs of Philadelphia to my later years in the suburbs of Atlanta, I learned almost exclusively alongside peers who were like me. While most of us were good at playing the game of school and I made excellent grades, I now have serious reservations about how much I actually learned, at least with regard to how to conscientiously participate in a culturally diverse and democratic society.

Other than the fact that the schools I attended were virtually monocultural institutions that offered few opportunities to interact with children who were different from me, I also feel I was mostly presented with forms of mainstream academic knowledge. Banks (1993) argued how “mainstream academic knowledge, while appearing neutral and objective, often presents propositions, concepts, and findings that reinforce dominant group hegemony and perpetuates racism, sexism, and classism” (p. 61). While this slanted view of knowledge seems debilitating on its own, my education further fell short in so far as I was offered precious few opportunities to participate in my own learning. Most of my teachers made use of banking models of education in which they attempted to deposit information into my mind, with my only function being that of absorption (see Freire 1993). Given this context, it may not be surprising to learn that I never really thought about or critically examined society while I was a young person. My education led me to believe that the way things were in the world was just fine.

This admission should not be mistaken as a sign that I was satisfied. I had actually grown increasingly apathetic during my career as a student as it seemed like my teachers enacted methods that primarily involved talking at me. This indifference was especially high toward the end of my high school experience. While many of my classmates were joyfully embracing senior superlatives describing them as “most intelligent” or “most likely to succeed,” I was indifferently shrugging off my designation as “most likely to fall asleep at graduation.” Still, college remained an option because I had good grades and I did well on standardized tests. I decided to attend only after my mother took the initiative to send out an application on my behalf, which I was surprised to learn was accepted. In any case, my experiences in college went pretty much as might be expected. I immediately dug myself into an almost inescapable academic hole as a result of having way too much fun and spending way too little time attending classes. However, I was eventually able to overcome my indiscretions and graduate with a degree in education in 4 years. I had chosen my major in my freshmen year for typical, though not particularly well-developed, reasons; namely, I had an interest in the subject area and wanted to help others.

Upon graduating, I promptly accepted one of the few remaining positions in the state as a social studies teacher at a high school in a rural county. In that position I learned just how much I had internalized banking models of education (see Freire 1993) as the way schooling was supposed to be done. Given my own feelings of

indifference in school, one might think that I would have tried to work toward change in my practice as a teacher by introducing exciting topics or implementing innovative pedagogy. Instead, not knowing what else to do, I mostly relied on my experiences as a student via my “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie 1975). This led me to embrace an approach to teaching social studies commonly referred to as citizenship transmission (Barr et al. 1977). This approach emphasizes teaching “content, sets of behaviors, and attitudes that reflect standard and socially accepted views” (Stanley and Nelson 1994, p. 267), typically derived from the canon of Western, particularly European-American, thought and culture (Vinson and Ross 2001). It also “suggests a more teacher-centered classroom in which a premium is placed on the efficient transmission of information” (Thornton 1994, p. 225). In short, teaching social studies using this approach meant that I was teaching in the same traditional ways in which I had been taught.

Despite my familiarity and comfort with my chosen approach, it did not take too long for me to realize that the type of education I had received was not going to work with my students in rural Georgia; many of whom had never even entertained the notion of going to college and were not interested in playing the game of school. I remember not being sure what to do, or where to turn for help. So, I decided to enroll in a master’s program at a local college after my first year of teaching. I had grown to really enjoy working with my students, and I wanted to learn about vexing issues I had to confront in my classroom regarding the implications of race and class in education. Plus the automatic increase in pay that came along with an advanced degree sounded really nice after trying to live for a year on a beginning teacher’s salary. The master’s program was educative in so far as it exposed me to more historical content knowledge and alternative teaching methods; however, it did not satiate my desire to better understand and serve my students, nor did it transform my worldview. My only solace over the next couple of years was that I successfully formed relationships with many of my students and seemed able to prepare them for whatever standardized tests came along. But other serious issues, like low attendance, high drop-out rates, and segregated classes remained the norm. Somewhat disenchanted as a classroom teacher, I decided to return to school yet again to pursue a doctoral degree. My intent was to return to high school teaching after earning the doctoral degree. I figured I might learn a little bit more and I knew I would be getting paid a little bit more. But that is not exactly the way things worked out. Instead, it was here, as a doctoral student and teaching assistant, where my formal transition from teacher to teacher educator began.

Cultural Psychology: A Theoretical Framework

An important function of graduate school involves learning about new ideas or theories and applying them to oneself. Cultural psychology (e.g., Cole 1996; Goodnow et al. 1995; Shweder et al. 1998) represents one such set of ideas that I was exposed to in graduate school and that I have found useful over the years in understanding

and informing my narrative of becoming a teacher educator. Cultural psychology explores how culture enters into the process of human development and life, including educational processes (Bruner 1996). Shweder and his colleagues (1998) defined cultural psychology as “the study of all the things members of different communities *think* (know, want, feel, value) and *do* by virtue of being the kinds of beings who are the beneficiaries, guardians and active perpetuators of a particular culture” (p. 867, emphases in original). Proponents understand human development as situated in particular social, cultural, and historical contexts (Rogoff 2003).

From this perspective, human development is best understood as the process of growing into a culture and becoming a member of the group (Lee and Walsh 2001). An important function of education is to support and contribute to this process (Bruner 1996). However, Bruner (1986) noted how “the truths of theories of development are relative to the cultural contexts in which they are applied...relativity is not... a question of logical consistency alone...it is also a question of congruence with values that prevail in the culture” (p. 135). Similarly, Walsh (2002) noted how “what is viewed as ‘natural’ in development will depend on who children are expected to become, that is, how a competent adult is defined” (pp. 213–214). Understanding development in this way promotes the idea that cultures can hold different goals dependent on their values.

Cultural psychologists maintain that every individual in every culture holds deeply embedded implicit cultural beliefs about how the world operates. These beliefs are known as folk theories or psychologies, and from them flow folk pedagogies (Bruner 1996). Lee and Walsh (2004) posit that such theories “exist in the deep structure of a culture – implicit rather than explicit – and become overlaid in formal education by scientific theories and academic language” (p. 230). Although the implicit nature of these theories makes them difficult to identify, it is important to be mindful of their existences because “for people, such as educators, who interact with children daily, these folk theories are enacted, albeit often subtly, in daily practice. As these theories are enacted, they contribute to the daily mix in which children’s development occurs” (Walsh 2002, p. 217).

Research shows that schooling in the U.S. encourages students to develop in ways that most align with European American values (Lee and Walsh 2004, 2005). These values are rooted in “the ontology of individualism..., and the central tenet of individualism is the epistemological priority accorded to the separate, essentially nonsocial, individual” (Shweder et al. 1998, p. 898). This view conceptualizes the self “as an autonomous, independent person” and is referred to as “the independent construal of the self” (Markus and Kitayama 1991, p. 226). Based on their cross-cultural studies on the conception of the self, Kitayama and his colleagues (e.g., Kitayama and Markus 2000; Kitayama et al. 1997; Markus and Kitayama 1991, 1994) argued that, on average, more individuals in Western, particularly middle-class European American, cultural contexts, hold this view than individuals in non-Western cultures. Researchers (e.g., Kitayama and Markus 2000; Kitayama et al. 1997; Kondo 1990; Markus and Kitayama 1991, 1994; Rosenberger 1992) have found that many other parts of the world, including East Asian, some African, Latin-American and many southern European cultures, see the self “not as separate

from the social context but as more connected and less differentiated from others” (Markus and Kitayama 1991, p. 227). These researchers’ discussions of the independent self and the interdependent self highlight how people from different cultures may hold different, if not contradictory, perspectives of what is considered the ideal self.

Although there is nothing wrong with the cultural values that comprise the folk theory of the independent self, Hatano and Miyake (1991) warned how “cultural effects on learning are both enhancing and restricting” (p. 279). Ritter and Lee (2009) demonstrated how European American values implicitly frame much of what is considered desirable in social studies education, and argued how such values can detract from more inclusive, and potentially more powerful, forms of democratic teaching and learning. Much of my own journey of becoming a teacher educator has involved grappling with the question of what can be accomplished by thinking explicitly about “folk pedagogical assumptions in order to bring them out of the shadows of tacit knowledge” (Bruner 1996, p. 47). Indeed, my own development necessitated me being willing and able to deconstruct folk theories and pedagogies that I had long overlooked in my life and career.

Methodology

Over the course of the last 10 years, I have regularly used writing as “a method of inquiry” to learn about myself in relation to a number of research topics in which I was interested (Richardson and St. Pierre 2005). This has primarily been accomplished through an iterative process of journaling aimed at unpacking the complexity of my work in teacher education. Lyons and LaBoskey (2002) argued that such use of narrative is “especially useful to capture the situated complexities of teachers’ work and classroom practice, often messy, uncertain, and unpredictable” (p. 15). In addition to its ability to capture nuance, Bullough (1997) argued that to create a story is “to engage in narrative reasoning, which plays a central role in a teacher’s effort to create a teaching self, a moral orientation to the world of which we testify when we teach” (p. 19). In these ways, reflective narrative methods have allowed for the contextualization of my experiences against the backdrop of action and consciousness.

Not only have narrative methods served the purpose of capturing my initial attempts to make sense of uncertain situations, but they have also preserved them as sources of data to be revisited later. This has made it possible to study my evolving identity and practices as a teacher educator, and resulted in eleven published self-studies (e.g., Bullock and Ritter 2011; Ritter 2007, 2009, 2010a, b, 2011, 2012a, b; Ritter et al. 2007, 2011; Williams and Ritter 2010) on those same topics. Now, re-examining the data and synthesizing the findings from these studies according to a categorical content perspective (Lieblich et al. 1998), applied in conjunction with the cultural psychology framework described above, has further resulted in the identification of four pivotal features of my professional learning and development as a

classroom teacher making the transition to teacher educator (e.g., taking a reflective turn, an epistemological turn, an ideological turn, and an instructional turn). Although discussed separately below, the turns are, of course, closely interconnected.

Taking a Reflective Turn

Possibly the most profound feature of my transition from teacher to teacher educator was the turn toward being more reflective. Although education programs are notorious for stressing the importance of reflection and being a reflective practitioner, the directive mostly rang hollow for me until my entry into graduate school with its concomitant duties in teacher education. One reason I may not have been prone toward introspection prior to my transition seems related to my uncritical background and acceptance of the status quo. In this way, for me, contentment may have bred complacency. Furthermore, my lack of reflection as a classroom teacher seems tied to the fact that I often felt consumed simply attempting to manage the complexity that permeates the daily milieu of the classroom. Ducharme and Agne (1989) conjectured how the classroom environment “is marked by much activity, great busyness, rapid decision-making, and quick responses. While not necessarily anti-intellectual, the life is not one of inquiry and introspection” (p. 78). Although surely not representative of all classroom teachers and teaching contexts, I can relate to the description provided of life in the classroom.

My views on reflection only started to change, as a matter of happenstance, after I was made to actually engage in its practice in a relevant and systematic way. This push came via a doctoral seminar on mentoring in which all of the participants were asked to conduct action research projects. The problem with this requirement, for me, was that I did not feel like my background or experiences had prepared me to conduct research. I remember thinking research was something smart people did, in uninviting settings removed from the messiness of the real world, to arrive at undiscovered truths. At a loss, I approached the instructor of the seminar, who later became my major professor, and expressed my lack of confidence in the research process. Perhaps anticipating the amount I still had to learn about teaching or how much I would need to learn about teacher education, he advised me to consider conducting a self-study of my development as a beginning teacher educator. I must have still looked confused, because he went on to advise me to simply start writing down events that resonated or questions that were raised as I conducted my work.

This initial, somewhat rudimentary, foray into the world of research led to a habit of regularly writing reflections on my experiences. Such a systematic approach to reflection has made it possible for me to study my evolving identity and practices. Moreover, although not necessarily obvious, I discovered that an important part of the process involves collaboration—sometimes considered retrospectively, sometimes achieved in the moment, and sometimes expected in the future. Along these lines, Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) claimed that “self-study points to a simple

truth, that to study practice is simultaneously to study self: a study of self-in-relation to other” (p. 14). For me, the significance of the reflective turn—when undertaken systematically and collaboratively—is that it can serve to uncover folk theory while yielding insight on research topics, like the shifting roles (Bullock and Ritter 2011), understandings (Ritter 2009, 2011), expectations (Ritter 2007), practices (Ritter 2010b, 2012a; Ritter et al. 2011) and identities (Williams and Ritter 2010) associated with becoming a teacher educator, both at the university (Ritter 2010a) and in the field (Ritter et al. 2007; Ritter 2012b). At the same time, I believe such understandings can benefit the larger educational community in so far as they “trigger further deliberations, explorations, and change by other educators in their contexts” (LaBoskey 2004, p. 1170).

Taking an Epistemological Turn

Another important feature of my transition from teacher to teacher educator involved taking an epistemological turn. In his book on research methods, Crotty (1998) discusses epistemology as the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective that defines what kind of knowledge is possible and legitimate. He goes on to present three broad epistemological positions ranging from objectivism (e.g., whereby meaning is discovered) to constructionism (e.g., whereby meaning is constructed) to subjectivism (e.g., whereby meaning is ascribed). As has already been suggested, prior to the reflective turn, I never really gave the nature and construction of knowledge much thought. But, given my affinity for transmissionist methods, I probably most identified with objectivism, at least implicitly, in so far as I assumed knowledge existed about the world regardless of my participation or engagement. Under this line of thinking, the truth exists somewhere out there, waiting to be discovered. However, two sets of activities shifted my epistemological understandings as I transitioned from teacher to teacher educator. Specifically, completing graduate coursework and engaging in the research process for myself encouraged me to broaden my view of what constitutes knowledge, and to recognize other ways of making meaning.

To that end, there are numerous examples in my data that illustrate how my coursework prompted me to consider the relationship between epistemology and formal schooling contexts. As one example, consider the following quotation derived from a personal reflection:

A history teacher who succumbs to the pressure of exclusively covering standards—most of which are based on behaviorist assumptions of knowledge—ultimately tends to simplify historical content knowledge to such an extent that it literally becomes just a series of facts that are checked-off of an endless list of objectives after they have been “covered.” In this scenario, precious little time is devoted to uncovering and exploring the relevance of the material by delving into the nuance and context that serve to provide deeper meaning. (coursework, 2005)

Given the close links between behaviorism and objectivism, this example shows how I was making connections between epistemology and my content area. Such connections were essential not only for the development of my own knowledge of teaching, but also for me to consider ways to work with preservice teachers who hold different epistemologies (see Joram 2007).

Further to this, I was also forced to think more explicitly about epistemology when I began to engage in research for myself. Although I began collecting data on my experiences in teacher education in 2004, I did not publish my first manuscript on the topic until 2007. In that piece (Ritter 2007), I wrote the following in my theoretical framework section:

I identified with constructivism as my epistemological stance because I believe “that social realities are constructed by the participants in those social settings” (Glesne 1999, p. 5). As Esterberg (2002, p. 16) argues, “there is no social reality apart from how individuals construct it, and so the main research task is to interpret those constructions.” Although I readily acknowledge the paramount role of interpretation in the construction of meaning, I do not believe that an uncritical sort of relativism must be adopted in order to explain social phenomena. According to Crotty (1998, p. 47), “what constructionism drives home unambiguously is that there is no true or valid interpretation. There are useful interpretations, to be sure, and these stand over against interpretations that appear to serve no useful purpose.” In this study, I use interpretivism as a theoretical framework to illuminate the pedagogical challenges I encountered as I transitioned from classroom teacher to teacher educator. Interpretivism “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty 1998, p. 67). Such a sociocultural-historical perspective provided me with an effective lens to help reveal what counted as useful interpretations within my research and why. (p. 6)

This excerpt makes it clear how the objectivist views that I carried into teacher education with me from the classroom had already begun to change by the middle of my graduate school experience. More specifically, it is clear that I was beginning to understand and identify with the notion of knowledge and reality being socially constructed. These understandings were further advanced as I went on to complete a certificate in qualitative research at my graduate institution, and have served as the foundation for explorations of other theoretical frames in my research and writing over the years.

Taking an Ideological Turn

Another important feature in the professional learning and development of teacher educators has to do with ideology. This is especially true in my case as a former social studies teacher becoming a teacher educator. According to Stanley and Longwell (2004), “The nature of social studies and social studies teacher education has been contested by both internal debates among social studies educators and the pressure of external forces seeking to shape social studies curriculum and methods” (p. 189). The essential debate in the field concerns whether social studies instruction should strive to transmit or transform the existing social order (Stanley 2005). The

place one comes to occupy on the ideological spectrum between teaching for transmission and teaching for transformation shapes the ways in which social studies educators think about their subject matter and what constitutes student learning.

As has already been touched on in the background section, both my experiences as a student and my classroom teaching tended to follow traditional patterns of instruction implicitly reifying the status quo. However, as I immersed myself in my doctoral studies and the work of teacher education, I found myself increasingly drawn toward other ideas and purposes regarding the function both of schools and social studies. In particular, I began to identify with a conception of teaching social studies referred to, by Parker (2003), as “advanced.” Proponents of this conception typically agree with Nelson’s (2001) claim that “education in a democracy demands access to and examination of knowledge, freedom to explore ideas, and development of skills of critical study” (p. 30). Similarly, most emphasize critical thinking “designed to promote a transformation of some kind in the learner” (Thornton 1994, p. 233). In stark contrast to other conceptions of citizenship education, Stanley and Nelson (1994) suggested the emphasis here be on “teaching the content, behaviors, and attitudes that question and critique standard and socially accepted views” (p. 267). Rather than treating citizenship as an entity to be acquired, students engage with their own interpretations of citizenship and are encouraged to communicate their interpretations with others who have different backgrounds. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) describe the outcome of such instruction in terms of justice-oriented citizens.

The ideological turn that facilitated my identification with this more advanced conception of social studies resulted from three primary sources: completing my doctoral coursework, doing the work of teacher education, and engaging with peers. The first source, completing my doctoral coursework, contributed to my ideological turn in a number of ways. First, the uncritical assumptions that guided my earlier thinking were challenged as I was pushed to consider the history and nature of the educational system. These examinations allowed me to begin to understand how contemporary schooling rests on practices that seem detrimental in a pluralistic society and that diminish the possibility of meaningful learning. Subsequently, completing my coursework helped me to recognize the importance of developing a sense of purpose for one’s teaching that considers and is responsive to the broader social conditions of schooling. Finally, formally reflecting on my background and experiences as a student and teacher in light of my developing understandings regarding these issues encouraged me to purposefully challenge some of the beliefs I held prior to my move to teacher education. These considerations all worked together to contribute to my evolving views on the purpose of social studies education.

Engaging in the work of teacher education similarly contributed to my ideological turn in a number of ways. As a starting point, my observations and critiques of student teachers in relation to the aims of the program in which I worked prompted me to reflect on my prior practice in ways that encouraged me to refine my understandings of good teaching. These understandings were further enhanced as I came to better understand the culture of schools and contemplated ways to work both

within and around the system. Additionally, engaging in the work of teacher education pushed me to think more deeply about the concept of learning and to make conceptual distinctions relevant for my own vision and practice as a teacher educator. These understandings were regularly applied and tested as I carried out my work with preservice teachers and sought ways to bridge theory and practice. Again, none of these contributing factors to my ideological turn existed or operated in isolation. Instead, they worked in unison to thrust me into an ongoing developmental cycle of reflection and action.

The third source prompting my ideological turn involved interacting and collaborating with my peers. At the same time as I felt encouraged as a result of these interactions, I was also regularly pushed to rethink my assumptions regarding education and to make connections between my evolving ideas and my work as a beginning teacher educator. In this respect, although I came to recognize there might not be correct answers in an absolute sense to my questions about teacher education, I also realized that there were potentially better or more thoughtful approaches than what I was already bringing to my work in this new field. The key to unlocking these new understandings rested in my attempts to interact or collaborate with peers who possessed divergent views. This represents a core understanding and practice that I now apply to my students as I teach them about teaching social studies, and encourage them to apply to their students as they teach them about social studies content. Purposefully interacting or collaborating with peers who possess divergent views seems incredibly useful for both the study and practice of democracy.

Taking an Instructional Turn

A final feature that marked my transition from teacher to teacher educator involved an instructional turn. On the surface, this may sound trite since all educators must be concerned with engaging their students in instruction. But, in my case, I am using the phrase to refer to my ongoing process of attempting to consciously live my values and beliefs in my practice. This is not a static relationship as it is always evolving. Still, as I moved from classroom teacher to teacher educator, there were certain themes that marked how my instructional turn unfolded. The relationship between my beliefs and practices can be traced and described according to the following developmental themes: starting from default assumptions about teaching; invoking my classroom teaching experience as a source of expertise; resisting changing my views on teaching; beginning to focus on core objectives; taking the content turn in my work as a teacher educator; and taking the pedagogical turn in my work as a teacher educator. Each of these themes is briefly described below.

First, I brought certain default assumptions about education with me to my work in teacher education. These assumptions were derived from my upbringing and experiences in school as a student. In particular, I understood effective classroom teachers as individuals who knew their content areas, who found ways to deposit appropriate information into their students' minds, and who produced students who

were able to pass standardized tests. These assumptions surfaced in my early practices with student teachers as I mostly focused my attention on emphasizing certain controlling behaviors and procedural elements to strengthen what amounted to standards-driven lessons. Essentially I used my understandings and experience from the classroom as a source of expertise for my new role. The focus of my teacher education practices only gradually shifted as I came to more closely align myself with several of the core themes from my social studies program and to formulate core beliefs for myself. Examples of these core themes and beliefs, include a definition of good teaching as “active student engagement in worthwhile learning,” rationale-based practice, and collaborative inquiry.

In the process of wrestling with these themes and beliefs, I eventually came to take what has referred to as the ‘content turn’ (Russell 1997). This turn involves rethinking what to teach. While Russell suggested that many teacher educators may take the ‘content turn’ while classroom teaching, my experience differed in that I was not compelled to rethink the subject matter of social studies until I was already immersed in my work as a teacher educator. This seems related to the beliefs I brought with me to my work, beliefs primarily derived from own background as well as my formal experiences with social studies as both a student and a teacher. I did not rethink the content, per se, until I was prompted to make connections between the ideological dimensions of social studies, the views individuals embraced regarding the good society, and approaches to instruction. This recognition was further complemented in my work as I took the ‘pedagogical turn’ (Russell 1997) and began to recognize that how individuals teach can also deliver important messages to students.

The pedagogical turn marked the beginning of my thinking about a distinct pedagogy of teacher education. I came to understand that students were taking away messages about teaching from my selection of content, the pedagogical methods I employ, and the management of my classroom. This put a heightened responsibility on me to model the sort of instruction I was asking of them, or to “walk my talk.” These considerations still continually weigh on my thinking as I strive to avoid lessening the power of my message through unintended contradiction. Still, even as I have come to understand my role in increasingly nuanced ways, and as I have sought to more closely align my teaching intents with my teaching actions, I know there is always a possibility of experiencing new tensions and enduring setbacks. That is why I never claim to have become a teacher educator, but rather discuss how I am always in a state of becoming a teacher educator.

Discussion

The purpose of this chapter was to present a metanarrative describing the pivotal features of my professional learning and development as a beginning teacher educator. These features were discussed in terms of taking a reflective turn, an epistemological turn, an ideological turn, and an instructional turn. Perhaps the defining

feature of these turns and, subsequently, of my personal professional journey from teacher to teacher educator is that I was prompted to challenge default assumptions, or folk theories, I held about the world and how it operated. The reflective turn facilitated many of these understandings by empowering me to actively construct knowledge for myself, both from the past and for the present and future. The epistemological turn encouraged me to broaden my view of what constitutes knowledge and how it is constructed. It specifically prompted me to confront previously held isolationist and objectivist views, and to seek out collaboration with others in the meaning making process. Similarly, the ideological turn disrupted my blind acceptance of the status quo and, in turn, fundamentally changed how I saw myself and my role as a social studies teacher educator. Finally, the instructional turn embodied—and continues to embody—the never ending challenge and opportunity to teach in ways aligned with my vision. Self-study research and the passage of time have proven these turns extremely influential on my developing identity and practice as a teacher educator over the course of the last 10 years. In the final analysis, each of my transformational turns represents more of an orientation or a process than it does an end product. As such, I tend to think that the issue of professional learning and development in teacher education is not one of what is right and what is wrong. As Rogoff (2003) argued, “the idea of a *single* desirable ‘outcome’ of development needs to be discarded as ethnocentric” (emphasis in original, p. 23). Instead, I am convinced “that in the story (or stories) of becoming, we have a good chance of deconstructing the underlying academic ideology—that *being* a something (e.g., a successful professor, an awesome theorist, a disciplinarian maven, a cover-girl feminist) is better than *becoming*” (Richardson and St. Pierre 2005, pp. 966–967, emphases in original).

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