Reflection and Imagination:
An Wholistic Approach
to Teacher Education

By Robert P. Craig

"Reflective Inquiry Teacher Education" focuses on the development of analytical and critical thinking skills. The aim of the program is to produce future teachers who will not only fit into the educational system, but will also have the ability to constructively critique it.

In this program, I have taught 25 students each semester—those students who were beginning their teacher education experience. Several analytical critiques were expected of them, including a journal of school observations and a study of the community that the school impacts (its constituency, housing patterns, business and/or industrial sites, and problems and issues affecting the community). The students also researched and wrote a study of a school where they interviewed teachers, administrators, staff, etc., to attempt to understand the lines of communication within the school, sources of political power, modes of decision making, and so on. Likewise, each student and myself critiqued two microteaching experiences that were videotaped.

Certainly the above kinds of experiences are valuable in developing reasoning, logical, critical, reflective, and analytical ability. In fact, the students

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in this program, in general, were more conscious of the school as a social and political entity than teacher education students I had taught in the past.

How could one possibly criticize a program that emphasizes reflection and critique? Have not such educational theorists as Silberman (1970), Counts (1930), Dewey (1944), Goodman (1964), and McLaren (1989) argued that many teachers were involved in "mindless ritual," as they had no theory embedded in their practice and no valid critique at their disposal?

But there is a huge logical and existential leap between the development of reflective and critical ability and acting on such insights (Rest, 1983). In what follows, I make two assumptions: (1) that preservice teachers need to be aware of the value clusters through which they live out their lives and that, as Hall(1986) notes, are the energizers leading to commitment; and (2) that skill development is a primary means of integrating what individuals value and the extent to which their reflections and critique lead to action (Craig, 1991a).

This article will be structured in the following way: (1) a discussion of the value clusters of the 25 preservice teachers I taught in one of my small groups; (2) an exploration of the skill development necessary for tying together reflection/ critique, personal value commitments, and action; and (3) the sharing of one student's "Personal Story," an exercise I required as one of their "additional" assignments as a vehicle for illustrating the interaction between critical thinking and the development of the moral imagination (Craig, 1991c).

Value Clusters

I used the Rokeach Values Instrument (1973) as a way of students naming and identifying their personal value clusters. The Instrument lists 18 terminal values, or those values that form the core of an individual's personality and life commitments (Hall, 1986), and instrumental values, or the means the student has for living out the terminal values. They were asked to rank order their value preferences, from 1 as the value that most energized them to 18 as the value that least energized them. Since recent research in values development has noted that when individuals are initially asked to rank order value priorities their choice comes from the subconscious "shoulds" (Craig, 1990), the students were asked to do the assignment twice. The second time they were to ask, "Is this really what I value, or is this value merely an internalized "should?" If the answer was affirmative, they were asked to do the rank ordering again.

Out of 25 students, 15 rank ordered salvation as their primary value. Fifteen students also rank ordered family security or a sense of accomplishment as their secondary value. Likewise, 5 students rank ordered family security as their primary value, followed by salvation as their secondary value.

It is clear that a large number of students are driven and motivated by religious values, salvation. As a group they also possess value clusters that are oriented

toward others: a sense of accomplishment—making a lasting contribution—and family security—taking care of loved ones.

These value clusters would seem consistent with someone contemplating teaching as a profession. They feel they have a sense of mission, or even a calling, in a religious sense. They seem to desire to perform work that has a lasting effect on others; as well as a desire for the school perhaps to be a kind of family environment. It seems to me that these are the kinds of value clusters appropriate for prospective teachers.

The instrumental values, or the ways the students felt they lived out the terminal values, were consistent with the terminal values. Twenty-two of 25 preservice teachers rank ordered being responsible as either 1 or 2; while 13 students rank ordered loving as either 1 or 2. Note that the instrumental values are either task oriented (responsible) or other centered (loving). There is a realistic connection, then, between the students' terminal and instrumental values.

Values and Skill Development

If the above sort of value clusters are desirable for someone contemplating teaching (wanting maturity and being largely other centered), how can programs in teacher education assist students with the skill development necessary to grow consistently in such values orientations? Hunter (1991) argues that one's method of reasoning affects what one values. For instance, someone who looks at reality through a scientific lens will value objectivity; while someone else who is highly intuitive will value artistic forms of creativity.

Hall and Thompson (1980) note that there is a relationship between peoples' decision making style and their personal value clusters. For example, someone who prizes collegial forms of decision making usually has values that cluster around the respect and dignity of others. Likewise, Hall (1986) argues that there are four skill clusters involved in an individual's values growth.

The first skill cluster Hall terms instrumental skills. These are the skills necessary to function in the day-to-day world—or what schools refer to as basic skills or competencies. Instrumental skills, though, have an importance beyond day-to-day competencies. They are also integral to the individual's self-esteem. One who cannot function in the social-cultural world hardly experiences a positive sense of self.

Thus, the development of basic skills whereby one can successfully, albeit minimally, function in the world is essential in developing self-esteem. An individual who lacked instrumental skills would be unable to follow the directions necessary to rank order the values on the Rokeach Values Instrument, for instance. As Hall (1986) notes, possessing instrumental skills allows the individual to transcend mere survival values, such as desiring a comfortable life.

A second set of skills essential in developing as a person is interpersonal skills

(Hall, 1986). These include the development of empathy and attentive listening. Interpersonal skills are directly related to the teacher-student relationship. Teachers who lack proper interpersonal skills are unable to relate to students as persons of worth and dignity.

As Kohlberg (1981) notes, empathy is the foundation of moral growth. Being unable to put oneself in another's place hampers communication, understanding, and human growth. Thus, such values as family security and social recognition are enhanced by the development of interpersonal skills.

A third skill cluster consists of imaginal skills (Craig & Norris, 1991). Imaginal skills include the use of fantasy and the functioning of the imagination so as to be able to associate persons, events, situations, and moral principles within the context of reconstructed experience. I will discuss imaginal skills in some depth when I share a preservice teacher's "Personal Story."

Suffice it to say that such values as wisdom necessitate the function of the imagination in harmony with reason and logic. Armed with reason and logic, the individual is a half-person in the sense that there is only one method of decision making. With the introduction of imaginal skills, the individual can vision and envision possibilities beyond the realm of reason and logic alone.

Finally, Hall (1986) argues that systems skills are integral to viewing a situation in its wholistic complexity. Systems skills include the ability to understand how the parts of a particular institutional setting relate to the whole, that is, relate to the mission of the school. Many teachers confide in me that much of their day seems to consist in "putting out fires."

If systems skills can be developed during preservice teaching, the individual might be able to note how the "putting out of fires" is necessary to the teaching-learning context. Less frustration would seem to occur if teachers saw that much routine classroom activity directly relates to the broader goal of teaching and learning. Systems skills, then, enhance the value of a sense of accomplishment, as the teacher is able to see beyond the immediate sets of classroom experiences to note more lasting contributions toward the learning and growth of students.

As a way of further discussing skill development, I will share Sharon's "Personal Story." This was a midterm assignment to aid the students in developing the various skill clusters. We discussed the "Personal Stories" in class to further reinforce the interrelationship between values, skill development, and teacher classroom practices. Sharon is not her real name; and the names and situations in the "Personal Story" have been adapted to respect confidentiality.

Sharon's "Personal Story"

I went to my first school observations with a vibrant sense of hope. I knew I had something to contribute to children's' growth and learning; and I also knew I had much to learn.

My S.B.T.E. (Site Based Teacher Educator) met me at the classroom door and welcomed me. She introduced me to the class and reassured me that the children are really fond of having visitors. She also told them why I was there and that I would be giving a mini-lesson in a few days. The children cheered; and I hoped my S.B.T.E. didn't think they were preferring me to her. I got no indication of this at all.

But I did notice that as friendly and as warm as she was, she played favorites. Her favorites seemed to be the children who did exactly what she said. They seemed to be the children who strictly followed orders. I wondered how the other children felt, and I wondered how this treatment might affect each group's success in school. Instead of discussing a violation of a rule, for instance, the teacher told the entire class about the undesirable behavior. Then she might or might not do something, that is, punish the child in some way. This seemed to me to be inconsistent.

When it came time for my mini-lesson, the teacher was behind me 100 per cent. In fact, she helped me outline the lesson, and even suggested different kinds of material I might use. She treated me (and made me feel) like a professional. When the mini-lesson was over, she spent an hour of her own time after school constructively critiquing it for me. I could not have asked for more support.

Yet, her favoritism and her inconsistency in enforcing the classroom rules really bothered me. I did not feel comfortable in discussing this with her. But I did learn how not to treat children. Her behavior seemed to me to be in violation of the respect due all children. That is, it is disrespectful to children to play favorites—and it is certainly unfair. When I become a teacher I will make sure to do the best I can to be fair.

Reflection

My argument thus far is that teacher education programs, such as the R.I.T.E. Program, are often one-sided, that is, they reflect a bias on critical thinking based on reason, logic, and analysis. I am not suggesting that preservice teacher education programs drop rationality, reflection, critique, and logic. I am merely noting that such an approach is limited—in the sense that there are skill dimensions lacking. It should be assumed that preservice teachers have good instrumental skills. In most states, for instance, students in a teacher education program must pass a basic skills test.

Likewise, the various assignments in the R.I.T.E. Program are essential in developing analytical and logical skills, among others. But can it be said that students in teacher education programs have good interpersonal skills? Some preservice teachers have, seemingly by nature, good interpersonal skills. Others do not. It is a tragedy to put someone in a classroom who has difficulty relating. Note

that in Sharon's "Personal Story" she discusses the positive relationship with the teacher. Sharon seemingly already had good interpersonal skills. Imaginative assignments or exercises like the one I gave are one way of discerning the need for better interpersonal skill preparation.

Sharon likewise possesses good imaginal skills. She is able to imaginally reconstruct the teacher's welcome and class introduction. She is able to imaginatively associate feelings with specific events, such as how much she felt accepted by the teacher and the class. Ricoeur (1977) notes that the development of the imagination includes several specific functions. One is the imaginative reconstruction of people, events, situations, feelings, etc. A second function of the imagination is to imaginatively associate situations with feelings and even with moral principles. Both of these functions are used by Sharon in her "Personal Story."

The final function of the imagination is to select a symbol or metaphor that challenges one to action. Sharon is very upset by the favoritism the teacher shows certain students, and by the way she reacts to other students. Sharon uses the term "unfair" as a symbol leading her to action. That is, to note that when she secures a teaching position she will make a constant effort to be fair to students. Part of the functioning of the imagination, then, is moral; namely, to label (with a symbol, metaphor, or moral principle, that is usually implied and not stated) the particular imaginative situation—or specific aspects of it. There is an important sense, then, in which moral insight and decision making are related to the functioning of the imagination within specific contexts (Hauerwas, 1977).

Finally, Sharon exhibits good systems skills. She notes the consequences of favoritism, and she is cognizant of the long term effect of this treatment on the other students. Sharon is viewing the classroom as a totality, and is noting how one part (teacher favoritism) affects the whole (the entire classroom). She also seems to view schooling in a broad, wholistic perspective; that is, she recognizes how unfair treatment affects students in general.

Valuing and Skills

I previously argued that each skill cluster enhances specific values. Yet, one may ask, "What does all this have to do with teacher education programs?" As Hall (1986) notes, values are human energizers: they form the basis of one's life commitments. I suggested that the value clusters of the students in my class were seemingly those desirable for a public school teacher. Using the Values Instrument allows the students a chance to name, clarify, and discuss their value orientations; and this gives them insight into why they chose teaching as a career. It might be the case that a preservice teacher decided **not** to become a teacher based on his or her value clusters. That is, the value clusters might exhibit values that are antithetical to teaching, such as a comfortable life or pleasure.

The imaginative exercise allowed the students to use an alternative to reason

and logic in reflecting on and in discussing their school observations (although reason and logic are essential in reflection). The imaginative exercise also was an aid in helping students notice skill deficiencies. If interpersonal skills are lacking, for instance, exercises in role playing or in practicing empathy can be a great help (Craig, 1991b).

The imaginative exercise also helps preservice teachers clarify their value clusters and priorities. Obviously, fairness was an important value for Sharon. My contention, then, is that values awareness, the use of the imagination (supplemented by reason and logic), and skill development go hand in hand. This makes for a more fully functioning and aware person; and for a more wholistic teacher education program.

Conclusion

At a time when teachers are being asked to be all things to all students (from involvement in multicultural education to character education), teachers need to possess skills beyond the analytical, reflective, and critical skill areas. These skills are essential; but people are more than their intellect or reason. They also are moral, emotional, and imaginative beings.

Perhaps if programs in teacher education could begin to educate the whole person, a slogan that has been around the teaching profession for some time, teachers could relate to students, among others, in more integrated ways. They could see others from differing perspectives and points of view. I hope that at the very least this article will spur others in teacher education to dialogue regarding more wholistic approaches to teacher education programs. In a pluralistic society such as ours, nothing short of this will do.

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