

“You Would Think I Could Pull It off Differently”
A Teacher Educator Returns to Classroom Teaching

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A common path to becoming a teacher educator in the U.S. entails moving from classroom teacher to graduate student to university-based teacher educator. More often than not, it has been assumed that “a good teacher will also make a good teacher educator” (Korthagen, Loughran, & Lunenberg, 2005, p. 110) and that teacher education is essentially a “self-evident activity” (Zeichner, 2005, p. 118). Presumably, many would believe the inverse of this to be true as well; that is, a good teacher educator will also make a good teacher upon his or her return to the classroom. But these kinds of assumptions are increasingly being called into question via a growing body of literature that examines how the work of classroom teachers and teacher educators actually occurs in discrete institutional contexts guided by varying sets of professional and instructional expectations (see, e.g., Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004).

Although the work of teaching shares certain similarities with the work of teacher education, there are important differences between the two. Perhaps most notably there is a different emphasis for instruction in teacher education. According to Northfield and Gunstone (1997):

[Teacher education] must be concerned with assisting teachers to learn and apply important ideas about teaching and learning . . . [and] must be presented in ways that achieve some balance between the existing

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context and role of teaching and the possibilities for improving teaching and learning. (p. 48)

Hence, while classroom teachers are primarily expected to teach subject matter to their students, teacher educators have additional responsibilities. Teacher educators are expected to teach teachers about how to teach subject matter to their students and to prepare teachers to work in schools, as they currently exist, while simultaneously raising awareness of the need to change adverse conditions in the educational system to improve learning for all students.

Embedded within this emphasis for teacher educators' university-based work is the imperative for their continuing to learn about the subject matter and how to teach it as well as to stay informed of changing school climates by maintaining direct experience with current students. Ironically, these kinds of teaching priorities and school-based experiences characterize the professional obligations that many teacher educators were focused on in their former roles as classroom teachers. This has led some to advocate that teacher educators should, at least periodically, return to classroom teaching to maintain their effectiveness as educators through encountering new challenges and reflecting on them, making substantive connections between practice and theory, and retaining credibility in the eyes of students (e.g., Giles & Moore, 2006).

Still, for all of the speculation on potential benefits that teacher educators might acquire as a result of returning to the classroom, the literature indicates only a minor, and fairly recent, tradition of individuals' actually choosing to do so (see, e.g., Chiodo, 2004; Giles & Moore, 2006; Kessler, 2007; Loughran & Northfield, 1996; Russell, 1995; Scherff & Kaplan, 2006; Spiteri, 2010). One notable theme across the existing accounts is the extent to which the teacher educators' re-entry experiences served to remind them of the unique challenges of teaching as a form of professional practice. Labaree (2004) framed these challenges in terms of client cooperation, the problem of a compulsory clientele, emotion management, structural isolation, and chronic uncertainty about the effectiveness of teaching. While all of the teacher educators reported struggling with these issues during their re-entry periods to the classroom, they also reported how their beliefs and convictions about teaching remained unchanged as a result of their experiences. As a group, the teacher educators mostly lamented the difficulties associated with enacting their preferred approaches to classroom interaction.

For the purposes of this article, it is important to note the similarities across the aforementioned studies as a way to differentiate them from the case to be presented here. Importantly, the teacher educators described in the extant literature were all experienced classroom teachers

and teacher educators. All also were full-time teacher educators who only took on temporary and part-time classroom teaching positions, usually as part of their sabbaticals. This contrasts sharply with the experiences and situation of the participant who took part in this study. In short, in this article, the author seeks to describe the re-entry experience of a novice social studies teacher educator to the classroom on a full-time basis. After spending four years instructing preservice teachers how to approach their roles as social studies educators, the author considers the challenges that the participant experienced in his quest to live his values in the classroom during his first year as a re-entry high school teacher.

Contextual Frame

After graduating from an undergraduate social studies teacher education program at a state university in the Southeastern U.S., the participant in this study, Jack, began his teaching career at a large suburban high school not unlike the one from which he graduated. The school was comprised primarily of White students from middle-class backgrounds. During his fourth year of teaching, Jack decided to return to the university that he had attended as an undergraduate to pursue a master's degree. He claimed that his decision was motivated by fear that he was beginning to embrace the same kinds of uncritical beliefs and practices that he had grown to resent as a student. In this regard, research has shown how social studies education is generally marked by stagnant teaching practices and curriculum (Cuban, 1991; Vinson & Ross, 2001). Cornbleth (2001) noted how the goal of "teaching for meaningful learning and critical thinking that incorporates diverse perspectives and students" is not "widely shared within the teaching profession generally or among social studies teachers more particularly (e.g., Cornbleth, 1998; Goodlad, 1984), nor among the general public" (p. 74). This reinforces notions of social studies instruction as the simple transmission of factual information and socially acceptable views for student absorption.

After enrolling in graduate school and becoming increasingly excited about the connections that he was forming between theory and practice, Jack ultimately decided to leave his classroom teaching position to work on his doctorate in social studies education on a full-time basis. This move to the university was facilitated by the fact that Jack was awarded a teaching assistantship position that provided him with free tuition and a small stipend in exchange for his doing work as a teacher educator. He gained much experience in this role over the next four years as he worked with student teachers and taught a number of university-based social studies teacher education courses. Even with a one-course teaching limit

imposed on graduate assistants, Jack still had the opportunity to teach each of the four social studies courses in the undergraduate program at his university multiple times. These courses included Introduction to Social Studies, Methods of Social Studies Instruction, Curriculum in Social Studies, and a Student Teaching Seminar.

A significant component of the social studies teacher education program involved preservice teachers' developing a rationale for their teaching that centered on the question of purpose, or what they wanted to teach social studies for. The idea was that the process of developing a rationale would encourage preservice teachers to wrestle with questions of what was worth knowing and how to best teach that knowledge or those skills and values. Given this focus on rationale-based practice, the key players in the social studies program seemed to implicitly view teaching as a "learning problem" and a "political problem" (see Cochran-Smith, 2004) and desired to have preservice teachers in the program address these problems via their evolving rationales for teaching. Cochran-Smith's (2004) conceptualization of teaching as a learning problem and a political problem is based on the fundamental premise that "teaching itself is an intellectual, cultural, and contextually local activity rather than one that is primarily technical, neutral in terms of values and perspectives, and universal in terms of causes and effects" (p. 2). Moreover, this conceptualization allows for the consideration and nurturance of aspects of a teacher's pedagogy that resist assimilation to a technical model. Such vital aspects of a teacher's pedagogy are exemplified in Shulman's (1987) work on "pedagogical content knowledge," Clandinin's (1985) work on teacher "images" and "personal practical knowledge," and Schön's (1983, 1987) work on "reflective practitioners," among others.

As Jack completed his doctoral coursework and engaged in the work of preparing future social studies teachers, he developed a strong feeling that social studies should be used to challenge student understandings in ways beneficial for democratic citizenship. In particular, he felt it important to engage students in deliberation around pressing societal issues, with the goal of fostering their practical competencies and heightening their moral sensibilities as citizens, something akin to what Parker (2003) referred to as the "advanced" conception of citizenship education. Proponents of this conception tend to agree with Nelson (2001) that "education in a democracy demands access to and examination of knowledge, freedom to explore ideas, and development of skills of critical study" (p. 30). Similarly, critical thinking is often emphasized in this approach "to promote a transformation of some kind in the learner" (Thornton, 1994, p. 233).

Stanley and Nelson (1994) suggested that the emphasis in the

mentioned conception is on “teaching the content, behaviors, and attitudes that question and critique standard and socially accepted views” (p. 267). Rather than treating citizenship as an entity to be acquired by students, the focus is on getting students to engage with their own interpretations of citizenship and to communicate their interpretations with others who have different backgrounds to ultimately effect societal change in support of the common good. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) identified the desired outcome of such teaching methods as justice-oriented citizens. They further described justice-oriented citizens as those who critically assess social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes, seek out and address areas of injustice, and know about democratic social movements and how to effect systemic change. These citizens understand that they must question, debate, and change established structures when such structures reproduce patterns of injustice over time.

Jack attempted to teach preservice teachers in a manner consistent with his beliefs about the purpose of social studies. His social studies methods course syllabus highlights his focus and provides a description of his intent to provide students with an introduction to the intellectual process of pedagogical decision-making in social studies classrooms, including examining the connection between content and pedagogy, the role of a rationale in pedagogical decision making, the impact of standardized curricula on teaching and learning, and the relationship between social studies and democracy. Further, his courses were primarily structured around three activities: teaching demonstrations, critical debriefings, and class discussions of selected readings and/or major issues germane to social studies education. His intent was to provide students with common experiences upon which to reflect, critique, and explicitly make connections to public theory in the field. Jack’s course was intended to fulfill his overarching desire to ensure that all of the teaching candidates under his charge were capable of engaging in conscious modes of professional activity, especially with regard to purposefully advancing goals associated with democratic citizenship.

After four years’ working as a teacher educator, with nothing left to complete for his doctoral degree but his dissertation, personal reasons compelled Jack to return to full-time classroom teaching. He accepted a job at a high school close to his university so that he could continue working on his dissertation while hosting student teachers from the social studies program in which he had become so invested. In contrast to the high school that he attended as a student and the high school where he had first taught as a classroom teacher, his newest position put him at a school more properly classified as urban, located in the metropolitan

area of a city of almost 500,000 residents. In contrast to state and district demographic data, students in this high school represented a greater number of cultural and linguistic backgrounds and were from a wider spectrum of socioeconomic levels. Demographic information indicated that the majority of students were African American (70%), followed by White (21%) and Hispanic (5%). Further, more than half of the students qualified for a free or reduced-cost lunch. Jack found himself as one of 10 social studies teachers, teaching a full load on a block schedule that included four core U.S. history courses and two elective psychology courses. Due to overcrowding at the high school, Jack was assigned a classroom in a trailer out in the parking lot.

Methods and Data Analysis

Because the literature offers little insight on how an individual in Jack's situation might approach his task as a re-entry social studies teacher, qualitative interviewing was chosen as the methodology, as it is a means “to gain in-depth knowledge . . . about particular phenomena, experiences, or sets of experiences” (deMarrais, 2004, p. 52). The author interviewed Jack once a month over the span of one year, using an “informal conversational” approach (Patton, 2002). This approach was facilitated by the author and participant's having a pre-existing relationship as graduate students in the same social studies program at the same time. Although it was Jack's idea to do this project, his name does not appear in the author list for two important, and telling, reasons. First, in his life as a re-entry social studies teacher, he did not feel that he had the time to actively write the manuscript; and, second, due to the sensitivity of some of the issues raised, he desired to remain anonymous.

The interviews were open-ended and largely directed by Jack. The author mainly listened and asked for elaboration as Jack described his challenges and experiences upon his return to the classroom. This approach encouraged Jack to convey his situated understandings of his re-entry experience through an oral narrative. Given the wealth of storied data contained within the interview transcripts, analysis was guided by considerations associated with narrative inquiry. More specifically, in what follows, the author attempted to construct a narrative of Jack's re-entry to the classroom in a way that preserved the essence of his story. In constructing the narrative, the author began by assembling all of the interview transcripts and summarizing what he perceived to be the highlights of Jack's re-entry experience, thereby generating categories. Then, to emphasize Jack's voice, all of the author's questions and

comments were omitted. The resulting narrative resembled a cohesive first-person account by Jack of his return to the classroom.

Jack's narrative was then considered, using an additional narrative analysis procedure guided by a framework for understanding the context of his decision making as a classroom teacher. The procedure involved Alexander's (1988) method of allowing data to reveal itself through principal identifiers of salience. These identifiers call attention to importance through the use of signifiers, including primacy, frequency, uniqueness, negation, emphasis, errors, omission, isolation, and incompleteness. The framework for understanding centered on Levstik's (2008) list of influences on social studies teachers, based on a review of the literature. According to Levstik, "teaching is influenced by teachers' sense of purpose, their understanding of students' capabilities, and their expectations regarding institutional support" (pp. 59-60).

This study, owing to its focus on a single subject and its exclusive reliance on interview data, is not generalizable in terms of traditional research paradigms. Nevertheless, its value can be framed in terms of the novelty of Jack's situation coupled with his willingness to candidly share his struggles. Jack's challenges may be recognizable and useful to other teachers and teacher educators as they consider ways to close the gaps between their own beliefs and practices. Moreover, these considerations of how teachers and teacher educators can sometimes experience themselves as living contradictions hold the potential to trigger further discussion and examinations of similar issues and to provide the catalyst for change in other contexts. Jack's struggles may further be used to inform the thinking of individuals with an interest in the preparation, induction, and/or professional learning of teachers and teacher educators. Summarily, this narrative account of a teacher educator-turned-classroom teacher represents an important perspective that should be included, and expanded upon, in the literature on both teaching and teacher education.

A Teacher Educator's Narrative of Returning to the Classroom

As noted, the narrative was constructed according to salient themes that emerged during the interviewing process. Although pieced together by the author, the narrative was read by Jack to ensure its accuracy. The main body of the narrative consists only of Jack's own words; however, additional insight gleaned through the application of Alexander's (1988) narrative analysis procedure in conjunction with Levstik's (2008) framework for understanding can be found in the brackets following each section of the narrative.

Starting Again as a High School Social Studies Teacher

I started my first year back in the classroom with what seemed to be a very strong sense of purpose. I had several goals, none of which had the content of the curriculum in the foreground. I was not overly concerned with the extent to which my students might learn discrete bits of content knowledge. No, I wanted my students to think, ask questions, inquire, develop their own ideas, and learn to talk with each other in meaningful ways. If those things happened, I was convinced the learning of the content would follow naturally. I understood the content as a vehicle for achieving the aforementioned goals. The content was a means to an end, not the end. I felt sure about this and my ability to make it happen. So, I had in mind what kind of classroom I wanted. This approach to teaching social studies was, after all, what I had been preaching to my student teachers the past four years, and I thought that I believed in it strongly.

For the first six weeks of school, I was working heavily toward my goals, but it was tough trying to get these kids to do it. I still didn't know all their names. I still didn't know who they really were or anything about them. And they didn't know me. “Trust the process; be patient,” I told myself. This was the mantra I had learned to use as a teacher educator and the mantra I often used when discussing teaching. I knew what I wanted to achieve would not be easy, but I was confident and determined. By the sixth week of school, that confidence and determination shattered, and my entire approach changed dramatically. My class was crazy. It was a zoo. The open, student-centered, inquiry-based methods I had been using created classroom management issues that would have been a concern for any administrator who happened to pass. And, after six weeks, I realized, “We've barely covered any content!” I found myself in survival mode simply trying to get through each day, each week until fall break, and then until the end of the semester. What happened that I found myself floundering in survival mode?

[In this section, Jack begins by drawing attention to his vision for social studies, and emphasizing how he believed it could inform his work as a teacher. Indeed, many of Jack's early activities were designed to facilitate goals associated with democratic citizenship education. During the interviews, he often referenced his attempts to get students to talk about provocative texts, and with each other, at the beginning of the year. However, as evidenced in the excerpt, Jack's lack of familiarity with his students as an impediment to meaningful learning quickly negated this vision. Although Jack claims confidence and determination in his ability to translate his vision into practice, he offers incomplete thoughts on

how he wants to proceed and omits seemingly important information as to why his methods were proving ineffective with his students. Much like other teacher educators who have ventured back to the classroom, Jack seemed to be caught off guard by unique complexities of teaching as a form of professional practice (see Labaree, 2004), even in spite of his previous experiences.]

Floundering in Survival Mode

A person can say, “I know what it’s like. I was a teacher.” But unless you are in it, you don’t really know. I have discipline problems. I have content issues. I have testing issues. My room is too small. It’s overcrowded. I can’t do this democratic citizenship stuff. I realized I simply did not have the time or energy to plan engaging lessons only to find most of my students uncooperative. I had a vision for what I wanted my classroom to look like and what I wanted my students to be doing, but this vision became something that would burn me out before Christmas. I remember the exact moment when I decided that my purpose and approach had to change. It was the final class of the day, and I had the students doing a jigsaw reading and discussion activity. I provided the students different excerpts from Howard Zinn’s [2003] chapter on the class dynamics of the Revolutionary War. Per the jigsaw protocol, I put the students in groups of four to complete a series of brief tasks around the excerpt they were supposed to have read. As I bounced around the room it became clear that only a handful of students had actually read the excerpt. So, instead of listening to the students in their groups discuss the reading, I found myself telling them what it said.

The students would sit there patiently and politely while I rambled. When I left each group I would point to a specific paragraph, leave them with a specific question, and say, “When I return, fill me in on what you all talked about.” And as I walked away, I could hear them immediately resuming the conversation I had previously interrupted. And, of course, when I returned, I would be met with blank stares and indifference. This went on for 30 minutes, as the classroom got progressively louder. Noticing that several students had iPods on or were texting on their cell phones, I announced that we were ending the activity, and I commenced with distributing textbooks. On the board I listed several pages of questions from the textbook and instructed them to get to work. I had previously expressed my disdain for the “biased textbooks” and “mindless bookwork.” But after six weeks, things had not gotten better in my classroom; things seemed to be getting worse. I felt I was getting less buy-in from the students and that many saw my classroom as a free

and open place to hang out and socialize, rather than a free and open place to discuss substantive issues.

I was frustrated and tired. Moreover, I didn't think that my students had learned anything about the history content. And this is where I had another realization. I have an obligation to help my students pass their high-stakes standardized tests. That is my main job. That should be my main purpose. With a third of the semester behind us, we were four weeks behind the pacing guide handed down from the county office. I'm behind and I've got an administrator harassing me: “You have to get to the 1900s by the end of the semester. You'll never make it. You've barely gotten to the Revolutionary War.” We were terribly behind, and I blamed the methods I had been using. I knew that my job would be in jeopardy if I did not start covering vast amounts of content.

[Jack began the section above with an isolated, seemingly defensive, statement about how individuals who are not in his situation cannot possibly understand the issues that he faces. It is then revealed, via the frequency of his comments, that much of his frustration is tied to his expectations for institutional support (or the lack thereof), and understanding of, or at least ability to tap into, his students' capabilities. With both of these influences on Jack's teaching's apparently working against his being able to enact his vision, the complexities of teaching described by Labaree (2004) become even more difficult to navigate, i.e., client cooperation, the problem of a compulsory clientele, emotion management, structural isolation, and the chronic uncertainty about the effectiveness of teaching. Perhaps as a way to deal with his feelings in the face of this frustration, toward the end of this discussion, Jack begins to emphasize the importance of standardized achievement and to make references to teaching as a job that necessarily requires him to cover vast amounts of content. In this way, it would appear that his teaching, if not his thinking, took a defensive turn before the midpoint of the first semester.]

Thinking About the Conditions of Classroom Teaching

I swear, teaching feels like day care, and I'm a day care worker for virtual adults. And I think how this educational system is so messed up. I mean this stuff—the standards, the Chinese exclusion act of 1882—who cares? Some of these kids want to be chefs and car mechanics. I don't know what they want to be. They don't even know what they want to be. But our school is not providing them with opportunities to explore that. Instead, they're stuck in my giant tin can out in the parking lot. And I'm trying to, you know, practically beg them and force them into

learning some American history; history which I'm not even sure . . . look, I'm a history geek, and I'm not even sure that a lot of this history is worth learning. You just have to meet kids where they are. You can't make demands. It's not that they're not capable of learning. That's not what I'm saying. But some people just have different interests, and they want to do certain things. Some people like to read, some people don't. And I wish everyone loved to read. But I don't have the time or the knowledge, the ability to get everyone to love to read, much less teach them how to read.

I don't even know where to begin. Maybe things would be better if I had fewer students, or a teaching assistant? I would love to have some mechanism to check up on them. To ask, how are you moving on this project? But I don't have that kind of space or time. And I can't plan at all. I'm just flying by the seat of my pants. We had a professional learning day at the county office where it was a series of workshops and bullshit. It was an all-day event where you're stuck in these stupid workshops. I took the day off. I took a sick day so I wouldn't have to go. I'm not sitting through that. And then when you do go, they start talking about enduring understandings, mastery, blah, blah. I want to ask, "Have you even read Wiggins and McTighe? [2005]. Because if you did, you would realize that Wiggins and McTighe are on another level that teachers cannot achieve in the conditions that you have created." U.S. History should be a two-year course, and it gets crammed into one year. It's too much. And they're pushing mastery of the standards and enduring understandings. It is impossible with the deck of cards we have been dealt. It's just so frustrating.

[In the section above, Jack gave primacy to the notion that teaching is similar to running a day care. Again, his expectations for institutional support and understanding of students' capabilities appear to work against his stated vision of getting students to learn democratic citizenship via its study and practice. As time passed, Jack found himself increasingly exasperated due to what he felt was the impossible nature of his situation. He cited a number of constraints on his ability to teach in the way that he wanted, including too many students, not enough time to plan or teach lessons in any kind of depth, a bureaucratic and regulatory environment, and no meaningful or ongoing professional development activities. The portrait that emerges is one in which Jack is completely at a loss in regard to how to proceed with teaching his students and skeptical that any source of relief might be found from his institution.]

Embracing a New Approach

So I got to thinking I needed an approach that would be better on my constitution, an approach that would be easier on me, an approach that was more realistic. I no longer cared about the skills and dispositions that I felt necessary for democratic citizenship. Learning, or maybe memorizing, the content of the curriculum shifted from an ancillary concern to the primary one. The content became both the means and the end. Moreover, I knew from past teaching experience and from reading Linda McNeil [1988a, 1998b] that using the content in a more traditional way would help me gain some sense of control in my classroom. Thus, my primary purpose became content coverage and maintaining order in my classroom. On one hand, I found this shift depressing. I felt I had quit and that I was doing my students a disservice. I know their textbook is bad. But they have to take a really stupid test at the end of the semester, and the test comes from the crap in the textbook. And, so I guess I kind of rationalized it as, “Well, as bad as I think the textbook is, maybe it’s not that horrible for them to read it?” They’ll come across just basic crap. Maybe it will reinforce stuff I covered in class and they’ll remember it better. And it’ll keep them quiet for 20 minutes, you know, so I can do roll and gather my own thoughts at my desk. That’s how I’ve been looking at it.

So I don’t really think about a lot of educational theory stuff too often. I don’t melt my brain over that because I understand what it is. I know what the score is. I know what’s going on. I know what all these damn tests mean. I know where they come from. I know the interests they serve, and who they don’t serve. And what’s the point of getting angry about it? If I talk about it, and complain about it, I’ll just get fired. And even though some days seem to go better than others, I still don’t know the extent to which students learned anything . . . or what they learned. I don’t know. There is a tremendous amount of uncertainty, and, you know what? I don’t care. I’m not going to lose any sleep over it, and here is why: I’m going to see these kids tomorrow. It’s a grind. If I obsessed about it, my head would explode. Plus, I found focusing on content coverage and maintaining order in my classroom tremendously liberating. It was so much easier for me to use a more traditional approach and give extemporaneous lectures, show portions of documentary videos, and assign textbook questions. My overall quality of life improved immediately.

What’s more, I didn’t feel like a total sell-out because I was still able to inject into my teaching aspects of my rationale for social studies. That is, my lectures were filled with opportunities for students to think about

contradictions in American society and consider questions dealing with race, class, and gender. I made certain my students knew the difference between my definition of Manifest Destiny and the textbook's definition. I'll talk to them about stuff like that. I'll talk to them, or discuss with them, or lecture to them . . . however you want to describe it, for thirty minutes or so. I feel strongly that the way I package the content for the students during my lectures . . . and the questions I pose are important. But then afterward I usually simply resort to turning their attention to the corresponding sections or pages in the textbook and ask them what it has to say on the topics we just discussed. It's frustrating because you would think I would know better . . . you would think I could pull it off differently.

[In this final section, Jack described the teaching approach of focusing strictly on content coverage that he came to embrace. Although he claimed that his approach to the content involves a critical lens, he also readily admitted that he does not concern himself with whether his students are explicitly acquiring or practicing the skills and dispositions beneficial for democratic citizenship. This objective simply ceased to be viable or worth the trouble, given his experiences as a re-entry social studies teacher. While Jack moved away from embracing democratic citizenship as a viable goal for the classroom, he maintained its importance during the interviews, suggesting that it could somehow be better broached via after-school clubs. Although, in the excerpt, Jack emphasized some of the liberating aspects of his decision to not worry about practicing citizenship skills and dispositions in the classroom, it is clear from the isolated thoughts he shares on educational theory and the political ramifications of his approach that lecturing and then having students answer questions from the textbook does not necessarily fall in line with his vision for teaching or sit well with him on an ideological level. This is reiterated in the last line of this section, where he emphasized his uniqueness in thinking that he could pull his teaching off differently than others in his similar situation.]

Discussion

Although we are not able to generalize from Jack's re-entry experience, his story does add to our understanding of how we might think about conducting our work as teachers and teacher educators. Indeed, the challenges that Jack experienced as he sought to engage his students in powerful social studies seem particularly relevant, given current shifts toward using the Common Core State Standards (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010) and the College, Career, and Civic Life

(C3) Framework for Inquiry in Social Studies Standards (CCSSO, 2012) as the basis for K-12 instruction. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Literacy in History/Social Studies call on teachers to assist students in becoming active readers by focusing on skills associated with disciplinary literacy. This requires students to carefully question texts, using skills such as sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, and making generalizations (see Wineburg, Martin, & Monte-Sano, 2011). The C3 Framework for Inquiry in Social Studies further emphasizes constructivist learning principles by calling on teachers to assist students in developing questions and planning investigations; applying disciplinary concepts and tools; gathering, evaluating, and using evidence; and working collaboratively and communicating conclusions. In this way, much of what is included in the CCSS and C3 Framework mirror what Jack claimed was his vision for teaching social studies.

Importantly, then, the results of this study showed how a well-educated teacher and teacher educator with a strong sense of purpose can struggle to achieve purposeful practice within the current climate of public schooling. While Jack’s sense of purpose was, at least initially, influential in how he understood his role, there is evidence that a perceived lack of institutional support frequently thwarted this purpose in terms of how he actually carried it out. As noted at various points in the narrative, Jack’s feelings of frustration and being on his own when it came to dealing with the issues of too many students, finding time to plan, and getting through the required content led him to essentially abandon his initial overarching goal of fostering skills and dispositions for democratic citizenship through his lessons. This suggests a harsh truth: A vision for teaching and learning, even one that is thoughtfully forged over years and derived from educational theory, will likely cease to meaningfully inform practice if the conditions for its execution are not right. Hence, state departments of education, local school boards, school administrations, and teachers all should work together to ensure learning environments in which students can practice the complex skills that comprise disciplinary ways of knowing.

There also are connections between Jack’s understanding of students’ capabilities and his expectations for institutional support. Jack indicated that he thought that all students were capable of engaging in rigorous and demanding work; however, he struggled in working with those whom he came to believe were not interested due to the countless ways in which their schooling had not worked for them. Part of this struggle may have been related to Jack’s finding himself working in a different context from what he was accustomed based on his own background. Jack readily admitted to not knowing much about his students

or what many of them wanted to be or do with their lives. Although he studied, theorized, and even preached the importance of concepts such as multicultural and culturally responsive instruction, which were part of his doctoral program, his experiences as a teacher and teacher educator did not include regular opportunities to actually work with diverse groups of students. This begs us to consider how teachers and teacher educators might best obtain the cultural sensitivity and practical experiences needed to engage diverse learners in meaningful learning. Even within more student-centered types of curriculum like the CCSS and C3 Framework, actual experience working with diverse groups of students is invaluable to teachers' meaningfully guiding their students in asking questions, critical thinking, and construction of knowledge.

Other reasons for Jack's struggle in tapping into his students' capabilities already have been described in terms of his feelings of frustration at the lack of perceived institutional support. Regardless, Jack found his knowledge of content to be his most important saving grace because he felt that he was able to draw from his knowledge to infuse his lectures with purpose and meaning, which was presumably more useful to students than his using traditional approaches that rely exclusively on rote memorization of discrete historical facts. This ability of content knowledge experts to explain connections and describe the relevance of the material seems reason enough for teacher educators to think more deeply about the treatment of content in their courses, to forge closer connections with their peers in other disciplines, and to consider how they are balancing their responsibilities to prepare teachers for the current climate of public schools as well as to be agents of change willing to address any existing adverse conditions to improve learning for all students.

Jack's experience as a re-entry teacher sheds light and offers perspective on possible approaches to incorporate in teacher education. As discussed above, one of these insights is the importance of teacher educator's assisting teacher candidates in developing more nuanced understandings of the content and how to teach it to diverse groups of students. Another insight from Jack's narrative is that vision does matter. For any sort of change to occur, it is imperative for most teacher candidates to disrupt their default modes of operation learned implicitly through their apprenticeships of observation (Lortie, 1975). Nevertheless, Jack's narrative also shows how vision can wither, when met with ongoing and persistent adversity, and cease to inform practice. Jack's permanent return to the classroom helped to uncover how adversity might negatively affect a teacher over the long run, a feature of the re-entry experience that was missing in other teacher educators' accounts of returning to the classroom only temporarily. Finally, this narrative

demonstrates the need for teachers to develop strategies to deal with the adversity that they are sure to encounter and, similarly, for teacher education, in general, to think of ways to prepare teaching candidates to exhibit resilience. Attention to these three broad areas of teacher preparation (i.e., the development of pedagogical content knowledge, a vision for teaching, and strategies for resilience), coupled with bureaucratic and administrative support for teachers in the form of additional planning time and resources, seems key to implementing the CCSS and C3 Framework, or any other form of meaningful social studies, in the current climate of public schooling.

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