Moral Dispositions in Teacher Education:
Making Them Matter

By Shelley Sherman

Teacher education programs continue to face the challenge of meeting uniform and very specific national and state standards that are established by external accreditation bodies, not by teacher preparation programs themselves (see Darling-Hammond, 2001, for a review of standard setting in teaching). But many teacher educators seek to establish goals that are driven by locally-shaped values, beliefs, and priorities and that focus on candidatesí capacities to be good teachers in a broader sense. This includes how a teacher candidate is developing capacities to be responsive to students in multiple ways in a variety of contexts. Such capacities can be associated with the moral dispositions of teachers, which I discuss later. Establishing high standards for the moral dispositions of prospective teachers is an important mandate for teacher preparation programs, although standardizing their assessment is not possible.

In this article, I first describe the tensions that exist between meeting prescribed standards and maintaining a focus on dispositional qualities of teachers. Then I discuss why it is vital to address these tensions, even if they cannot be fully resolved. My emphasis is upon responsiveness to students, which I suggest is an aspect of the moral dimensions of teaching. Finally, I propose potential ways of maintaining a focus on aspects of the moral dimensions of teaching in practical and visible ways.

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Existing Tensions

The standards movement has strong ties to the social efficiency model, which, with its emphasis on causal relationships between teaching and learning, according to Beyer (2002), positions teacher preparation ìas something like a scienceÖto be generated by an adherence to content and developmental standards and evaluation practices that guarantee results . . .î (p.240). And yet, the goal to achieve learning outcomes in schools, a goal that traditionally has been associated with quantitative research studies, remains an elusive one. Contextual factors, including the circumstances of particular communities and the needs of students, require locally situated decision-making, interpretation, and innovative teaching responses that resist standardization.

Shaffer and Serlin (2004), in their discussion about the qualitative-quantitative research ìparadigm warsî (and who provide an interesting model for possible rapprochement between the two research traditions), assert that ìNo techniqueónot even randomized controlled trialsÖprovides a universal prescription for truthî (p.23). Similarly, although standards may provide useful benchmarks for teacher assessment, used alone, they may not provide a full-bodied vision for assessing candidates that must include individual developmental considerations as well as contextual knowledge of the school settings in which candidates are learning how to teach.

Serious concerns about the pressures of standardization in teacher preparation are not new. These concerns have been felt by many teacher educators and have been described convincingly in the literature (e.g., Beyer, 2002; Bullough, Clark, & Patterson, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2000, 2004). The drive to standardize teacher education is one that is related, politics aside, to the desire to produce high-quality teachers across teacher education programs. Standards are not inherently bad. But the notion that teacher candidates will necessarily become good teachers by meeting the technical competencies that standards emphasize is questionable. This is the reason why. The term ìhighly qualifiedî is being used by policymakers in ways that are associated with program completion and satisfactory performance on certification tests (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). This characterization of high quality is limited and even distracting, because it draws attention away from normative aspects of teaching that cannot be quantified.

The dispositions of teachers, which can be related to the moral dimensions of teaching but are not explicitly attached to technique and content knowledge, may not be assessed in compelling ways by national and state standards alone. In many instances, one must read between the lines to detect them. Kindness, fairness, honesty, patience, and empathy, for example, are some of the normative qualities one would hope to see in a prospective teacher. Indeed, some of these qualities are included in the following National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2002) definition of dispositions:

The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward

students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motiva-
tion, and development as well as the educatorís own professional growth. Disposi-
tions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness,
honesty, responsibility, and social justice. (p. 53)

And so we do see the valuing of dispositions as a key component in teacher
preparation. But dispositions such as these may not be represented in sufficiently
visible ways in current models of teacher assessment.

When standards are taken at face value, teacher educators may be doing what
is akin to teaching to the test. In other words, under the gun to prove that programs
are meeting standards and producing highly qualified teachers, as policy mandates
currently characterize them, teacher educators are increasingly pressured to design
courses, assignments, and fieldwork experiences that enable candidates to produce
artifacts that match the standards. Although standards have helped teacher educa-
tion programs focus candidates on important skills and knowledge, when specific
output is of paramount importance, the vital process-related aspects of teaching,
including those I will describe shortly, may be lost in the shuffle. Here I sketch some
results of standardized regulation of teacher education programs and suggest the
danger of overshadowing difficult-to-assess but equally important non-technical
qualities of teaching.

The Paper Chase

The task of tracking the performance of teacher candidates on countless discrete
skills (which, by the way, many highly experienced teachers may not demonstrate)
is overwhelming. Consequently, teacher education programs have felt compelled to
create a mountain of paperwork, which includes checklists, databases, and pages of
matrices that document output in terms of standard compliance. Actions and skills
of teachers that are recognized easily across settings are most likely to be included
in these forms. Alignment of coursesóand even specific course assignmentsóto
standards in institutions across the country has become commonplace. Many
education department websites provide charts that show how standards and courses
intersect. Liberal arts faculty in math, science, and history in my own institution have
been astounded at the degree of standardization that is being imposed upon education
faculty. They have much greater liberty to construct courses and continually change
them in creative and intellectually exciting ways.

Although electives, topics courses, and some foundations courses provide
opportunities for teacher educators to do this, such freedom has become less
possible in methods and clinical courses. Furthermore, teacher educators in small
institutions, who may have fewer opportunities to teach electives because of the size
of their faculty and need to cover courses required for certification, are hit especially
hard. Moreover, it is unlikely that the image of teacher education, already unfor-
tunately perceived by many in the academy as vocational training rather than
rigorous intellectual work, could possibly be elevated in such a climate. In fact, the

potential to strengthen the relationships between arts and sciences and education schools, a need that Beyer (2002) suggests is a significant issue facing teacher education, may be put seriously at risk in such an environment.

A Narrow Lens

Closely related to the first concern regarding overwhelming record keeping and paperwork, is the concern that supervision of teacher candidates can become highly focused on technique in the current standardized climate. Good supervision is both time and labor intensive. When university supervisors feel compelled to document particular technical competencies, complete checklists, and match standards to fieldwork components, it becomes more difficult for them to pay close attention to the interactions between teacher candidates and students.

These interactions, which represent process-related, relational aspects of teaching are subtle and require keen observation on the part of the supervisor. They include the way a teacher looks at a student, uses a particular tone in a question, listens intently when a student tells a personal story, perseveres with a particularly challenged student, acts kindly and patiently when a student requires immediate personal attention, listens with complete focus, and knows when to be silent (see Alerby & Elidottir, 2003, on the value of silence).

Judgment Calls

Documentation of technical skills is much easier and less subject to interpretation than dispositional characteristics. Judgments about dispositions are easily questioned and more difficult to defend because they can be seen as being subjective. Teacher educators may become more likely to focus on easily recognized and documented aspects of assessment to avoid scrutiny and questions about gate-keeping related decisions that are associated with moral dispositions. This has always been the case. But the relatively clear-cut characterization of technical skills in current standards makes it even less likely teachers will be willing to make judgments about aspects of teaching that are more interpretive in nature.

Selection of Standards

Teacher educators are not at liberty to pick and choose those standards that are most applicable both to local school contexts and to the developmental needs of particular teacher candidates. Conversely, they cannot pay less attention or ignore those that they feel are less applicable (see, for example, Hughes, 2004). It seems especially important to question the lack of flexibility in this regard in light of increasing diversity in schools and the need for innovative approaches to meet the needs of a demographically shifting school population.

In short, the standards movement has made the task of assessing teacher candidates a highly bureaucratic, extremely time- and labor-intensive, and less interpretive process. It has focused teacher educators on easily observable aspects

of teaching, while making it less likely for teacher candidates and teacher educators to engage in meaningful, sustained discourse about dispositional aspects of teaching. There is no doubt that the discourse on teaching standards has included dispositions as an important part of the equation in teacher preparation. The question, however, is whether teacher educators can operationalize dispositional assessment in ways that are visible and responsible when the bottom line does not really demand it, and in fact, may place teacher educators who do it in precarious positions. Teacher educators and teacher candidates know that what really counts in terms of policy mandates is meeting the standards and passing state certification tests. Their time and energy are limited and their careers are on the line.

The situation as it currently stands is difficult enough. It could get worse. The relatively recent move to performance-based assessment, which at least aims to assess teacher candidatesí knowledge and performance in ostensibly authentic ways, may, too, be threatened by what Cochran-Smith (2004) calls the training view of teacher education, which is embedded in current political initiatives, specifically *No Child Left Behind*. Teacher shortages make this an even greater danger, as the need intensifies to quickly and efficiently produce teachers, especially for high-need schools.

So the critical situation that I am addressing here, achieving a healthy balance in the assessment of knowledge, skills, and moral dispositions, may be further exacerbated if an even narrower conception of what it takes to produce quality teachers gains momentum. It seems that much more crucial for teacher education programs to examine avenues for focusing on the moral dimensions of teaching, such as responsiveness to students, because these are related to the nurturing and evaluation of dispositions that promote teacher development and student growth in the broadest sense.

The Importance of Addressing These Tensions:
Promoting a Vision for Responsiveness within a Standardized Climate

There are important reasons to work toward the resolution of tensions between meeting prescribed standards, which often focus on the technical aspects of teaching, and addressing dispositions that are central to responsive teaching practice. I have already referred to some of them within my discussion of the tensions that exist. I continue here with a more complete warrant for such a resolution, one that is grounded in the literature. I try to provide a framework that supports a broader aim for teacher assessment than what is being currently offered by the standards movement.

The foundation for my discussion here is rooted in the literature that provides a philosophical framework for responsive teachingóranging from scholarship about the intrinsic moral nature of teaching (Hansen, 1998), normative educational decisions (Goodlad, 1990), teaching as a moral activity (Fenstermacher, 1990), the ìtactî of teaching (Van Manen, 2002a), and caring school communities (Noddings,

1992), to discourse that directly addresses efforts to reform the design of teacher education programs (Richardson, 1997; Tom, 1997). This rich body of literatureó and I barely skim the surface of it hereóis not represented sufficiently in the positivist orientation of todayís standards movement. Much of it relates to the ways in which teachers are responsive to individual students. In this respect, Hansen (2001a)describes the notion of moral attentiveness:

> Moral attentiveness means being alert to studentsí responses to opportunities to grow as personsÖMoral attentiveness issues, in part, from being mindful that each student is a unique, irreproducible human being who embodies a distinctive, evolving set of dispositions, capacities, understandings, and outlooks. (p.10)

So we see a clear emphasis here on aspects of teaching that defy standardization, recognizing the variances among students and their particular needs. Moral attentiveness requires dispositions that enable the teacher to read subtlety and nuance during observations and interactions with students and the capacity to act upon that information in ways that promote student growth. And yet, as Fenstermacher (1990) suggests, discussions of teaching activities often revolve around notions related to ìknowledge, such as expertise, skills, competence, objectivity, validity, and assessmentî (p.132). Such concepts, he says, ìare not the concepts that capture the essential meaning of teaching. Without the specification of the moral principles and purposes of teaching, the concept amounts to little more than a technical performance to no particular pointî (p.133).

Dispositions for responsive teaching include paying attention to individual students, being empathetic, being patient, and creating a supportive tone (Van Manen, 2002b) in the classroom. These dispositions complement a teacherís technical skills; without them, technical skills may be meaningless (Hansen, 2001b). They include, for example, what Van Manen (2002a) describes as the ìtact of teachingî and Fenstermacher (1990, 1992) suggests is the ìmannerî of teaching. Van Manen (2002a) acknowledges the need for teachers to be able to carry out the technical and routine aspects of teaching. But he separates from these skills what he calls the ìreal stuffî of both teaching and parentingópedagogical thoughtful-ness and tact. ìTact,î says Van Manen, ìis the pedagogical ingenuity that makes it possible for the educator to transform an unproductive, unpromising, or even harmful situation into a pedagogically positive eventî (p.130). Manner, as Fenstermacher (1992) characterizes it, includes the ìdispositions and traits of the teacher as he or she undertakes the tasks of teachingî (p.99). He suggests that manner is one ìattributeî of pedagogy that works hand-in-hand with method.

The capacities of teachers to be responsive to students in particular ways in specific contexts (Sherman, 2004) represent dispositions that may or may not be assessed well in many teacher education programs. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC, 2002) provides a list of dispositions for each of the principles in its standards document; this document has been used

widely as a basis for state boards of education that are members of INTASC (there are currently 34 state members) to create state standards for teacher preparation programs. Here are some examples from the INTASC standards document of competency indicators that are categorized as dispositions:

◆ The teacher realizes that subject matter knowledge is not a fixed body of facts but is complex and ever-evolving. S/he seeks to keep abreast of new ideas and understandings in the field.

◆ The teacher is concerned about all aspects of a childís well-being (cognitive, emotional, social, and physical), and is alert to signs of difficulties.

◆ The teacher values both long term and short term planning.

◆ The teacher values planning as a collegial activity.

◆ The teacher respects the privacy of students and confidentiality of†information.

◆ The teacher takes responsibility for establishing a positive climate†in the classroom and participates in maintaining such a climate in†the school as whole.

◆ The teacher is a thoughtful and responsive listener. (INTASC, 1992)

Hansenís (1999) concept of the moral in teaching includes any action that can influence students. In this regard, all of the above fit because they are all relevant to the assessment of teachers. But the kinds of teacher actions that I am trying to highlight here are more closely associated with the one-on-one encounters teachers have and the character of those encounters, rather than with the general values and attitudes of teachers. Clearly, the last two INTASC dispositions listed above can be most directly related to the emphasis that I am trying to provide. They need not only to be in the foreground of teacher assessment, but also require further illumination in terms of what they might look like in the classroom.

Dispositions to be responsive to students in particular ways are not formulaic applications of strategies or skills learned in methods courses. Furthermore, they are difficult to evaluate with rubrics, which have become a standard feature of teacher education assessment. Moreover, although knowledge, skills, and dispositions are mutually supportive, dispositions are most clearly associated with personal characteristics, ethical conduct, and relational aspects of teaching. Dispositions are the propensities of teachers to conduct themselves in a certain way when they interact with studentsóin what they say, do, or convey in other ways in a certain teaching moment. They count a great deal in the classroom because they can have either a wonderfully positive or seriously negative impact on the learning of students. They cannot be divorced from instructional skill, but must be recognized as having a distinct quality; they should be discussed in terms of their discrete potential to have an influence on a student at a particular time.

What is coupled with technique, then, to achieve the broad aims of teachingó helping students become literate, think critically, and lead fulfilling, ethical livesó

is an understanding of students as individuals. This understanding includes a recognition of studentsí strengths, weaknesses, intellectual and emotional needs, aspirations, and cultural perspectives. Such understanding can emerge from inter- actions between teachers and students, interactions that may be supported by technical competencies, but that surely are guided by moral intention and personal attention and measure the extent to which a teacher is being responsive to a student.

These dispositions, for example, include the ability to be immersed in a true communicative exchange with a student. The quality of these exchanges is an aspect of teacher preparation programs that warrants more attention; it is linked closely to moral dispositions that enable teachers to be responsive to students. Communicative exchange includes the disposition of a teacher to engage in dialogue for the purpose of coming closer to a studentís perspective in order to help the student learn. So it is not just the ability to engage in dialogue; it is also the intention that accompanies it that is aimed toward a certain outcome. It is this intention (see Van Manen on pedagogical intentionality, 2002b) that is central to the moral dispositions about which I am speaking. It is the quality of the exchanges between a teacher and student that I believe require the focused attention of teacher candidates and teacher educators. In other words, it is not only important that teachers engage in dialogue with students and that they value it; it is also important to examine the nature of this engagement as it is related to responsive teaching. To illustrate, I discuss the capacity for engaged listening as an example of a disposition that can be both nurtured and assessed in teacher education programs.

The Qualities of Engaged Listening

Communicative exchange includes both speaking and listeningóboth are aspects of dialogue that occur in classrooms. Dialogue can promote responsive behavior. It helps us ìapprehend the reality of the otherî (Noddings, 1984, p.14). With dialogue, there comes the opportunity to explore the ways in which we may become responsive. Meaningful dialogue cannot be achieved unless each party considers the otherís position and responds to it. In fact, the phrase ìmeaningful dialogueî is often used when describing negotiations as an indication that the type of dialogue taking place includes consideration of opposing ideas.

Engaged listening is a central component of meaningful dialogue in general, and, of course, in teaching, too (Sherman, 2001). Engaged listening enables the participants in a dialogue to reply thoughtfully to one another, and it can be demonstrated in many ways. In addition to verbal cues, sometimes referred to as signal words (e.g., yes, I understand, of course), eye contact, facial expressions, and body language can be expressions of engaged listening. Engaged listening in- volves taking notice of what is important in the other personís words and trying to understand the context in which the words are spoken. This means trying to put yourself in the place of the other (Noddings, 1984) in order to understand why certain ideas are being expressed. An engaged, respectful listener refrains from

interrupting the speaker and allows thoughts to be completed before responding. The respect and attention received by the speaker when the listener is engaged provide support to the speaker, which is one aim of dialogue. The speaker is encouraged to put forward ideas if he or she senses that the listener is attentive.

I have gone into some detail to describe engaged listening to illustrate a particular disposition that may not be receiving sufficient attention in teacher education programs. It seems important, given the potentially strong impact that communication may have on a studentís learning to consider whether or not teacher education programs are helping teacher candidates examine their own capacities in this regard. I use engaged listening as an example because it represents, in my view, an important disposition toward having a certain kind of interaction between a teacher and a student. I think it is important to ask whether and how dispositions related to responsive teaching are being nurtured and assessed in teacher education programs within a standardized assessment culture. Communication skills, no doubt, are being assessed in teacher education programs. They are at the heart of good teaching. But the manner, degree, and context in which such dispositions are being assessed are areas that deserve more attention. In the next section, I provide some specific examples of the language in the INTASC standards document that help underscore this point.

Unpacking Standards:
Keeping Moral Dispositions in the Picture

In addition to the already mentioned disposition for responsive listening, included in the INTASC standards, are these knowledge indicators (as distinguished from dispositions):

◆ The teacher recognizes the importance of nonverbal as well as verbal communication.

◆ The teacher knows about and can use effective verbal,†nonverbal, and media communication techniques. (INTASC, 1992)

The following two indicators are listed in the category of dispositions for the communication standard:

◆ The teacher appreciates the cultural dimensions of†communication, responds appropriately, and seeks to foster†culturally sensitive communication by and among all students in†the class.

◆ The teacher values many ways in which people seek to†communicate and encourages many modes of communication in†the classroom. (INTASC, 1992)

And so we see that there are standards clearly related to the type of communication I have described. The dispositions connected with the communication standard include the words ìvalue,î ìappreciate,î ìfoster,î and ìencourageî to denote a teacher candidateís actualization of them. A positive attitude and an

affirming value, however, may only indicate that a teacher is disposed to acting in a certain way. And this disposition may be evident at certain times, but not always present in situationally called for ways. Similar to Noddingsí (1984) view of caring, which she suggests must be perceived by the other, ìappreciationî and ìvaluingî must be represented in deep and authentic ways in classrooms. My concern is that, in an effort to document candidatesí performance, teacher educators may be paying lip service to assessing dispositions by documenting surface behaviors or technical skills that do not really get at the heart of moral dispositions that provide an anchor for technical proficiency.

As I have suggested, dispositions for teaching are embedded in the literature about the moral dimensions of teaching. This includes the significant body of work related to non-technical aspects of teaching that has been generated by contemporary scholars (e.g., Carini, 1986, 2001; Fenstermacher,1990, 1992; Hansen,1998, 1999, 2001a; Noddings,1984; Perrone,1991; Tom,1984; Sockett,1992; Van Manen, 2002a, 2002b).The important relationship between technical skills, such as instructional planning, lesson implementation, and assessment design, for example, and the qualities I have just mentioned, dispositions that may be associated with teachingís moral dimensions, cannot be denied.

Earlier, I referred to Fenstermacherís notion that method and manner cannot be divorced from one another. This relationship also is underscored by Hansen (2001b) when he suggests that ìmoral knowledge in teaching becomes ineffectual without technical skill. But technical skill and expertise may be damaging and even dangerous without a moral vision informing their useî (p.849). What seems apparent, however, is that the literature on teachingís moral dimensions has not been sufficiently tapped into by the standards movement. In the section that follows this one, I begin to offer possible entry points for working toward this aim.

The question is not whether dispositions related to teachingís moral dimensions should be part of teacher preparation. To that question, the answer must be a resounding ìyes.î Rather, in my judgment, the question is whether teacher education programs can (1) identify more pragmatically the character of moral dispositions that support student learning; (2) sustain a focus upon nurturing these dispositions in the current standardized climate; (3) determine the extent to which candidates do or do not demonstrate them; and (4) decide how these qualities should affect the entrance, progress, and completion of teacher preparation programs.

Keeping Teaching's Moral Dimensions in the Foreground

As I have argued earlier, standardization in teacher education has made it difficult for teacher educators and teacher candidates to pay adequate attention to the assessment of moral aspects of practice, such as responsiveness to individual students, which may not explicitly be associated with a particular standard. A commitment to assess teacher candidatesí dispositions in a more comprehensive manner, including

the aspects of teachingís moral dimensions that I have outlined here, requires determination, commitment, and creativity on the part of teacher educators.

There is no doubt that technical aspects of teaching that are taught in teacher education programs are important. There is a degree of confidence attached to a mastery of technique that enables new teachers to approach their work with some degree of self- efficacy. The concern I express regards a rush to develop technical skills that is not only unrealistic but also that can diminish attention on the often nuanced moral dimensions of teaching practice. The labyrinth of standards and the demands of the reporting process make it more difficult to develop a language of moral practice that is explicitly connected to the preparation of new teachers. I now present several ways in which teacher education programs might work toward making moral dimensions of teaching, such as responsiveness, more visible within existing structural components.

Maintaining Individual Program Identity

First, it seems important for teacher education programs to maintain their individual character and integrity. They still have the opportunity to do this, even within a standardized climate. Programs have been charged by NCATE, for example, to develop conceptual frameworks that articulate the philosophy and commitments of the program. It is within these frameworks that programs have been given the flexibility to emphasize aspects of a program that are locally valued and that also transcend technique. The vision to nurture in candidates a commitment to make a difference in the lives of students in high-need schools, for example, is a vision that can be emboldened in a conceptual framework.

Philosophical orientations inspired by the literature discussed earlier, which stress the moral and ethical aspects of teaching, can be firmly rooted in program frameworks. What this looks like in teaching practice needs to be fully fleshed out. Accountability measures have added a level of intensity to the assessment of technique, but they also can provide motivation for sustained discourse that clarifies the philosophical underpinnings of programs and their relationship to what actually occurs in courses and fieldwork. How are programs nurturing the dispositions they value? How are candidates expected to demonstrate these dispositions? This operationalization of beliefs and values can take many forms, but it must be carried out in compelling ways.

Shifting Supervisory Focus

Second, supervisor documentation of teacher candidates in classrooms must include a focus on teacher interactions that may not appear on checklists. Supervisors must learn to pay close attention to the relational character of the interactions between teacher candidates and individual students. They must pay attention not only to what is said but to how it is said. Often, supervisors schedule visits to classrooms that focus on a particular lesson. Lesson delivery and the knowledge

base and technical skills required for lesson implementation often are the primary aspects of teaching being assessed. There also should be ample opportunity to assess informal interactions with students. Self-documentation should require teacher candidates to focus on ways they are responding in situationally specific ways to students. Observations that identify specific teacher-student interactions related to aspects of caring, respect, and engaged listening should be equally important to those that identify a well organized lesson plan.

It seems important to consider technique not only as a goal in and of itself but as something to consider in terms of the ways it is appropriately implemented in particular contexts. Reflection must be focused more on these aspects of teaching. Zeichner (1996) criticizes the emphasis of reflection on technical aspects of teaching and the avoidance of reflection on the moral and ethical. Although teacher education programs may pay lip service to such reflection, this avoidance, in my judgment, continues. In terms of classroom practice, questions must be asked that revolve around what teachers can and should do in their interactions with particular children. What does caring look like with this student and why? How much teacher interaction is required with a particular student on a daily or weekly basis to make a difference in the studentís motivation to learn? Teacher candidates can describe in detail the encounters they have with individual students. The purpose of the interaction, their perception of the studentís words and actions, and their response can reveal both to the teacher candidate and the teacher educator the moral dispositions I discussed earlier. This reflection can occur in written reflections, conferences with supervisors, and in dialogue journals, for example (Sherman, 2005b).

Sustaining Discourse about the Moral Dimensions of Teaching Throughout Teacher Education Programs

Third, the rich scholarship on the moral dimensions of teaching must be connected in more explicit ways to the actual preparation of teachers. This literature provides worthy aims for teaching practice. It is often used in teacher education programs, primarily in foundations courses, to engage prospective teachers in discourse about teaching in a third person, rather than first person-sense. Beyer and Zeichner (1982) refer to the ìtendency for foundations instructors to see their activities as divorced from teacher preparationî (p.23). This is an unnatural and undesirable breakómoving from critical examination of educational practice to application of prescribed methods. Once teacher candidates enter methods courses and clinical placements, methods texts easily can become the primary textual resource, and the orientation can become vocational, especially in the current standards-driven environment.

When teacher educators talk about moving theory into practice, it often means applying what are traditionally referred to as ìeffectiveî methods to classroom practice. There is less time provided in methods courses and during clinical placements than in foundations courses for sustained dialogue about the philo-

sophical underpinnings of educational practice. Writing good lesson plans, select-ing curriculum resources, and designing assessments often become the focus at this juncture of the teacher preparation process.

Furthermore, as teacher candidates progress in their programs, classroom management becomes a major concern. Disruptive student behavior prohibits teachers from ìgetting throughî the lesson; and getting through the lesson and ìcoveringî content is what they believe counts the most. Moreover, in order to meet standards, prospective teachers must demonstrate competency in instructional implementation. When students are not paying attention, disturbing others, or aggressively acting out, teachers cannot teach what they have planned to teach. Continuing to use readings in methods courses and sustaining discourse during clinical experiences about responsive teaching may help candidates better under-stand how their own dispositions can be directly related to successful classroom management. Sound methodology alone will not enable teachers to create support-ive and productive learning environments.

It is my sense that stronger relationships could be developed between the literature about teachingís moral dimensions and what teacher candidates are experiencing in classrooms. This literature provides an anchor for reflection about real classroom situations faced by teacher candidates. For example, what does Noddingsí (1984) notion of ìcaringî look like when a teacher is trying to get at the heart of a childís chronic disruptive conduct or inability to focus in class? What kinds of interactions, questions, body language, or responses are called for in a particular situation if one subscribes to what Noddings has to say about the qualities of care? If, as suggests Noddings, ìthe perception by the cared-for of an attitude of caring on the part of the one-caring is partially constitutive of caringî (p.68), what can a teacher say and do for this perception to be sensed by a student in a specific moment in the classroom? How can teacher educators nurture these capacities (see Goldstein & Freedman, 2003)?

When Van Manen (2002a) discusses and provides examples of tact in teaching, he richly illustrates its actualization in classrooms using vivid anecdotes. Teacher candidates can consider how their own practical classroom experiences during teacher preparation provide an opportunity for them to exercise tact in teaching in specific and unique ways. Hansenís (1999) characterization of moral and intellectual attentiveness in teaching provides a lens into ways teachers try to understand students in a deeply responsible fashion. Teacher candidates can begin to ask themselves how they are moving toward this kind of attentive stance in their own work. In short, the role of teacher educators is to provoke conversations about moral dimensions of teaching by posing the right questions at the right moments and by helping prospective teachers understand how these aspects of teaching play a pivotal role in their capacity to be responsive to their students (Sherman, 2004, 2005b).

Conclusion

The standards movement, high-stakes testing, alternative certification programs, teacher shortages, and the political agendas of a variety of stakeholders all have contributed to the hard-to-predict course of teacher education in the years ahead. Active participation by teacher educatorsóparticipation that has not been vocal enoughóin the public dialogue about setting the agenda for teacher preparation has at no time been more urgent than it is today. In a special issue of the *Journal of Teacher Education* focusing on teacher education at the turn of the century, Cochran-Smith (2000) notes that ìmany of us in teacher education have been conspicuous as much by our absence from the political debate as by our occasional participation in itî (p.164). Discussion about the uncertainties and challenges in teacher education has been on-going for years.

Cochran-Smith underscores these challenges when she says that ìteacher education institutions nationwide are shifting from input- to output-based programs and [are] struggling with questions about what it means to provide empirical evidence that teacher education is a ëvalue addedí endeavor that can be linked to both student learning and school changeî (p.163). It is incumbent upon teacher educators to define what constitutes the value of their work and to take a stand about what is fundamental to the work of preparing teachers, but that is not part of the public discourse. Although technique may be developed over time in the course of a teacherís practical experience, the nascent assumptions of prospective teachers about teaching and learning may form the cornerstone of their work throughout their careers. It is during their early preparation for teaching that teacher candidates may be most receptive to the vital role of responsiveness in their practice and most open to cultivating the dispositions that support it (Sherman, 2004, 2005b).

How might teacher educators concentrate their efforts so that teacher education is a ìvalue-added endeavorî? This is a question that begs response. What is it that constitutes the potential value of teacher educatorsí work and what evidence is there that it is truly valuable? What does it mean to be a good teacher educator? Does teacher education contribute to educational improvement? If so, how? Does the work teacher educators do have any enduring meaning for prospective teachers? Whatís more, does the work teacher educators do with teacher candidates have any impact on students? Responses to questions such as these may be saturated with implications about the value or lack of value of teacher education. If the value of teacher education predominantly resides in the ability of teacher educators to aim teacher candidates toward sustained consideration of responsiveness to their students on a day-to-day basisóas is proposed hereóthey will have to do so in spite of the external expectations being imposed upon them.

The emphasis upon a rapid development of technical skills within teacher education programs is not only unrealistic, it is misguided. I suggest here that, perhaps, the greatest potential impact and value of teacher education is situated in

helping teacher candidates recognize and act upon what is central to being responsive to students. A deliberate redirection toward the kind of responsiveness I discuss here may be a difficult course to navigate in todayís educational and political climate. This is not only a result of the overwhelming labyrinth of standards that already has been created by multiple external stakeholders, but also because a moral language of practice is understandably resistant to shared normative interpretation across contexts. This does not mean, however, that a language of practice infused with moral meaning cannot be developed collaboratively within teacher education programs by teacher educators, teacher candidates, and teachers who work with teacher candidates in K-12 settings. In fact, it is within these local settings that the vocabulary of responsive teaching and the moral dispositions associated with it may have its deepest resonance.

It seems inevitable that the momentum of the standards movement will continue to drive teacher education in the immediate years ahead. But there is no way to predict how the standards movement will play out beyond that. Those who have been engaged in educational endeavors for several decades have seen the coming and going and coming again of a variety of trends, including the open classroom, individualized learning, behavioral objectives, whole language, and phonics. What seems important, however, and what teacher educators who stay the course no matter what current political winds bring know is this: The value in teacher preparation lies not in helping teacher candidates learn what they ultimately can learn on their own, but what they might better understand with the assistance of more experienced, and, presumably, more far-sighted others (cf., Vygotsky, 1978). The value of teacher education resides most essentially in what Roderick and Berman (1984) refer to as the ìfellow-travelerî relationship between the teacher candidate and the teacher educator and the understanding about teaching that emerges from that relationship. Such understanding can flourish when novice and expert tackle together the hard questions about teaching that are at the center of its moral dimensions, questions that deal with how teachers can be responsive to their future students. Teacher educators should be creating opportunities to situate moral dispositions as central aspects of teacher preparation and assessment. Moreover, they cannot point to the standards movement as a reason for not doing so.

Note

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