

Chapter 4

Self-Study Methodology as a Means Toward Ongoing Rationale Development and Refinement

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Rationale development, as a core theme of social studies teacher education, has received renewed attention in recent years (Hawley, 2010). Simultaneously, interest in and the use of self-study as a methodology for researching and reframing teaching and teacher education has also increased (Loughran, 2007; Russell, 2007). Despite similar approaches and goals for improving social studies teaching and learning, both exist in relative isolation, or at least in quiet conversation. As part of this quiet conversation, social studies teacher educators have been using self-study methods and methodology to examine the process of improving their practice as teacher educators (Dinkelman, 2003; Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006a, 2006b; Powell & Hawley, 2009; Ritter, 2007, 2009; Ritter, Powell, & Hawley, 2007, 2008). As the chapters in this book demonstrate, the conversation is not only growing louder, it is creating a collaborative spirit among social studies teacher educators who share a common interest in rethinking their own practice, pedagogy, and decision making. They are also making their research public as part of adding their voices, experiences, and research findings to the growing dialogue focused on attempts to improve the process of social studies teacher education.

As part of joining this conversation, this chapter begins with an exploration of the evolution of thinking about rationale development in social studies, and of self-study as a methodology to structure and expand the possibilities of ongoing rationale development and refinement. As this section demonstrates, both offer social studies teachers and teacher educators a means to structure their attempts to improve their own practice, and social studies education as a whole. After discussing the literature on rationale development and self-study methodology, I draw on findings from a recent self-study to argue that the utilization of self-study methodology provides the necessary structure, and a unique opportunity, to examine the connections between the process of ongoing rationale development and refinement, and subsequent rationale-based practices of teachers and teacher educators. After

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an exploration of the ways in which I reconsidered and reframed my thinking in my developing rationale, I conclude by building an argument for linking rationale development and self-study as a natural next step for teacher educators interested in rationale-based teaching and learning in social studies classrooms.

Rationale Development and Social Studies: Flashback to the 1970s

Within the social studies literature, the development of rationale development can be traced back to the work of Shaver (1977), Newmann (1970, 1977), and Shaver and Strong (1982). Together, they each assisted in providing the groundwork for rationale development as a core theme of social studies teacher education programs. Much of this work began when Shaver (1977) edited a bulletin for the National Council for the Social Studies entitled, *Building Rationales for Citizenship Education*. The work of Shaver, Newman, and Shaver and Strong positioned rationale development as a process of personal examination through which teachers could reframe their thinking about the purposes guiding their practices as social studies teachers.

While there has been little research conducted on the process of rationale development and the influences of rationales on teaching practice, interest in the process of rationale development as a core theme in social studies teacher education is beginning to grow (Hawley, 2010). This section is designed to provide an overview of Shaver, Newmann, and Shaver and Strong's thinking about the nature and purpose of rationale development followed by an examination of current thinking about rationale development, and the power of purpose in social studies teacher education.

As part of articulating a definition of, and purpose for, rationale development, Shaver (1977) was adamant that the process of rationale development was not designed to create a one-size-fits-all approach, nor a mandated curriculum for citizenship education. As he put it,

This bulletin on citizenship education, as its title suggests, does not propose a philosophy for citizenship education nor a set of prescriptions for a citizenship education program. Instead, the intent has been to involve social studies educators, teachers and supervisors in particular, in re-examining the assumptions underlying their curricular and teaching decisions, and in looking at the citizenship implications of what actually happens in their classrooms and schools. (p. vi)

Drawing on Beard (1934), Shaver defined rationale-building

As the process of making clear and examining the beliefs in one's frame of reference—beliefs about what the world has been, is, will be, can be, and should be like—the influence, consciously or not, of his or her behavior as a teacher. (p. 97)

Shaver's (1977) concern for rationale development as a thoughtful reflective approach to professional and pedagogical decision making originated from his frustration with traditional approaches to social studies teacher education. As Shaver saw it, social studies teacher education programs were too focused on "the 'doing,'

active part of teaching—on stating objectives and preparing lesson plans, on how to use textbooks and conduct discussions, on new materials and programs available for use” (p. 97). Indeed, Shaver realized that each of these components were important, yet had been promoted “at the detriment of philosophical concerns” (p. 97).

Rationale-building, according to Shaver, could expand the power of teaching students to develop lesson plans and to lead discussion by simultaneously allowing teacher candidates to consider powerful philosophical questions of purpose (e.g., What are the assumptions underlying the use of behavioral objectives, of textbooks, of differing discussion styles, or of a new program or set of materials?). Without considering these questions and the assumptions underlying them, Shaver recognized teacher candidates miss an opportunity to approach teaching as a process of constantly examining purpose and practice.

Newmann’s (1977) attempt to develop a definition for a comprehensive rationale focused more on the process of, as well as the intellectual and ethical reasons for, rationale development. For Newmann, a rationale is “the vehicle through which the educator justifies to the community at large his or her use of the power that the community has delegated to institutions for formal education” (p. 31). As part of exercising their intellectual and ethical obligations, Newmann realized that teachers who develop a rationale might not improve their practice or create a better experience for students. While aiming for improvement, Newmann was more interested in the process as an ethical practice. As he saw it,

Any particular rationale may have the effect of enhancing or reducing the power of the educator; it may lead to actual improvement or deterioration in the education of youth. Regardless of their effects, however, educators have an intellectual and ethical obligation to build more comprehensive rationales. (p. 31)

Shaver (1977) outlined four main reasons why teachers should develop a comprehensive rationale for teaching social studies. These reasons are

- (1) *Personal Growth*. Shaver recognized that the process of “rationale-building is not just a process *like* education; it *is* education” (emphasis in original, pp. 102–103). Personal growth is important and meaningful when “the emphasis is on growth through the person’s own attempts to understand and evolve, and not on impositions from outside or the rejection of self” (pp. 102–103).
- (2) *Professional autonomy*. Shaver understood that professional autonomy developed as a result of the reflective nature of rationale development. According to Shaver, the process of constantly reflecting on pedagogical and professional decision making “can help to liberate one not only from bias and conventional wisdom, but from unthinking or irresolute reliance on the decisions of textbook writers and other curriculum developers and on the models of teaching one has experienced as student” (p. 103).
- (3) *Examining the “hidden curriculum.”* Shaver saw rationale development as a way to examine and evaluate “the unintended school experiences from which students learn, with the outcomes often counter-productive in terms of the commonly stated goals of citizenship education” (p. 103).

- (4) *Building community relations and program support.* Shaver believed that teachers had an obligation to open up their classrooms and their curricular decision making to the scrutiny of parents and other members of the community. According to Shaver (1977), the goal of administrators and teachers should be to “encourage involvement, even—or especially—among those who might object to school practices rather than trying to discourage or avoid such participation” (p. 104).

Newmann (1977), as part of addressing skeptics of the potential of rationales to improve the practice of social studies teachers, articulated three reasons why comprehensive rationales were necessary. Newmann’s reasons were

First, educators have an *intellectual* responsibility to try and understand what they are doing and why. Second, sound rationales do offer some, albeit insufficient, *practical* assistance in narrowing the options as to what and how to teach. Third, persons wielding power through state-supported institutions have an *ethical* responsibility to justify their actions. (emphasis in original, p. 30)

Newmann also added a fourth reason why rationale development is an important process for teachers. He recognized that “a comprehensive rationale will also suggest directions for future work on how to organize and teach specific curricula” (p. 30).

Shaver and Strong (1982), in many ways echoing Newmann’s (1977) ethical stance on rationale development, saw two main reasons for comprehensive rationale development. The main reason individual teachers should develop a comprehensive rationale “is to avoid the unthinking imposition of your beliefs on your students” (p. 10). Their second reason, again echoing the previous work of Shaver (1977) and Newmann (1977), took a more pragmatic stance toward rationale development suggesting teachers must develop “a systematic, well-grounded basis from which to explain, even defend your instructional behavior to administrators and parents” (p. 10).

A final part of the work of developing the purpose and process of rationale development, Shaver (1977), Newmann (1977), and Shaver and Strong (1982) each articulated their belief that the process of rationale development was always ongoing, potentially unsettling, ultimately impossible to complete and, yet, professionally fulfilling. As I explore later in this chapter, much of this thinking mirrors many aspects of self-study. Although they never referred to themselves as self-study researchers, or even advocates, their thinking would certainly find a happy home in the world of self-study.

Addressing the complex, and potentially unsettling, nature of rationale development, Shaver (1977) recognized how

The task of rationale-building, is, then, not only difficult, but never-ending. Moreover, it can have serious implications for the tranquility of one’s professional life, for the examination of beliefs in one’s frame of reference and of the implications for teaching will frequently lead even the most thoughtful (or, perhaps, especially the most thoughtful) to conclude that parts of what he or she is doing as a teacher cannot be justified, and so much be changed. . . . Some changes will be relatively easy; some may be difficult, especially those

that call for reassessment of one's basic mode of interrelating with young people. Some may require careful self-analysis; some may be dependent on acquiring resources from the school administration; some may necessitate professional help, such as may be available in inservice courses dealing with different discussion techniques. But it is not likely that the genuine analysis involved in rationale-building will leave your professional life untouched. (p. 102)

Shaver and Strong (1982) argued that the process of rationale development is never finished or fixed. Their thinking about rationale development highlighted their belief in the need for teachers to engage in an ongoing process of self-exploration. As they saw it,

A rationale, like the person who is attempting to develop it, evolves and is always in the process of becoming. Your rationale may become more explicit, more comprehensive, more logical in the interrelationship of its parts, clearer in its implications for your behavior as a teacher. But it ought never to be considered final, for that would imply that you have stopped changing and growing. (p. 10)

Together, the work of Shaver (1977) and Shaver and Strong (1982), highlight the complex, ongoing nature of rationale development and the potential for the process to disrupt the habits and decision making of even the most veteran teachers. The process of rationale development is, as Newmann (1977) reminds us, an ethical justification that "must be grounded in universal principles of justice, human dignity, equality, and not merely in a self-interested attempt to enhance one's power over others" (p. 31).

Rationale Development and Social Studies: A New Generation

Picking up where Shaver and Strong left off, a new generation of social studies teacher educators are once again focused on the possibilities of rationale development and the power of purpose within teacher education (e.g. Barton & Levstik, 2004; Dinkelman, 2009; Hawley, 2010; Thornton, 2006). Barton and Levstik (2004) acknowledged that without "a sense of purpose that is clearly thought out and articulated, teachers may fall prey to each new fad or harebrained instructional program, or they may find themselves adopting the practices of their peers by default" (p. 255). For Dinkelman (2009), the development of a rationale extends beyond a philosophical statement written to gain admission into a teacher education program. Instead, a rationale developed throughout a teacher education program can be a "practical, vital statement of the aims that direct the very real deliberations teachers engage in as they sort out questions of what is worth knowing and how best to teach it" (p. 2).

Barton and Levstik (2004) argued that if teacher educators wish to shape the classroom practices of teachers they must work to help develop the purposes guiding teachers' day-to-day practices. Rationale development, however, must be more than just another method presented to teacher candidates. As Barton and Levstik (2004) pointed out, rationale development "must be more than a slogan, and it must be more than lip service; it must be a goal to which teachers are deeply and genuinely

committed, a goal that will inspire efforts to make actions consistent with beliefs” (pp. 258–259). They argue that the development of participatory, democratic citizens has the most potential among the various and competing goals to animate reform practices in teacher education. They claim such a rationale empowers teachers to move beyond teaching for content coverage and gaining control over their students—the two goals they believe account for the tepid and unengaging forms of instruction so prevalent in contemporary classrooms (p. 258).

Thornton (2006), drawing on Barton and Levstik (2004), contended that effective history teachers incorporate a strong sense of purpose into their pedagogical decision making. He supports the assertion that “teacher’s purposes matter more and in a different way from assembling a standardized product” and that “teachers’ purposes, then, guide how far they open the curricular-instructional gate; for whom, when, and which gates to what they open; how they react to collegial norms on the foregoing, and so forth” (p. 418). Together, Barton and Levstik (2004), Dinkelman (2009), and Thornton (2006) have made a strong case for the establishing rationale development as a key component in the process of social studies teacher education.

Self-Study Methodology

Writing about self-study as a methodology, Berry and Crowe (2009) recognized the potential for self-study to present “a framework for inquiry into one’s beliefs and practices as an educator with a focus on better understanding the interaction between beliefs and practices for the improvement of teaching and learning” (p. 85). Their work builds on Pinnegar’s (1998) conception of self-study methodology as an attempt to understand the influence of both the researcher’s context on her/his practice and the researcher’s practice on her/his context. For Pinnegar, “self-study is not a collection of particular methods but instead a methodology for studying professional practice settings” (p. 33). Pinnegar’s writing, and theorizing about self-study as a methodology, coincides with Brandenburg’s (2009) point that an “increasing understanding of teacher education conducted within the context of teacher education by teacher educators has been, and continues to be, a distinguishing feature of self-study” (p. 196).

LaBoskey (2007) expanded on Pinnegar’s (1998) work by developing and defining five principle characteristics of self-study research. LaBoskey’s five key characteristics were designed to position researchers to produce findings that would be accepted as trustworthy. The five characteristics are (1) self-initiated and self-focused; (2) improvement aimed; (3) interactive at one or more points during the process; (4) the study draws data from a variety of (generally qualitative) sources; and (5) validity is defined as a validation process based on trustworthiness. Notably, Tidwell, Heston, and Fitzgerald (2009) highlighted that “while drawing heavily on traditional qualitative methods of data collection, self-study generally transforms those methods by taking them into a new context and using them in ways that often depart from the traditional” (p. xiii). These transformations, they asserted,

“highlight the fact that the role of the researcher in self-study and the role of teacher educator are closely intertwined and generally inseparable” (p. viii).

Bringing Two Worlds Together

As I argued earlier in this chapter, and as the chapters in this book demonstrate, social studies teacher educators are starting to recognize the potential for connecting their work with the commitments and possibilities of self-study methodology. This is surprisingly true for teacher educators interested in the possibilities of rationale development as a core theme of social studies teacher education. At the heart of both worlds is a concern for the moral and ethical commitments teachers and teacher educators should hold for their work, as well as a strong belief in the power of collaboration to both sustain and support those involved in these, often unsettling processes.

Writing about reasons why teacher educators engage in self-study research, Bullough and Pinnegar (2007) pointed out how most teacher educators are as concerned with preparing “committed teachers as we are to studying our own work in order to understand it and get better at it. In this way, our political engagement in the research and practice of teacher education is morally grounded” (p. 324). At the heart of their argument is the recognition that engaging in self-study research forces teacher educators to confront their moral and ethical obligations to students and to the larger teacher education community. For Bullough and Pinnegar, “self-study demands a deep moral commitment to inquiry that connects the past in the present to imagine a new future in the concrete reality of a single teacher educator, as well as new possibilities for teacher education collectively” (p. 325).

The process of explicitly examining one’s practice provides a framework for teachers interested in improving their own practice as part of contributing to a larger conversation on the process of teacher education. Writing about reasons why teachers should develop a comprehensive rationale, Newmann (1970), argued that a well-articulated rationale for teaching and learning is “more than an intellectual ritual for the amusement of academics; it becomes a social duty owned to the citizenry at large” (p. 10). Newmann’s recognition that rationale development was an ethical and moral act of citizenship on the part of social studies teachers echoes Bullough and Pinnegar’s (2007) call for a moral stance on the part of teacher educators. Shaver (1977) realized that the process of rationale development must be self-imposed. Like LaBoskey (2007), Shaver pointed out that, rationale development, “an essential beginning point is the recognition that rationale-building cannot be imposed productively” (p. 106). Teachers interested in developing rationales must recognize the potential purpose holds for their practice. If simply forced, they will see the process of rationale development as a hoop to jump through as part of completing their teacher education coursework.

Collaboration is a distinguishing feature of self-study research (Bodone, Guðjónsdóttir, & Dalmau, 2007; Kitchen & Parker, 2009; Lighthall, 2007). Collaboration, as Shaver (1977) highlighted, is a necessary part of improving the

process of rationale development. Collaboration, as part of the process of ongoing rationale development and refinement, makes the tough, unsettling work more bearable and more likely to be improvement aimed. For Shaver,

A “community,” even if it contains only two people, is necessary to provide the support that most of us need to engage in the exhilarating but often excruciating process of self-analysis and development. Shared commitments, the comfort from knowing that others are having the same difficulties as you in grappling with fundamental questions, the mutual reinforcement for rationale-building behavior are important community functions. (p. 109)

This vision of collaboration to strengthen the process of rationale development is reminiscent of LaBoskey’s (2007) recommendation that collaboration be a natural part of the process self-study research, and in turn making the results of self-studies more trustworthy.

Examining the Ongoing Development and Refinement of My Rationale: A Self-Study

This self-study originated formally as part of the formation of a self-study collective I helped organize with Alicia Crowe and four graduate students at Kent State University (see Hawley, Crowe, Knapp, Hostetler, Ashkettle, & Levicky, Chapter 11 this volume). I believe that I have always been committed to examining the influences on, continual development of, and process of reframing of the ideas guiding my work as a social studies teacher educator. However, until this study, my research with the process of rationale development and rationale-based practices has involved working with others. Much of my work as a graduate assistant at the University of Georgia focused on teaching undergraduate social studies courses and observing student teachers. In this role, I was involved with helping students develop their initial rationales during their coursework (Powell & Hawley, 2009) and to supervise their attempts to put their rationales into practice as student teachers (Ritter, Powell, & Hawley, 2007, 2008). My dissertation research focused on the problems and possibilities of the rationale-based practices of three first-year social studies teachers (Hawley, 2008). Again, this work focused on the ability of teachers to put their rationales, developed as teacher candidates, into practice (Hawley, 2010).

The study explained here was my first attempt to examine my own developing rationale. As a first-year assistant professor at Kent State University, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to join together with Alicia Crowe to form a research collective designed to examine our work as teachers and teacher educators. Finally the chance had arrived for me to examine my own ongoing rationale development. As part of the collective, I focused my study on the following research question:

- (1) How does the process of planning for, and teaching, an undergraduate social studies methods course and a graduate-level social studies seminar influence my developing rationale for my work as a social studies teacher educator?

As the semester progressed, I began to also focus my journals and discussions with the self-study collective on the potential connections between self-study methodology and the process of ongoing rationale development and refinement.

Data Collection and Analysis

As part of my process of examining the influence of my practice as a teacher educator on my rationale—including course planning, course readings, classroom discussions, interactions with individual students, and my decision-making process while teaching—I followed LaBoskey’s (2007) principles and focused my efforts on collecting data from a wide variety of sources. Data sources for this study included my original rationale, course syllabi from the two courses I taught during the spring semester 2009, course blog posts, emails sent to my undergraduate class after each course session, personal journal entries, personal notes taken during self-study research meetings, transcripts from the audio taped research meetings, a lesson plan guide I developed as part of my role leading a summer institute for social studies teachers, and my rationale at the end of June 2009. Together, these data sources were collected to help make sense of the continued reframing and refinement of my rationale as a social studies teacher educator, as well as add to the trustworthiness of the research findings (Mishler, 1990). Trustworthiness, here, is seen as a process of also making findings available to, and meaningful for, other social studies teacher educators.

The process of data analysis was ongoing throughout the spring semester 2009 including the six scheduled meetings of a collaborative self-study research collective. These collaborative meetings enabled me to begin the process of data analysis and to openly explore my thinking about how the data were influencing my thinking about my developing rationale and later the connections between self-study methodology and the work of rationale-building. This collaborative process enabled me to make my thinking about data analysis visible and more concrete for myself, and the group. After the semester and the research meetings ended, I began a more formal process of data analysis that involved reading through my data sources and making connections between the data sources and my research questions. For this chapter I specifically focused on two data sources—my posts to the blog I developed as part of the graduate-level seminar course and my email responses following each of my undergraduate methods course sessions.

Findings

Beginning with Praise as Part of Attempting to Push Students to Think Differently

At the beginning of the semester I was committed to the ideas of my rationale. I was also committed to creating a space for students to openly engage in democratic

dialogue while deliberating about the major issues facing social studies teachers. While analyzing the blog posts I made in the graduate-level social studies course, I noticed that my attempts to push students' thinking usually began with praise. Embracing a process of praising students before pushing them to think differently has never been an explicit part of my rationale. In reading the following excerpt from my class blog, it is obvious that I felt the need to begin my response with praise before pushing the student to reconsider his initial thoughts.

This is a very nice post. It has me returning to the article and really forcing me to think out the reconstructionist argument. Good Stuff. . . . I also understand your position that it might turn students off from being active. This is where I think teachers have to provide outlets for students to act on their knowledge. So, if they learn about lobbyists, then students could learn how they can also influence the legislative process, or work to balance the power relationships involved. I also agree that teachers have to be aware that the students will get other sides of the story in other settings (classes, at home, church, friends parents). My reading of the reconstructionist argument is that they want to produce citizens who are active in that they want to open up the system to expose the inequalities that exist to improve the system for all. I wonder how this is making you think about the reconstructionist argument now? (Blog post, 1/28/2009)

I recognize my many ideas from my rationale in my post. My rationale has always reflected my desire to make social studies classrooms spaces where students can learn content and have a chance to act on their new knowledge. In this case, I wanted to demonstrate that students should have the opportunity to learn about lobbyists and how they attempt to influence the legislative process, and then be given a chance to do something with their knowledge.

As the semester progressed, I continued to use praise as part of pushing students to reconsider their initial positions. However, as the following blog post demonstrates, my attempts to push students became more explicit and were designed to push students even further than they thought they might take their own practice. This is evident in my response to a student searching for examples of heroes from the Civil Rights movement.

So happy to see you wading into the conversation, I appreciate you jumping in and asking such tough questions without putting your students down and saying that they cannot be engaged. Instead, I hear you saying that you are trying to get them engaged but worry that there are not enough good examples out there. I am convinced that all students can be engaged by courageous, hardworking, activist, and everyday people, who represent a version of history that is anything but white. Also, all students can learn from the example of Black, Chinese, Native American, Hispanic, Irish—just to name a few—and it is our job to find ways to use these examples to engage students . . . I want to push you to see more than a handful of examples of heroes from the Civil Rights Movement and to expand out to include those who spoke out when there was no movement, who fought slavery, who survived slavery, who are leaders today, who might not fit the mold of the hero you speak of. They, might, however, be figures, historic examples that can help engage your students. (Blog post, 3/3/2009)

What has not been an explicit part of my rationale is a desire to directly push students to reconsider their initial thinking. Furthermore, the use of praise as a means to positioning students to possibly re-evaluate their initial stance is an interesting realization for me. I would argue that this is something that I have always done, but

I have never been as aware of it as I am now after reading through my responses to students in the class blog. As designed, this study does not provide me with any insight into the influence it had on the students' thinking about their work as social studies teachers. However, it leaves me thinking more deeply about my own work as a teacher educator committed to the work of rationale development.

Renewing My Focus on the Pedagogy of the Process

As part of my work teaching undergraduate methods courses at the University of Georgia I became interested in the idea that learning social studies content, and learning to be a social studies teacher, should focus as much on the process of learning as the content. While working with Dave Powell to examine our combined efforts to teach two related social studies methods and curriculum courses, we discussed an idea—The Pedagogy of the Process (Powell & Hawley, 2009). The pedagogy of the process, as we conceptualized it, asked our teacher candidates to consider what their students were learning other than the specific content they were attempting to teach them. More specifically, what were students learning from the process of learning the content. This idea has become a more integrated part of my teaching rationale. This study reinforced and demonstrated the depth of that commitment.

This commitment to making the pedagogy of the process part of my work with teacher candidates is visible in many of my email responses to my undergraduate methods class at Kent State. These email responses were sent to students following each class session and were designed to model my thinking and decision making both in planning for class and while teaching. Initially this was conceived as a way to model my thinking and to work on chipping away at the influence of the “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 2002) on their thinking about the process of becoming a strong teacher. While analyzing my email responses I quickly noticed that much of my focus was also placed on reinforcing my belief in focusing on the process of teaching social studies content. Also highlighted in many of these responses are many of the central themes of my initial rationale: listening, discussion, deliberation, and collaboration.

As the following excerpts demonstrate, my focus on the pedagogy of the process was a central focus of my responses to my undergraduate methods students. Responding to the second class session, I introduced the idea of the pedagogy of the process saying,

First, I should say that I am going on the assumption that everything we do in class can be done in a middle and high school classroom. Having said that, I do not begin the semester thinking that I have to wait so long before I can put you in groups or that you are not ready for certain types of lessons. I also know in advance that there is as much “teaching” that has to take place when students are “learning” to work in groups, to talk to each other in certain ways, or whatever you are trying to accomplish. I also want us to think about the ways you are having students learn (the process) as part of the content. I am working on calling this “The Pedagogy of the Process.” I like to ask “what are your students learning other than the content that you were trying to teach them?” This could be how to work in groups, how

to talk to someone different from themselves, or how to take on the position of someone you would never assume OR it could be that it is ok to do other homework in class, to paint your nails, to sleep, to text, that the teacher will go off on tangents if you just ask the right questions. (Email response, 1/26/2009)

Responding to the sixth class session, I again focused on the pedagogy of the process as part of a larger critique of my decision-making process. In the first paragraph of my response I highlighted how

I have to continue to make sure that I am structuring the process so that it does engage more people as part of learning the content from the readings, as well as the content I am also trying to teach you related to how to have certain types of conversations, how to listen to each other, and how to learn to reach a deeper meaning by working together. This is what I am thinking about when I talk about the pedagogy of the process. (Email response, 2/9/2009)

Again, analyzing my attempts to address my desire to have my teacher candidates focus on the process as content has me thinking that I know very little about the influence these reflections had on my students' thinking. There were several students who responded to my emails; however, at this point I have no way to know how it will become part of their approach to teaching social studies. This work does make me more aware of just how much of my rationale is part of my practice. This is valuable knowledge as I move forward with thinking about improving my work in my undergraduate methods courses.

Finding Room for Improvement

While I am happy to recognize areas where my practice has explicitly focused on the central themes of my developing rationale, data analysis revealed room for improvement. By improvement I mean that there are central themes of my rationale that I am committed to, yet do not explicitly appear in my practice. This is especially true of my desire to frame part of my undergraduate methods course on the ideas of culturally relevant pedagogy and placed-based education. Analyzing the course syllabus indicated that I only included one reading that helped them explicitly examine their work as curriculum developers for racist undertones (Pinar, 1993). I am very aware that I still have much work to do to make these ideas a more explicit part of the teaching and learning in my courses. Reading through my email responses, I did not see enough attention to culturally relevant pedagogy or placed-based teaching and learning. Typically, my responses were focused on promoting a focus on process as well as on how to integrate listening, deliberation, and collaboration into social studies teaching and learning.

As the following email response following our fourth class session reveals, I leave out any discussion of possible ways to leverage students' culture or sense of place as part of creating an engaging classroom environment.

Most of my happiness comes from the fact that we struggled a bit, that there were some silences, and that most people eventually felt comfortable to jump in. I was also happy with many of the ideas that we were able to bring to life in that discussion. I want for us to think

more about who is participating in the discussion and who is not, how we are listening to each other and building from previous comments to push the discussion in new ways, and how discussions are not just something that happen and that working on creating engaging discussions is something that (in my opinion) can be taught but will usually be messy at first. I am hoping that our class can be a space for you to experience that messiness as a student so you can work on putting similar discussions into place in your own lesson planning and classrooms. (Email response, 2/2/2009)

Rereading this email response I am aware of how easy it would have been to include issues of culture and place. While stressing the importance of listening and of focusing on which students are participating in discussions, I could easily have included a few ideas to encourage teacher candidates to consider how the culture of their classroom might make the process of having discussion more engaging. As I continue to analyze this data, and collaborate with my social studies colleagues, I will work to make these themes more explicit in the content and process of my courses.

Discussion

As a teacher educator I am committed to positioning teacher candidates to thoughtfully consider the idea that the process of learning social studies content matters. Until embarking on a self-study of my own practice as a teacher educator, however, I had never fully considered the implications self-study could have on my own ongoing rationale development and refinement. As I mentioned earlier, I studied my practice working with teacher candidates and how my written feedback enabled and constrained their ability to develop as social studies teachers. In this study, however, I was finally able to examine my own rationale-based practices during my first year as an assistant professor at Kent State. As the findings section demonstrates, my blog posts and email responses reveal a commitment to several central themes of my rationale in my practice, a reliance on using praise as part of pushing students to reconsider their positions, and an explicit attempt to position students to see the value of focusing on process as content. I am also now aware that there is much room for improvement regarding my attempts to make culturally relevant pedagogy and placed-based teaching and learning central to the content and process of my courses.

At the beginning of the study I was not fully convinced that sending email reflections to my undergraduate students could actually become a learning experience. I have plenty of experience deleting emails I receive, and worried that my students would do the same. I also worried that I would just become a preacher or cheerleader for my approaches to social studies teacher education in a way that would turn the students off. I was much more confident that the course blog would become a space to interact with, and push my graduate students to think more deeply about conceptions of citizenship education. I am disappointed that I do not know more about how the students experienced the emails or blog responses. That is another study for another day. I am convinced that using structured reflections to examining rationale-based practices, as well as my ongoing rationale development, and refinement has much to offer social studies teachers and teacher educators.

Concluding Thoughts

Exploring the literature on rationale development in social studies and on self-study as a methodology leaves me wanting more. More work is needed that brings these two worlds together. Continuing to explore the potential for developing purposeful rationales that influence, and possibly, improve social studies teacher education is made considerably stronger when connected to self-study methodology. Despite the growing conversation and potential of such work, we need more open dialogue regarding two questions related to rationale development. First, how are social studies teacher educators, committed to rationale development as a core theme, positioning students to see rationale development as more than just a theoretical hoop to jump through? Second, in what ways are social studies teacher educators drawing on their own rationales as part of developing their courses? Heilman's (2009) edited volume is a good first step, however much more work is needed that provides insight into the purposes that are driving the practices of social studies teacher educators.

Drawing on commitments from the self-study world, social studies teacher educators should begin to publicly model their own attempts to develop their rationales for several important reasons. First, teacher educators should be willing to model the type of work we ask our students to complete. In this case, if we are going to ask our students to develop rationales then we should be willing to examine our own purposes as part of continuing to rethink and reframe our practice as teacher educators. As Shaver (1977) recognized, teacher educators should provide details of their own developing rationale "as an object for critiquing, and even as a potential point of departure for the formulation of other rationales" (p. 108). Without such modeling, teacher candidates might dismiss the process of rationale development as too theoretical. Secondly, teacher educators should make their work public as part of building a conversation about the complexities of social studies teacher education. Questions about the structure, content, and process of teacher education should not be discussed in isolation from others in the field.

Loughran (2006) offered a solution to both problems. Regarding the perceived disconnect between theory and practice within teacher education programs, he encouraged teacher educators to create situations where the relationship between professional knowledge and professional practice is examined as part of the process of learning to teach. To do so, Loughran challenges "teacher educators to carefully consider the nature of their own knowledge of teaching and to begin to clarify the role that it does, and should, play in their own conceptualization and practice in teaching about teaching" (p. 46). Through the practice of openly modeling their own rationale-based practices, educating teachers might enable teacher candidates to begin their first year in the classroom with a greater sense of how to make the ideas of their rationale part of their practice (Loughran, 1996).

Social studies teacher educators interested in the process of rationale development and refinement have much to gain by structuring their work on the methodology of self-study. Both worlds are committed to infusing teacher education with a moral and ethical stance toward preparing teachers. Both recognize the power of collaboration to make the potentially unsettling work of examining your own practice more tolerable and thoughtful. Both are improvement aimed and view

their work as impossible to finish. Together, they offer teacher educators, committed to rationale development as a core theme, a way to make their thinking and decision making visible to themselves and others. Only by adding to the growing conversation can social studies teacher educators begin to fully engage in an open dialogue about the potential of ongoing rationale development and refinement to actually improve social studies teacher education and the teaching and learning that takes place in social studies classrooms every day.

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