

*Provoking and Being Provoked by
Embodied Qualities of Learning:
Listening, Speaking, Seeing, and
Feeling (Through) Inquiry in Teacher
Education*

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Introduction

Aporia: "a perplexing difficulty" (OED)

The following set of narratives is a third in a series of oral and written engagements we have undertaken in response to theme of "provoking curriculum."¹ In each of our collaboratively created presentations and papers, we have started from the particular experiences of our work in our university's B.Ed. Master of Teaching (MT) Program, which is grounded in an inquiry-based learning approach to teacher education. While we think our program has had and is having success in preparing teachers in terms of certain dispositions related to inquiry and understanding teacher identity, that experience has also raised more

questions for us about the nature of teaching and learning in the context of teacher education. Our experiences in the program as teachers and administrators have provoked questions about how we understand our own practices, those of our students (i.e., learning as practice), and how inquiry lives—even “mythically” (Smits, 2007)—in everyday practice.

When we suggest that inquiry is taken up mythically, we refer especially to the belief that if we just have good methods of teaching—for example, the right approach to inquiry, whatever that might look like—good teaching and learning will follow. Yet, as Ted Aoki (2005) evocatively suggested, there are many layers to practice, and many layers of understanding of the experiences we have as teachers and students. Those layers of complexity begin to gnaw at the belief in certainty and the triumph of theory over practice. In his extended philosophical position on understanding teaching practice as practical judgement, Joseph Dunne (1997) starts with the question of how teaching is still largely viewed as a matter of technical mastery, and the correct application of theory to practice. Inquiry-based learning is not necessarily immune to such ways of reasoning and instrumentalism.

The questions we are posing, then, have to do with the other “layers” of inquiry, to use Aoki’s (2005) term. Our intention is to open up the understanding of “thinking”—or what we term “inquiry” in our inquiry-based teacher education program. In the ensuing narratives, we are intentionally bringing forward our own concerns and questions about becoming “thoughtless” (Young-Bruehl, 2006) about the practice and understanding of inquiry in a teacher education program. Admitting the necessary difficulty of the work with which we are engaged, and that of steering a “right way” (the *aporias* of which we speak), we are trying to open the question of inquiry in ways that speak to more embodied understandings of learning, questioning what we have experienced as the modalities of *listening, speaking, seeing, and feeling*.

We find it interesting how in our individual and shared experiences as teachers and researchers, these terms evolved as we strived to understand our experiences of teaching and learning, and those of our students. As we have discovered, unsurprisingly perhaps, inquiry can still be understood and indeed practiced as a logic that is instrumental and narrowly cognitive in quality. When we attend more carefully to experiences we find there are qualities—which we are calling *embodied* qualities of inquiry—that are foundational, in a sense, to forms of inquiry based conceptually on the exercise of reason.

This is a point that Martha Nussbaum (2001) makes so powerfully: that thought and actions which may precede or follow each other are marked with emotion, intensity, conflict and desire, qualities that belie the idea of detached reason. Indeed in Nussbaum’s formulation, emotion is foundational to reason—particularly reason understood as the practice of good judgement. The elements we discuss in the following sections of the paper indeed have emotional resonances, suggesting the experience of inquiry is complex and multifaceted. We attempt to explore those embodied qualities of inquiry—listening, speaking, seeing and feeling—as integral aspects of inquiry, suggesting that inquiry is more than an abstract and methodological exercise.

It is important to emphasize as well that the qualities of embodiment we discuss below are not simply adjuncts to inquiry, but are qualities of embodiment that point to how inquiry is also lived inter-subjectively in the world. In his discussion of the work of Merleau-Ponty, John O’Neill (1989) puts this point well: “Our world is given to us in the hollows between things, as the field of our exploratory senses that polarize objects, as the immanent ends of our intentions, in the paths where our experience and that of others intersect and blend together” (p. 41).

The form of the paper thus represents an embodied response to the intersubjective play of inquiry. Our discussions represent challenges to living more fully as teacher educators, recognizing that for us, and our

students, inquiry requires a different logic than that founded on the solitary subject of modernist thought. *Listening, speaking, seeing and feeling* describe for us a “logos” of inquiry—the language and practice of thinking *together* (Peperzak, 2006). The following sections then, take up each of these modalities, and provide a sense of the complexity of inquiry, and the necessary difficulties in our practices, which we conceived as an experience of *aporia*.

Hans Smits: The Aporia of Listening in an Inquiry-based Teacher Education Program

Conversation is the game of language, and readiness for conversation is only the entrance door into this game, not an absurd effort to hold the game within boundaries (Gadamer, cited in Palmer, 2001, p. 68).

Starting with Gadamer’s description of conversation is intended to foreground for my discussion the problem of boundaries—specifically boundaries in teacher education—and what those boundaries both offer and limit in terms of listening to students’ experiences of becoming teachers. I administer an inquiry-based teacher education program, and one that claims to be learner focused, implying attention, in a dialogical fashion, to the interactions that student teachers as learners bring to their understandings of practice. It can be argued that inquiry requires dialogue, as suggested by Joseph Dunne (2005), in the very nature of the inquiry process: that learning through inquiry requires linking “universal knowledge” along with “techniques” to any situation that follows a model of dialogue.

But asserting that a program is inquiry based does not reveal anything about what students experience as learners, or how we ourselves, as teachers in the program, are enacting inquiry-based teaching. Our program recently conducted a formal review. As we

gathered multiple forms of data and information, there was ample evidence of tensions between trying to hold something “within boundaries,” to use Gadamer’s phrase, and an absence of the kind of “freedom” that is implied as a necessity for engagement in dialogue and learning. I would like to suggest that this is one of the central difficulties in teacher education (hence the notion of *aporia*), and that we must more fully consider the wisdom of our work in terms of how we orient to external demands, historical forms of schooling, and the changing social and cultural milieus in which we find ourselves, yet at the same time, nurture hope and possibility for our students in their quests to become teachers.

The *aporia* of boundary-freedom lives in several ways. For example, a “program,” however carefully and thoughtfully conceived, may nonetheless take precedence over the multiple ways students and faculty members interpret their own places in the world, privileging theory over practice. Indeed, a program in its conception and practice as a program may become negligent of the multiple dimensions of students’ experiences, and in effect negate dialogue. Even as we espouse inquiry and a focus on learners, we may forget to ask ourselves of our students:

Who are they? What hopes do they bring? What is the language of their dreams? What experiences have they had, and where do they want to go? What interests or concerns them?... What will they fight for, and what and whom do they care about? (Ayers, 2001, p. 28)

There are several ways in which such tensions exist in teacher education programs. A recent example, albeit on the surface a relatively trite one, made me think about this very question: I was on a short flight to attend a doctoral oral at a different university, and a young flight attendant introduced herself as being in our program. She attested enthusiastically to her experiences in the program even as she admitted to working year round as a flight attendant. She related this without

embarrassment and volunteered that she felt she ably and fully engaged in learning about becoming a teacher.

I didn't divulge my doubts about the extent of her commitment to the program. However, one of the things that this made me think about was the wider context for education and the experiences of students, and the kinds of pressures and expectations for young people living at this time in our society. Material wants and needs, whether urgent or not, are not suspended while in a teacher education program.

Despite my own qualms, I am not raising this as an issue of whether the student is right or wrong in working during what is espoused as a full-time program, but only to point to an example of how students might make their way through a program. Working extensively in outside jobs can simply be interpreted as a question of need and choice on the part of a student. But perhaps it can also be an example of the complex ways subjectivities are in play, and what becomes assigned as important in the development of teacher identity. I began to question myself about how little we know about the realities of the lived experiences of our students and how they negotiate, in a sense, their ways through a teacher education program—and what that means to them.

So while our program offers a logic of inquiry and encourages students to engage in extensive experiences of dialogue, the particular event described above provoked me to think about the way that dialogue lives or not in the structural and pedagogic dimensions of a program founded on inquiry and dialogue. I pose the question then, *what does it mean to listen to students in a teacher education program like ours?*

In the review of our program mentioned previously, responses from students suggested that as a "program" we do not listen well at all. Examples of that in particular include issues such as that of the student I describe above—workload concerns and how to maintain life outside the program—to experiences in classrooms (e.g., too many student-led

presentations in the guise of inquiry, and manifest inconsistencies in expectations and learning experiences across the program).

I do not want to be simplistic about the modality of listening, as if to say if we only listen better to our students we would solve our problems in the program. Thus, I am asking what does it mean to listen, and what are both the imperatives in listening and its limits? And how might listening be understood? As Diane Micherfelder (1989) has suggested, listening may be understood as an ethical way of being. She argues that, in Gadamer's formulation, the ethical dimension of dialogue involves a speaking *for* the other; one has a responsibility to say more articulately what the other knows.

From a pedagogic perspective, this is inherent in the exercise of education and, in our case, teacher education. There are "boundaries" to which we have responsibility, and one of those responsibilities is to speak well for others, to try to provide an account for and of our students to outside authorities. While our graduates may be ultimately responsible for their practices, we nonetheless start their careers with providing a language. In a sense, we have to speak the "truth" of our program and what we believe about teaching and learning. This in itself has been a challenge in the program in which we work: that is, to articulate what we believe our students have learned well, when the language required for such reporting cannot hold the very meaning of what we would want to assert as "knowing well."²

Speaking for others—for our students, to which we are legally and ethically bound, and hence something that we cannot simply ignore—carries nonetheless a risk of *not-listening*. Hence, speaking for the other, in terms of interpreting through listening something about who they are and what they know, is not yet listening in a fuller sense. Boundaries, including programs, standards for professionalism, and the like, may dominate so that the other is not heard, and our own speaking may even further obscure that to which we ought to listen.

Micherfelder suggests that Gadamer's counsel to listen in order to say better what the other means or knows provides one way to understand the ethics of dialogue and listening. It carries the risk, however, of foreclosing on something that may be other to the immediate experience of dialogue, immanent or not amenable to full expression. To counter that danger, she offers Derrida's position that dialogue must be oriented by letting the other be *heard*, which calls on the listener differently, in a sense to withhold a rush to judgement so as not to ignore possibilities yet uncovered. In Derrida's notion of listening, there is a kind of imperative for us as listeners, that is, to hold our desire to state something authoritatively in abeyance.

Adrian Peperzak (2006), writing from a Levinasian perspective, supports this stance of listening within the pedagogic relationship. That is, the speaking for, to articulate what we think the other knows, carries the risk precisely of not attending to the particularity and uniqueness of the other, and hence framing the listening in *a priori* universals. Peperzak notes, "each speaker and each listener is unique... and their encounter is always an event" (p. 41). Listening in this mode requires that we attend to the uniqueness of each speaker and the event of speaking and listening, or the event around which dialogue and learning happens. From this perspective, our students in a teacher education program are not simply students or teachers to be, but unique persons who carry their own, even if conflicting, interpretations of the world.

So what do the two forms of listening I have sketched out have to do with teacher education? There is, first of all, the question of how we attend to both the universal and the particular in our programs and in the experiences of students, or to put it more prosaically the relationships between the theoretical and regulatory structures, and how our students are experiencing learning. Gadamer would suggest listening means that we are attentive to the play between more universal knowledge and traditions that are re-interpreted and applied in the specific instances of

practice. At the same time we cannot avoid asserting *legitimate* authority. Peperzak would not deny that there are common understandings and indeed “boundaries,” but listening, in the first instance, is to attend to what is unique in each person and each situation. The imperative here is one that says we are obliged to first attend well to the other, to listen to what is said, however incomplete that may be.

There is an *aporia* here, as I would suggest we cannot resolve one form of listening for the other, but must in some sense live between the two. That *aporia*, then, also has implications for the practice of inquiry-based learning in a teacher education program. If we are to listen more fully to our students, learning (i.e., of practice) that listening cannot solely be understood in cognitive terms. Where students express a deeper level of engagement, it seems to point to experiences like seeing things differently and uniquely and becoming engaged at emotional levels, struggling with articulating what is different in their understandings.

As I’ve suggested above in my story of the student/flight attendant, one element of listening is the recognition of our students as subjects, and not simply the objects of our actions. The notion of embodied learning requires that kind of recognition, that is, that inquiry is necessarily and intimately bound up with the self. As Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1991) note, “if there is no experienced self, then how is it that we think there is? What is the origin of our self-serving habits? What is it in experience that we take for a self?” (p. 63). It is to suggest, then, that inquiry—learning—can never bypass the self. Indeed, to follow Varela, Thompson and Rosch, the self is co-emergent in the process of learning, so that when we are attempting to listen to what the student is learning or not, we are also listening to the self who is expressing the learning. But that suggests the need for deep attunement by those of us who teach to the ways that understandings begin to unfold. And yet we are called

upon to guide that unfolding, as even our own understandings continue to unfold.

Further, listening as inquiry is a mode of pedagogy especially because we are uncertain of where learning might go. If it is only to guide learning to the boundaries which exist, and such boundaries are conceived as immutable, then why listen to where the student is going? If the student's only task is to become a teacher in terms already foreclosed by the conventions of schooling (Grumet, 2006), then to what should the student listen in their learning? Listening, then, belies certainties, and inquiry as listening demands an understanding of what is possible beyond the boundaries, even as we struggle within them—the aporia of which we speak. Like the other forms of attunement that we discuss today—speaking, seeing, and feeling—I am suggesting that listening is one aspect of a fuller engagement in the practice of inquiry.

In the next section, Jo Towers will take further the question of inquiry as embodied learning and, based on her research, illustrate how the demand for speaking inquiry—to encapsulate conceptually the experiences of learning—is belied by a deeper sense of embodied engagement.

Jo Towers: Speaking of Inquiry

In this piece I explore an emerging difficulty in my work as a teacher educator practising within the inquiry-based MT Program. My recent research with graduates of our teacher education program is exposing another aporia of inquiry-based learning—a tendency for our beginning teacher graduates to have a capacity to enact inquiry-based practices in their classrooms that far exceeds their ability to describe to others their vision for teaching through inquiry.

In my research study³ I interviewed teacher education students at the end of their two-year, after-degree program and then videotaped them in

their classrooms teaching mathematics throughout their first year of teaching, combining this with additional interviews of those new teachers and their Grades 1-6 students. The data reveal that, unlike many reported studies that show that new teachers can “talk the talk” of constructivist or inquiry-based teaching and learning before developing matching practices in their classrooms (Britzman, 2003; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford, Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald, & Zeichner, 2005), graduates of our program may develop an embodied practice of inquiry that is much more sophisticated than their discourse about inquiry. In this time of sound-bites and time-structured employment interview schedules, new teachers who can “walk the walk” of inquiry may never get to demonstrate this capacity if they are unable to “talk the talk” fluently and concisely. One immediately obvious (effective and efficient) solution to this dilemma might be to be more explicit in our teaching of the “talk” of inquiry; however, here I consider the perplexing difficulty of whether directly teaching the talk of inquiry may interrupt the very learning that enables the embodied practice to develop.

In order to make sense of the complex relationship between our students’ practices and their discourse, I draw on the literature on embodied cognition. In this framing, cognition is understood as non-representationalist—learning is not simply a matter of *taking things in*, of representing internally an external, observer-independent world, but instead, learning is seen as a process of adaptation in which learner and world co-evolve (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991). In Varela’s (1992) terms, learning is the path laid down in walking. It is a process of reaching out, a process through which one “becomes capable of more sophisticated, more flexible, more creative action” (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000, p. 73). In this frame, cognition is reinterpreted as joint participation and hence “knowledge is contingent, contextual, and evolving; never absolute, universal, or fixed” (p. 78).

Teaching is also re-interpreted to be part of this learning process, rather than seen as supplementary to it; teaching is not simply a mechanism for delivery of information that has already been abstracted from the world and pre-packaged into consumable chunks. The ties that bind cause and effect are therefore loosened, and learning is understood as dependent on, but never wholly determined by, teaching.

As the focus of this brief piece is the question of explicitly teaching students to speak of inquiry, space limitations prevent me from offering here a synthesis of the literature on inquiry-based teaching practices and full descriptions and transcript evidence of the strength of these beginning teachers' inquiry-based classroom practices and their challenges in sustaining such practices.⁴ Nevertheless, it is important to understand some of the elements of practice that characterized these beginning teachers' classrooms. Careful analysis of the videotapes collected throughout the year in these beginning teachers' classrooms revealed a range of teaching strategies consistent with strong inquiry-based practice. The beginning teachers I studied used varied and interesting prompts to engage learners, drew from commendable sources when planning for teaching (such as the journals of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics), used multiple prompts such as good children's literature, taped stories, and children's own suggestions as prompts for mathematical investigation, often incorporated the use of manipulatives in the classroom, connected the mathematics to other curriculum areas the children were studying, encouraged the children to work together to solve problems, showed genuine interest in students' alternative solution strategies, and made attempts to assess learning authentically.

These sophisticated inquiry practices stand in rather sharp contrast to the relatively unsophisticated ways these students had thus far developed to communicate *about* inquiry. For example, one of the new teachers, Daniel, mentioned to me in an interview one day that one of the

teachers in his grade team (a teacher who had many more years teaching experience than he, but whose practice was solidly traditional) wasn't comfortable with how he thought math ought to be taught. He said, "she trusts that I know what I'm talking about." Then he laughed and said, "I don't know if I really do know what I'm talking about but she sees my vision." There was a long pause and then he said, "well, maybe she doesn't. She sees that I *have* a vision, but she doesn't see what it is." I pressed him to describe the difference between them, and he said that they were "philosophically different." He bemoaned the fact that he hadn't been able to team plan for his teaching, but adopted the blame for that:

Daniel: It's partly my fault because I can't really describe [pause 2 secs] how I'm wanting to teach it. I just sort of have an idea, and I can't/ I mean in order for me to really describe it to her I'd have to just show her sort of the learning I did over in [the university]... and all the papers I've read from there and... my inquiry project I did last year... and... I mean I could, I guess, steer her in the right direction and say "this is... the latest thinking on teaching math in a constructive manner," ... but I can't really explain to her how to do it.

This inability to describe in concise form the tenets of inquiry-based learning so that someone else can "get it" (despite evidence that Daniel can enact inquiry-based teaching practices in the classroom) emphasizes the embodied nature of his knowledge. Daniel's suggestion that his colleague would need to live through the whole, complexly-woven program of education in which he had participated in order for her to understand his practice reminds us that, as teacher educators, we cannot hope to simply tell learners what inquiry is, and that instead they need to *experience* inquiry.

Like many of the new graduates, Daniel's ability to describe the abstract principle of inquiry or inquiry-based learning was quite limited. When I asked him what the inquiry-based teaching principle of the MT Program had meant to him, he said,

Daniel: Well, you just find something that you want to look into, or one of your passions, and just sort of go into it and er, you can just find all aspects of it, through research, through er/through observation, through your own thoughts, your own mediation [*sic*] on everything.... Whatever comes out after you've had time to reflect. Um, it's just basically a process of just sort of struggling with it on your own and sort of coming to terms with whatever through different methods.

Though there are hints here of the kinds of principles found in the literature on inquiry-based learning, this is certainly not a sophisticated description, a feature that is troubling when our graduates get so short a time in employment interviews to respond to questions about their vision for teaching. Other new graduates were barely more fluent. This is Noah's description of inquiry:

Noah: My understanding is that inquiry-based, we basically um, we learn through questioning, um [*pause 2 secs*] and we discover all on our own and we get the support and the prodding in the directions that we go and... that's what I see as inquiry-based, er, programming.

The theme of "doing it on your own" was, worryingly, echoed in several other beginning teachers' descriptions. This is Liz on inquiry:

Liz: Basically it's an internal sort of, um [*pause 2 secs*] discovering your own areas, discovering your own questions about certain things and solving those questions for yourself.

When moved away from the challenge of being asked to describe abstract principles of inquiry and asked instead to speak about their own experience of inquiry in the teacher education program, or about what inquiry might mean for their own teaching, the graduates were slightly more articulate, but still showed a remarkable clumsiness in their discourse compared to the depth of understanding demonstrated in their first-year teaching practices. The overall impression gained, from both the classroom and interview data, is a tendency for our beginning teacher graduates to have a capacity to enact inquiry-based practices in their classrooms that far exceeds their ability to describe to others their vision for teaching through inquiry. What are the implications of such a finding?

Firstly, this finding is in contrast to other published research findings. There is a considerable body of research on the impact of initial teacher preparation for teachers (see, for example, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Sikula, Buttery, & Guyton, 1996) and teachers of mathematics in particular (see, for example, Ball, 1988, 1990; Grouws & Schultz, 1996). Research has shown that preservice elementary teachers in traditional teacher education programs are often fearful of mathematics, see mathematics only as a set of procedures to be memorized, and strongly resist inquiry-based and investigative approaches to teaching mathematics (Nicol, 1998, 2006). Research has also shown that traditional preservice teacher education often has a limited impact on students' conceptions of, and relationships with, mathematics and mathematics teaching and on their subsequent professional practice (Ball, 1990; Bennett & Jacobs, 1998; Ensor, 2001; Lampert & Ball, 1990).

In this teacher education literature, it is most commonly reported that beginning teachers' actual classroom practice lags behind (in terms of sophistication) their ability to *describe* good practice; in other words, they can "talk the talk" before they can "walk the walk" (Barrett et al., 2002;

Britzman, 2003; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford, Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald, & Zeichner, 2005; Raymond, 1997). Whitehead (1929) would refer to typical beginning teacher knowledge as “inert”—they can *talk* about an idea or construct, but it does not guide their *action* in new settings. In contrast, my research has shown that, in particular forms of teacher education (such as the inquiry-based program in which these teachers participated), it may be the case that teachers learn to “walk the walk” of inquiry-based teaching and learning before they develop a sophisticated ability to “talk the talk,” in other words that their practice is intuitive and embodied and, in many cases, unavailable for external description.

An immediate response to this “problem” might be to effect a “fix”—to more deliberately teach the language of inquiry to these students so that their discourse catches up with their enacted practice. In this way, our graduates might put on a better show in employment interviews, and they might also be better able to convince reluctant colleagues in the schools of the value of inquiry-based practice. However, my understanding of embodied knowing prompts me to ask: What might such deliberate teaching of the discourse of inquiry do to the embodied practice? Might an emphasis on externalizing inquiry-based practice, threaten the very nature of the embodied practice itself? The literature on metacognition is divided on this point but there is certainly evidence that talking through a process during enactment can interrupt the process itself, and that even inviting post-activity reflection (as one might do in teacher education) can also be problematic. For instance, Nisbett and Wilson (1977) have claimed that asking subjects to recall and recount higher-order cognitive processes may be highly unreliable, and that research participants are often unable to trace and verbally recount their own decision-making processes and instead invoke implicit *a priori* causal theories that they regard as appropriate explanations of their actions. Such claims, are of course, contested, but there is evidence that

teachers' verbal accounts of their own practice often do not match the interpretations made by observers of that practice (see, for example, Hiebert & Stigler, 2000; Stigler, Gonzales, Kawanaka, Knoll, & Serrano, 1999). What all of this reminds us is that much of our knowing is tacit. Embodied knowing relies on the fact that we are coupled to our world through our bodies and that much of our knowing resides within—distributed throughout our being. Extracting this knowing is not simply a matter of straightforward recall. Nor is it a matter of re-presenting, for an external hearer, what is already present to us. Embodied knowing is present to us only in the acting. There is, therefore, every possibility that our embodied knowing will be threatened by attempts to have us account for it verbally, out of context, and to another who perhaps does not share our frame of reference.

At the current stage of my research with our present and former teacher education students I have no explicit evidence that their embodied knowing would be threatened by such interventions. Nor have I, though, any strong urge to “test” this conjecture by explicitly and directly teaching new generations of our students the fragmented skill of fluently defining inquiry. Such a technical-rationalist strategy would, in any case, be antithetical to the philosophy, drawn from Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* (Dunne, 1997, 2005; Phelan, 2005a), on which our whole program is founded. Of course, we want our graduates to be able to talk about inquiry as well as they can enact inquiry in the classroom. My understanding of the embodied mind (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991), though, prompts me to urge caution in how we rush to impose a solution to the problem, and so for the moment the issue will remain for us an *aporia*—a perplexing difficulty with which we will dwell.

Experiencing such *aporias*, dwelling within their difficulties, is part of the work of teaching through inquiry. In the following section, Lisa

Panayotidis explores aporias of her practice through a third embodied quality of learning—seeing.

Lisa Panayotidis: On the Dialogic Possibilities of Seeing Through Inquiry

“So what does it mean to *see*”? I ask my visual arts students and “what is there for us to *see* in the world?” More critically, “how might our *seeing* relate to the fine arts program of studies”? My queries, at our introductory fine arts curriculum class, are both assuring and unsettling. For many of the students such invitational questions provide both a hopeful assurance that the arts will be central to our weekly discussions and a troubled understanding about how I have articulated this task. “Do you mean how I *see* as an artist?” asked a student recently. “Not exactly,” I replied, “I wonder how you and I, we, all *see* as people—as men and women, old and young, of this culture or that culture—and what our *seeing* and *non-seeing* might mean in the classroom for us and our students.” I add, “I want us to think about how inquiring through the arts allows us and our students to be in the world?” “It’s an interesting question, isn’t it?” I ask rhetorically. As I look out at the students looking back at me intently I read apprehension, joy, playfulness, confusion and wonder, and I am reminded of Maxine Greene’s evocative understanding about the dialogic possibilities of *seeing*. “All we can do,” she notes, “is to cultivate multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same” (Greene, 1995a, p. 16).

My enticement on that first day is meant to draw students into a different space of knowing, being and acting. Our term-long inquiry on what it might mean to work with young people around the arts in schools is situated around the provocation of *seeing*. *Seeing* in our class is equated with critically thinking-through the world. This generative

approach gestures toward an orientation to the world outside the classroom and a critical analysis around issues of culture, identity/self, diversity, history, and pedagogy. It prompts them to consider how art lives in the world and more importantly what this might mean. It asks of them, for a moment, to leave the bounded space of the classroom and the static strictures of the curriculum so they might see it anew, to recognize that the inquiries undertaken in classrooms are woven into the fabric of the world—embedded and enfolded into the matrices of our day-to-day embodied existence. And perhaps to *see* intimately how the past lives in the present, often couched in nostalgic and euphemistic language about tradition, the basics, standards and excellence, which often belie its ideological moorings. The latter is an *aporia* that pervades my work as a historian and one that seems to me to be critical to our work in teacher education, particularly needful in our incorporation of *phronesis* or practical wisdom. On this note, the Aristotlean notion of practical wisdom as a basis for understanding teaching, and the difficulties around nurturing the “*nous*” or “inner eye” as a quality of teaching, is an interesting metaphor for thinking about the notion of “seeing.”

Yet, as Greene (1995b) has pointed out, “participatory involvement with the many forms of art does enable us, at the very least, to *see* more in our experience, to *hear* more on normally unheard frequencies, to *become conscious* of what daily routines, habits, and conventions have obscured” [italics in original] (p. 379). Such *encounters*—a key term in the fine art program of studies—I advise students may be difficult, dark, and at times painful. While we have been trained to *see*, we have become accustomed to not *seeing* the harsh outlines that art may also invoke. Art “alter[s] and enlarge[s] our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe” and thus constitutes an “ethics of seeing” (Sontag, 1990, p. 3). *Seeing* through inquiry is an ontological act, which awakens us to the difficulties of the arts in the world. I wonder: how do

we keep visual arts from becoming merely what Ellen Dissanayake (1988) has called an opportunity to “make special”?

Accordingly, we spend a lot of time in the first couple of weeks of the curriculum class talking about significance, interpretive inquiry, and our interests in art and education. We speak of our attachments, values, understandings in the world and particularly attend to what “we think counts in the world”—in effect *what* and *how* we choose to *see*. For as Martin Jay (1994) provocatively suggests, “there is no view from nowhere” (p. 18). *Seeing*, or more properly, *vision* is much more than a simple physiological act. Vision cannot provide an unproblematic access to an unmediated external reality; clearly not everyone has the same perceptual experience, for perception and knowledge are always unhooked and subject to particular situational contexts. While vision “refers to a physical/physiological process: *visuality* is *vision* socialized,” *visuality* recognizes that “viewers are not merely pairs of eyes—they have minds, bodies, genders, personalities and histories” (Walker & Chaplin, 1997, p. 22). Some theorists speak of unmediated vision—seeing the world—and mediated vision—seeing images. Our experience is mediated by forms of language, constructed through relations of power—in the case of *visuality* through surveillance, the gaze, and other scopic regimes. Memory and imagination offer us images of the familiar, fictional, and mythical as a way to attend to “what [we]... might never have seen in [our]... lived world” (Greene, 1995b, p. 380).

When looking at the fine arts program of studies I ask students: “How will we know what is significant to teach about the arts, and how will you explain this to your students? How will you recognize *difference*, what Atkinson (2002, p. 4) calls ‘pedagogized identities’, in the classroom? What is the relationship among subjectivity and artistic representation, and signification?” Emergent artist-teachers seem eager to think through such questions as a way to assert and articulate their own beliefs about the world: “I’m very concerned about the plight of the

poor and homeless,” one student noted in one class. “I was labeled an at-risk youth,” another student adds, and “the art room provided a safe-haven for me.” “I love art” shouts another student, “it gives my life meaning. I want kids to experience that—to have that in their own lives.” For many students, the arts have the potential to critically activate our *seeing* into the realm of the political. A topic that always seems to generate an animated discussion is what constitutes graffiti art in our city at this particular and historical juncture. The debates surrounding graffiti and other forms of non-authorized art have been politically stark and bureaucratized. The mayor and city council have labeled it *vandalism*—calling it “a blight” on a city increasingly *seen* as one of “world class” standing. They have taken an aggressive approach toward eradicating all vestiges of graffiti from city streets within twenty-four hours of its appearance. Graffiti artists, at least those who choose to comment, are unfazed by such aggressive responses, more fearful that legitimizing and institutionalizing the genre will spell its eventual decline as an *avant garde* artistic form. The debates, language, and politics around graffiti illustrate an imaginative *opening* to the world—a way to construct spaces of inquiry which present powerful possibilities for conversation and questions around cultural politics and its real effects in the lives of students and teachers. As Grumet (2006) has noted,

if there were ever a time to bring our students who would be teachers out of our classrooms into the world it is now. First of all, most obviously, only the freshness of the wind on their cheeks, only the siren or cry, can break the drone of accountability, a drone that dulls them and us into the drudgery of schooling (p. 53).

There is a palpable difference when students talk about their beliefs and it is a welcome conversation for many of us, myself included. For it is in those moments that I really meet my students and *see* through flashes of memory and narrative, their own desires to pursue art and

pedagogy in particular contextual spaces. All teachers know that such “in-between moments”—moments of disequilibrium—make other things possible (Robert Frank, as cited in Sontag, 1990, p. 121).

Needless to say, the way we approach inquiry, with an emphasis on *seeing*, in this curriculum course is markedly different from other subject areas and I suspect from our disciplinary cohort in drama and music. Negotiating a particular space for inquiry in the program, according to the needs of the participants and the inter/disciplinary lenses under consideration, is a necessary contextual reality. The possibilities of our work in this curriculum class are based on the not-so-surprising similarity between inquiry-based teacher education and artistic process. We might say that “learning to teach, and teaching itself [as learning to make art and artistic practice], is a complex and uncertain enterprise that demands ongoing, thoughtful inquiry and discernment” (Phelan, 2005b, p. 340). Messing up our tightly sealed constructions and technical generalized approaches is vital to the work we undertake over the term. Our inquiries, individually and collectively, reorient our attention to the renegotiation of art practice, to fracture staid artistic notions of representation, creativity, talent, and originality and to reclaim new “*visualities of difference*” (Atkinson, 2002, p. 86) that honour our *encounters* with the Other in our midst. We need to awaken our students to what ought to be, as “encounters with... art nurture and sometimes provoke the growth of individuals who reach out to one another as they seek clearings in their experience and try to live more ardently in the world” (Greene, 1995b, p. 381).

Clearly, the visual arts curriculum class is often a space fraught with conflict and difficulty (Panayotidis, 2007). Speaking/writing about *seeing* always seems so commonsense at first, until we interrupt our smooth narratives to ask about how and why we failed to *see* something. What does it mean to make the invisible visible? And what are our responsibilities as teachers to inquire into the social world and to bring

such difficulties to the forefront of our discussions around curriculum? Inquiring into the visual arts must provide occasions to “reveal its complexity, diversity, and integral cultural location” (Freedman, 2000, p. 314). Accordingly, Freedman and others have written passionately about the need to broaden our lens in fine arts through a visual culture context—that is, a realm that includes intersections among the fine arts, television and film, fashion, advertising and computer technologies, to mention just a few of the signifying forms that reflect this broader field of study. Resisting traditional boundaries and spaces, visual culture can extend beyond strict notions of “form versus meaning” and the assumption that “aesthetic experience is a mere sensory coupling with elements of principles of design, not the meaningful, interpretive (cognitive) experience that makes art fundamental to human existence” (Freedman, 2000, p. 317). The arts serve as a way to pursue school-wide reform (Jackson, 1994), exposing the “dominant forms of our conditioning” (Bersson, 1986, p. 42) both inside and outside of schooling. I have come to see that rather than *unsettling* our understandings of what it might mean to teach and learn it might be better to “settle into our discomfort,” so that we might *see* that “seeing is a beginning without end” (Leppert, 1996, p. 15).

Sometimes part of seeing the social world anew means to leave ourselves and our students more vulnerable to some strong emotions. In the following section, Darren Lund explores aporias around feeling in teacher education.

Darren Lund: Feeling the Tensions in Inquiry on Equity Issues

I suppose I’ve always known I was a bit sensitive; I remember as a child when my father would sternly dismiss my tears over some deeply felt sharing of emotions at the dinner table. If I would ever begin to cry over something, his immediate response was the same: “Stop it, or I’ll

give you something to cry for!" The irony of his warning didn't escape me when, later that evening while watching an old episode of MASH, I would look over to see tears welling in his eyes as Hawkeye faced some challenge. I always imagined that it was his many years as a "roughneck" on the oil rigs, or later, as a tough beat cop in downtown Calgary, that must have hardened my father against the willing expression of any emotion other than anger.

In academic work and post-secondary teaching, a popular way of dismissing the importance of a class is to say it is too "touchy-feely," as if any attention to the affective somehow denigrates our learning. However, as Nieto (2004) asserts, "one of our primary roles as educators is to interrupt the cycle of inequality and oppression. We can do this best by teaching well, and with heart and soul" (p. xii). Almost a decade ago, our faculty placed itself in the unique position of focusing the experience of teacher education on the learner, through the adoption of an inquiry-based model of learning. Rather than the typical attention to content delivery, our students are invited into the challenging role of directing their own education. Woven into this approach is a strong thread of self-reflection that runs throughout all of the non-graded seminars and practica that comprise the program. No longer competing with other students for the top marks in each section, the students in our classes pursue excellence for other reasons.

For many of our students, it is the first time they have been asked to consider themselves as the focus for their own learning; highly educated experts have typically been expected to deliver any possible university enlightenment to these students, all of it pre-packaged, piloted, and evaluated based on neat sets of norm-referenced examinations and assignments. Here in the MT program, however, none of the typical rules of attaining grades apply, and there is nowhere to hide. Aside from a weekly communal lecture, all classes are small and seminar style. Professors are not expected to lecture, but to be expert facilitators of the

students' own learning journeys. With the excitement and liberation from letter grades, our students are forced into the discomfort of *learning to learn* in another way. For many of them, there is a strong sense of uncertainty and imbalance; the very familiar world in which they have succeeded has been turned on its head. We must ask of ourselves and of our program:

Can the tensions of teacher education be experienced in such a way that its potential—as a catalyst of transforming schools and the knowledges cultivated there—becomes a possibility felt by its participants?
(Britzman, 2003, p. 48)

Adding to their feelings of unease, a stated key strand of the MT Program is social justice, with a number of lectures and even a final semester devoted entirely to delving into issues of identity, cultural understandings, learners with special needs, Aboriginal issues, and inclusive practices, among others. Themes of diversity and pluralism are brought up, not as problems to be solved, but as topics of conversation and reflection to be treated to critical inquiry along with self-reflection. In his antiracism work in schools, Gillborn (1995) argued that issues of “‘race’ and ethnic identity are complex and changing factors that we must constantly review against the real world experiences of teachers and students” (p. 2). As other teacher educators in this field have reported, our demographic of candidates offers particular challenges for doing this work (Sleeter, 1996; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003). Particularly for our mainstream and mainly White, middle-class female pre-service candidates, this sustained attention to social justice and equity can be especially disconcerting.

In an earlier collaboration (Lund, Panayotidis, Towers, & Smits, 2006) I explored the resistance and denial that often accompanies uncomfortable and difficult explorations of privilege and power with White students. Likewise, a recent Canadian study documents the

various negative reactions of White pre-service teachers to a classic article on White privilege (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005); they report:

In our work with teacher candidates, we have observed on multiple occasions the level of discomfort that is experienced on the part of the candidates when discussions of oppression, marginalization, colonization, racism, etc., are initiated. This discomfort is similarly evidenced in many university spaces when students, particularly white students, are asked to consider the possibility of alternative interpretations of history, society or social relations (p. 154).

It is not easy to confront the hidden existence of unearned advantages for some and unfair barriers to others. Inevitably, this knowledge evokes strong feelings from people, regardless of their previous level of awareness on these issues, or their relative privileges.

Solomon and Levine-Rasky (2003) write about the resistance they have faced in schools from some educators who seek to avoid the contention and emotion associated with social justice issues: "Some of the resistance to teaching from an equity and diversity framework derives from a sensitivity to the emotions that may be aroused when broaching issues such as inequality, racism and ethnocentrism" (p. 37). The deliberate fracturing of our students' relatively secure senses of self-identity, and their typical obliviousness to their own racialized identities, can be felt as traumatic emotional experiences for many of them. I argue that these tensions are necessary in disrupting the status quo and questioning dominant discourses. Like Kumashiro (2004), I strive to arrange and welcome the kinds of provocative learning situations for students that induce "a state of emotional discomfort and disorientation that calls on students to make some change" (p. 28). It is important that they not be abandoned at this stage; rather, "to change their thinking in

ways that work against oppression, students need a learning process that helps them to *work through their crisis*" [italics in original] (p. 27).

Following Sleeter (1996), I welcome these opportunities to help unsettle our students, to open their eyes to new ways of seeing their worlds, their role as becoming educators, and the complex set of racialized and politicized social relations that define and shape us and our worlds in schools and communities. Banks (2004) further warns about denying or silencing the discourse around the emotions evoked when equity issues are taken up in the public domain. Recalling the 1954 decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Banks reminds us:

Brown engendered great hope and possibilities for Southern Blacks but evoked rage and hostility among Whites. When teaching about *Brown* and its historical context, teachers should help students to understand the complex emotions, behaviors, and consequences of the *Brown* decision (p. 7).

His words are a timely reminder that teachers and pre-service teachers need to continue to attend to—and address responsibly—the various emotions that are routinely expressed around any number of current hot-button equity issues, from Asian gangs, to “streaming” minoritized students, to racism at local nightclubs, to the complex aftermath of 9/11. Facing the painful feelings and the *aporia*, or troubling questions, they inevitably raise, takes a kind of pedagogical risk, but one that offers great rewards.

For the past two years I have been involved in an ongoing study⁵ within our faculty (Arthur, Lund, Guo, & Musk, 2006) that draws data from the engagement of first-year B.Ed. pre-service teachers reflecting on “critical incidents” emerging directly from their experiences in our program around cultural and other forms of diversity. By their very nature, “critical” incidents are those in which participants report feeling something strongly. The critical incident technique is associated with the

case study method in which the specific behaviors of people and changes in behavior over time are examined through open-ended inquiry about the qualitative and subjective descriptions of people, situations, and interpretations of experiences (Arthur, 2003; Pedersen, 1995). Critical incidents are brief descriptions of vivid events that people remember as being meaningful. We researched the experiences of pre-service teachers confronting aspects of identity and difference. Bringing them to the surface for critical inquiry inevitably points us toward where we need to go as educators, students, and researchers.

We sought participants for detailed survey completion, individual in-depth interviews, and drew further insights from three focus group activities with a selected number of practicum students. Over the course of two semesters, our research team obtained participation from 33 pre-service candidates who completed 67 questionnaires. In many of the responses, our White participants reported feeling frustration around addressing issues of cultural pluralism in the classroom:

When I got to my grade four class, I was surprised to find out that most of the students were not from Canada... We started talking about Halloween and Thanksgiving, and immediately kids started putting up their hands. Some didn't celebrate these holidays, others had other important holidays, and others had questions about holidays. I am at a loss of what to include in my lessons as far as holidays or celebrations. I have no idea how I can possibly include everything. I am also still forming an idea of what my identity is as a Canadian and what that means.

Another practicum student reported feeling overwhelmed with all of the discussion around equity and social justice, but left with few practical ideas:

I think it just needs to be looked at more. A lot of people feel like it was drilled down their throats that it exists, but

there haven't been a lot of ways to talk about how you specifically deal with cases.

Similarly, another participant expressed the enormity of personal growth and learning that comes along with this kind of inquiry:

I don't really know the best way to reach all of the cultures except for educating yourself. But that is a huge task, educating yourself to every single culture and how they learn.

As more "enlightened" teacher educators, we can recognize a naivety and cultural essentialism in this individual's way of expressing a feeling, but I am more interested in the anguish that has been elicited, and considering its potential to motivate this student toward further learning.

Another student teacher reported feeling a sense of internal dissonance, as the insights he was gaining from his time in our teacher education program did not match up with his common-sense worldview:

I was forced to re-examine my views of how others think. I always assumed that my way of doing things was correct, and that anybody who did something different was not thinking logically. However, after this I realized that my logic is based on Western concepts.

Here, we can see a fracture in the hegemonic and under-analyzed ways of knowing that work to keep oppressive structures in place. It is in these fissures that great educative moments may occur. Our team is still analyzing the data, but these interchanges remind us that our research is tapping something important. We are examining a space where feelings are not only acceptable, but can be shared and discussed in respectful and reciprocal ways.

Rather than shying away from eliciting emotional responses in students, my colleagues and I have decided to embrace opportunities to

explore the understandings that can only emerge when we face and challenge our emotions. If we feel a certain way when we deal with a particular student or when we read something troubling—or exhilarating—that should signal us that we are coming to a window through which something significant may be revealed. Rather than closing the blinds, as our years of schooling have taught us, we should swing them open to let in the light. Dei, Karumanchery, and Karumanchery-Luik (2004) assert that self-knowledge is key to meaningful anti-oppressive work, and offer a challenge to their readers:

Let us take up the project of “knowing ourselves” as a starting point to personal and social change.... We would develop strategies... that in their organic nature might sow seeds of social change that are capable of moving from the self to the collective (p. 10).

It is important to recognize the emotions that surface in our teaching on equity issues, and take positive actions that allow students to work through this discomfort. For those who identify as White, this seeking of greater self-awareness also requires facing our own complicity in the web of White privilege. When we deal with provocative issues of homophobia, sexism, racism and ableism, we must strive to anticipate and become more comfortable with our own and our students’ feelings. In many ways, these emotions are the *currency* of this field of study. When we welcome and face our feelings, questioning why certain situations trigger particular emotional responses in us, and exploring the pedagogical and theoretical implications of these, we provoke crucial catalysts for the work we need to do in educational research and teacher education. *Provoking* means to call forth, and calling forth difficult emotions can be worthwhile work.

Conclusion: Provocations Offered by Listening, Speaking, Seeing and Feeling in Teacher Education

We believe the foregoing narratives express something significant about the way we are beginning to understand the complex ways in which teacher education—and particularly the practice of inquiry—is experienced in teaching and learning. We have made the argument that inquiry in the context of teacher education is not simply a tool or method for coming into understanding, but its practice engenders what we have called embodied modalities—those of *listening, speaking, seeing* and *feeling*. Each of these modalities has significant implications for the way teaching identities are formed, and how teaching practices become enacted.

In writing about each of these “embodied” aspects of inquiry, we intentionally did not parallel the form of our discussions. All of the modalities have very different, albeit related qualities, and each of the authors took up the discussion on the basis of their own research interests to provide a different aspect or facet of how we might begin to understand listening, speaking, seeing or feeling. Nonetheless, there are some commonalities that run across the narratives, and we will briefly summarize those in conclusion. The first is that, individually and collectively, the narratives show that inquiry has much to do with what Dunne (1997, 2005) and others have termed the development of a necessary form of *subjectivity* for teaching. It is a self as teacher that is not simply an outcome of knowledge and skills, but expresses itself more holistically—not reductively only in cognitive terms—and in the form of beginning to enact good judgement. As Kertz-Welzel (2005) notes, “the development of the senses is crucial to a self-confident individual, to be able to make responsible decisions” (p. 106).

Secondly, the focus on listening, speaking, seeing, and feeling has also emphasized a quality of embodiedness as intersubjectivity, that

“sensory experience, emotional reaction and cognitive intention are *each* critical to human interaction with changing realities” [italics in original] (Bichelmeyer, 2000, p. 6). In our experiences, inquiry-based approaches in teacher education cannot only be contained as an individual cognitively-based process; as our own and our students’ experiences show, questions open up about how we listen and to what, the difficulties of speaking something that is often first tacitly understood, the emotional and ideologically framed ways in which we see the world, and the deep sets of feelings involved with the struggles for equity and understanding difference.

Lastly, and as a way of bringing this to a close, our discussion of inquiry in the context of teacher education also provides a glimpse, we hope, of what might or ought to challenge still existing reductionist views of learning and teaching. It is interesting and relevant to our discussion that there is a burgeoning critique of limited forms of learning and human practices understood only instrumentally. Those critiques point to the need to develop a richer ontology of human practice, one based, for example, on the recognition of “capabilities” for action (Nussbaum, 2006).

The preceding narratives recognize the necessarily difficult paths learning takes, and that learning involves practices of listening, speaking, seeing, and feeling—not in some abstract sense, but very much in relation to understanding possibilities for oneself and those with whom we interact. In our discussions we intended to support an understanding and practice of inquiry that relates to the development of what Nussbaum (2006) calls “capabilities” rather than simply skills. Our own reflections provoke us to think further about the nature and purposes of inquiry, and orient us to reflect further on a richer conception of teaching and learning in the context of teacher education practice: that the end of learning to become a teacher is not to be simply competent in some pre-figured and restricted sense, but indeed, to become a more “capable”

human being. Such capability may be understood in terms of inquiry that includes the exercise of capacities for listening, speaking, seeing and feeling with care and conviction—something that pertains to students and their teachers.

Notes

¹ “Provoking Curriculum” is the general theme of a curriculum theory conference held every two years, co-sponsored by the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies and a host university. The present paper is a revised version of our presentation at the 2007 conference hosted by the University of Calgary and held in Banff, Alberta, from February 22-24, 2007.

² In Alberta, teacher education programs are required to attest that their graduates meet the “standards” for initial certification (KSAs, or “knowledge, skills, and attributes”). The language of those standards is quite general, but can easily reduce to quite technical descriptions of teaching competence.

³ Funding for this study was provided by the Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies.

⁴ Manuscripts that offer such evidence are currently in process. See, for example, Towers (in press; 2007).

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