Academic Freedom and the Publish or Perish Paradox in Schools of Education

By Ardra L. Cole

From the vantage point of mid-life I can safely and honestly say that I have spent almost my entire life immersed in formal education. As a pre-schooler I fell in love with School and everything it stood for. Since then my passion for education, like a candle in the breeze, has at times flickered and burnt low to the point of being extinguished only to be re-enlivened to burn brightly for a time before being nearly snuffed out and then once again rekindled, almost in a rhythmic fashion. The reasons for the changes in intensity of my commitment to education have varied with age, maturity, interest, circumstance, and level of insight. I have, and continue to have, a love-hate relationship with Education as a formally defined institutional construct. Yet, connected with things educational is where I belong. It is where I feel at home.

After several years of teaching in a variety of Special Education settings I left schools to return to university in search of another more rewarding intellectual context, my images of what it meant to be a teacher shattered. I felt dissatisfied with what I came to see and understand as devalued women's work,

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bored by staffroom conversations about domestic life outside school, unchallenged intellectually by what I was teaching, constrained by the rules and routines that ordered school life, and discouraged by the unfairness and inequities of the education system. The values and qualities for which I had been rewarded, and which allowed me to succeed as a young student and the oppressive structures which seduced me as a young girl, were the very ones that turned me away from School as a young adult and teacher.

I delight in learning and in teaching adults. I take great pleasure from facilitating and being involved in creative explorations of various kinds—intellectual, artistic, scientific—through learning, teaching, researching, and writing (or other forms of representation). I am gratified when the formal structures of educational institutions—policies, schedules, written and unwritten rules—enable rather than impede learning. I relish the autonomy I have as a university educator and researcher to teach and research in ways and areas that reflect my interests and passions. I have been fortunate, indeed, to grow up as an academic in the kind of university context that I did. Because of the kind of institution I work in and the kind of people with whom I work, I have had the degree of autonomy I need as a university teacher, researcher, and academic–as a person. I know that I am fortunate and that many of my colleagues in other institutions are less advantaged.

Why, I wonder, did I not love my work, the way I do now, when I was a teacher in schools? Why do the teachers I teach feel as beleaguered as I did by "the system"? Why do so many of my teacher educator colleagues, particularly those who are untenured preservice teacher educators, feel the same kind of beleaguerment and constraint? How can teachers and teacher educators work in ways that are consistent with who they are and what they value as individuals and as professionals? These and other similar questions guide my work as a teacher educator and educational researcher. The implicit expectation of conformity set by educational institutions (schools and universities alike) and the blatant inequities inherent in the entire education system nag at me. They drive my teaching and researching agenda.

For the purposes of this theme issue, "Publish or Perish," I focus my attention on particular kinds of inequities and some of their influences on teacher educators' lives and work. I refer to inequities that come about by virtue of individuals' academic status and job security within the university, the status of schools, departments, and faculties of education within the university, and inequities that are associated with degrees of personal and academic freedoms. My main point is that professors of education as a whole, and particularly those individuals without tenure or job security, by virtue of their history and status within the university and by virtue of their dual mandate to the university and professional community, are caught in a "publish *or* perish" paradox—for some, it is publish *and* perish; for others, it is perish *by* publishing. If teacher educators and teacher education institutions are to survive and grow (not perish) in the academy, attention must be

given to how the concept of academic freedom, designed to protect faculty and enable the development and communication of knowledge and learning, can be reinterpreted to more appropriately reflect the context and nature of teacher educators' work. In addition, teacher education institutions themselves, as relatively new members of the university community, need to examine their defining ethos and culture *vis à vis* that of the university, paying particular attention to the concept of personal freedom as it relates to academic life and work.

In addition to relevant theoretical and experience-based literature, I draw on and present excerpts from conversations I had with several pre-tenured teacher educators as part of a study of teacher educators and teacher education reform in Canadian English-language faculties of education (see, Cole, in press). The tenure process and system, not surprisingly, was a predominant influence on and presence in their lives and work. Present, as well, were challenges associated with a dual commitment to the professional and academic communities. In this article, I highlight some of the teacher educators' comments on these issues as well as those that speak to the concepts of academic and personal freedoms in relation to teacher educators' work. I explore the meaning (or meaninglessness) of the concept of academic freedom for teacher educators, given both the context and mandate of their work, and argue that most teacher educators experience such constraints on their time, energy, and intellectual and professional commitments that the concept of academic freedom is rendered paradoxical.

Academic Freedom

Howard R. Bowen and Jack H. Schuster (1986), in their analysis of the American [meaning the United States of America] Professoriate, define academic freedom as one of the hallmarks of the academy (a definition that has broad application outside the United States of America as well):

> Academic freedom includes the right of faculty members to substantial autonomy in the conduct of their work, and to freedom of thought and expression as they discover and disseminate learning. This freedom is essential to the advancement of learning. (p. 53)

These authors go on to argue the significance of the relationship between academic freedom and job security and cite tenure (or other similar articulations of job security) as part of the wider contractual commitment to academic freedom. They assert that job security is necessary so that faculty members have

> ...long periods of unbroken time and freedom from distractions to perform their duties well.... Thinking and communicating are exacting tasks that require concentration and peace of mind.... One of the most costly aspects of the current anxiety among faculty about job security is the adverse affect on their productivity. (p. 236)

This rather broad definition of academic freedom, which includes conditions that affect the intellectual lives of academics and make possible the practical realization of academic freedom, is not universally held. Other scholars writing in the area offer a much narrower definition of academic freedom. For example, Edward Shils (1991) asserts that academic freedom pertains to the rights and freedoms of academics to teach, conduct research, and communicate knowledge derived from their studies. Issues, such as specific working conditions within which academic freedom might be attained or violated, are not part of Shils' definition. Moreover, while he acknowledges that, in North America in particular, academic freedom has come to be intricately linked with tenure and job security, Shils maintains that tenure (or its denial) is but one of any number of potential sanctions against academic freedom. The implication in his lengthy definition and discussion of academic freedom is that the definition should remain pure and therefore quite narrow.

Those, such as Bowen and Schuster (cited above) and Conrad Russell (1993), who argue for a broader and perhaps more contemporary definition of academic freedom, have been criticized by those who suggest that such elasticity weakens the concept. Michael Skolnik, for example, in a (1994) review of Russell's book, *Academic Freedom*, suggests that "to stretch the term, academic freedom, too far, is to risk losing credibility and understanding with those groups outside the university whose respect for this principle is essential" (p. 109). The point here is to acknowledge that, within higher education, there are differences of opinion on the definition of academic freedom.

While the concept and implications of academic freedom have been widely debated and its future increasingly questioned, particularly in some countries, by and large it is a right (and privilege) jealously guarded by academics. Most critics attack the close relationship that exists between the promise of academic freedom and the reward system of the university rather than the concept of academic freedom itself. For example, William G. Tierney and Estela M. Bensimon (1996), who obviously assume an integral relationship between academic freedom and tenure, argue that academic freedom is a false promise:

> If one of the reasons for the creation of tenure was to protect faculty so that they could engage in intellectual battle without fear of reprisal, then that purpose has been lost.... If a faculty member does not walk the ideological line, he or she will be at risk of not attaining tenure and promotion. (p. 8)

Similarly, Susan Finley (2000, this issue), commenting on academic freedom in schools of education for untenured faculty members in particular, states:

> [Academic] freedoms have been threatened and usurped by a system that maintains power structures that create hierarchies of oppressors and their oppressed, that tolerates rhetoric over action, that stymies change with the exercise of power. (p. 59)

The definition of academic freedom, which includes assumptions about

working conditions—a definition that I use in this article—renders the realization of the concept almost an impossibility for full-time academic staff in schools of education. The inextricable link between academic freedom and the reward system of the university also raises questions about what academic freedom actually means (if anything) for teacher educators.

Academic Freedom in Schools of Education

The notion of academic freedom in schools of education provokes interesting debates. One argument is that, if academic freedom is a reward for proving oneself worthy of job security and promotional rewards and if such rewards are primarily based on conventional views of scholarly production (i.e., articles in prestigious, refereed journals or other scholarly venues deemed meritorious by university standards), then teacher educators and teacher education institutions must make a commitment to the production and communication of knowledge in ways that uphold the values, priorities, and orientations of the university. One result of following this conservative line of argument is that:

> Education faculty quickly come to understand which research and publication efforts "count" and which do not.... The result is that education faculty veer away from professionally demanding activities and toward those understood and hence rewarded in academic departments. (Clifford & Guthrie, 1988, p. 337)

In other words, to earn academic freedom, education faculty essentially are forced to overlook or turn their backs on their commitment to the professional community and field, that is if they want to become and remain *bona fide* members of the academy.

Conversely, there are those who argue that the definition of academic freedom, which ties it to the reward structure, is inappropriate for schools, departments, or faculties that have a professional as well as scholarly commitment (e.g., education, social work, nursing) and that a redefinition is in order. For example, Jon Nixon (in Nixon, Beattie, Challis, & Walker, 1998, p. 282-283) calls for "an ethical turn" from an exclusive to a more inclusive notion of academic freedom. His suggestion for redefinition includes:

- redefining what counts as research;
- putting the teaching relationship first;
- developing our professional selves;
- turning collegiality inside out.

This suggestion merits serious consideration because the ideas reflect and take into account the goals, values, and commitments of teacher education as a field or discipline. I expect that few contemporary teacher educators, especially those who define themselves as such, would argue with any of Nixon's suggestions. I expect they would find his ideas refreshing, freeing. That is my response, in part. Another part of my response is that, not only do universities need to rethink or extend the definition of academic freedom to better suit but not diminish professional schools,

teacher education institutions also need to engage in a broader examination of the concept of that freedom as provided to and experienced by faculty.

From Normal School to University

The moving of teacher "training" institutions into universities is an international phenomenon that has taken place in the early to latter part of the twentieth century in North America and is still taking place in other parts of the world. Prior to being affiliated with or located in universities, most initial teacher preparation took place in community or land grant colleges and universities (the latter being a type of institution in the United States of America), normal schools, or other tertiary institutions with solely a professional mandate. Such a move was a strategy intended to professionalize teaching and raise the status of the education profession which, historically, had suffered low social status and lack of economic resources (Clifford & Guthrie, 1988). Since joining the university, schools of education have struggled for acceptance by and legitimacy within the university system. They have been pulled between commitment and allegiance to the professional community and identification with and acceptance by the academic community and, as some would say, have gained little ground in the struggle (e.g., Arizona Group: Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar, & Placier, 1998; Clark, 1978; Clifford & Guthrie, 1988; Ducharme, 1993; Hazlett, 1989; Reynolds, 1995).

Values Conflicts, Rewards, and the Possibility of Academic Freedom

The values and priorities of the academy, which emphasize scholarship (narrowly defined), research funding, and academic prestige, are reflected in the kind of work faculty do and get rewarded for; the values and priorities of the professional community, which emphasize teaching excellence, service to the professional community, and ties with the public and professional sector, also are reflected in faculty work. For teacher educators, the mandate to "serve two masters" (Reynolds, 1995, p. 222) demands that they be super-faculty members if they are to survive, thrive, and not perish in the academy.

Each set of values and priorities demands a different kind of commitment and way of working which, in turn, requires different facilitating conditions. Schools of education, with their cultural history and ethos rooted in practice and the demands of practical problems, are not set up to support the work of teacher educators endeavoring to meet the demands of the academy. Similarly, the academy is not set up to support the work of teacher educators intent on serving the professional community. The academy is committed to protecting the academic freedom of those members deemed worthy by virtue of their ability to uphold its academic "ideals" (which are conservative translations of scholarship or what it means to

advance knowledge). This is so that, as Bowen and Schuster (1986) assert, scholars can proceed with the tasks of thinking and communicating free from distractions and with peace of mind. The realities of teacher educators' work are fraught with, perhaps defined by, distractions, demands, and obligations that make "peace of mind" almost an impossibility.

If one of the reasons for placing teacher education in the academy was (and is) to raise its status as a *bona fide* field or discipline, then in order for that to happen simultaneously with the successful honoring of the academic-professional dual mandate, a rethinking of the concept of academic freedom is required. This rethinking requires teacher education institutions to closely examine the working conditions of its professoriate. At the same time, the broader university policy on academic freedom, particularly as it is tied to job security, career mobility, and financial remuneration, needs to be examined and expanded to take into account the nature of teacher educators' work and commitments.

Teacher Educators' Work and the Elusive Pursuit of "Peace of Mind"

It is an historical reality that "traditionally feminized occupations [such as education, nursing, and social work] are not accorded equal status and resources with male undertakings" (Clifford & Guthrie, 1988, p. 328). Sandra Acker and Grace Feuerverger (1996) use the phrase "doing good and feeling bad" to sum up the sentiment of women education academics. They cite women's "outsider" status in the academy as one reason for their tendency to keep trying to work harder in order to prove themselves successful and comparable to their male counterparts. Without in any way intending to negate Acker and Feuerverger's argument, I expect this same line of argument can be applied broadly to schools of education as feminized institutions. As members of a feminized occupation, teacher educators (both male and female) are used to, in Ann Oakley's words, "taking it like a woman" (Oakley, 1984). That is to say, they (and we) are so entrenched in their feminized roles that they keep working harder to meet personal, professional, and institutional demands without overtly questioning the fairness and appropriateness of such demands and the resources available to meet them.

The kinds of infringements on the personal time and space that many teacher educators experience, the lack of resources available to support their work, and the sheer volume of work expected make it almost impossible for teacher educators to feel good about what they are able to accomplish and to feel like they have academic freedom or other kinds of freedom. The following comments from two teacher educators in two different institutions for initial teacher education illustrate. First:

> I am expected to be "at work" all day five days a week from nine to five as well as several evenings for special events.... While I do believe that I need to be accessible to my students, the sense of "being checked up on" can be irritating. If you are not [at the institution] between nine and five it had better be written on the blackboard where you are. The whole nine to five thing is bizarre. I work when I

> work (and that is most of the time). Education is my life.
>
> When I moved from school to the university I imagined that I would be teaching and that I would have time to do research. What I had not imagined was the number of meetings I'd have to attend and the control [over my time].... We have five, six, seven meetings a week, meetings to plan meetings.

Second:

> I see the older people in my department (who, for the most part are extremely unproductive) clocking in and clocking out, telling their secretaries where they are going and when they'll be back. When I came along I'd just come in and out when I felt like it. Sometimes I'd be in my office, sometimes at home. I stay home sometimes for three days in a row. At the beginning people would say things to me [about that]. They don't anymore. I cannot work under those conditions. I cannot work in a high school [-like structure], where I'm at everyone's beck and call, and get any work done.

The assumptions embedded in the strictly controlled work environment described and experienced by these teacher educators might be aligned with Douglas M. McGregor's "Theory X" approach to administration, that is, an approach based on the view that, if left to their own devices, people will express their natural qualities of apathy and work avoidance. In order to be productive, therefore, they must be carefully monitored and controlled with appropriate behavioral prompts (McGregor, 1961). From a more contemporary, feminist perspective, such a controlling stance might be viewed as gender-related oppression. From any vantage point, these working conditions conflict with those embedded in the concept of academic freedom and the conditions of academics' work.

Not all teacher educators experience their work context this way but I expect that there will be a fairly high level of resonance with the above comments. Perhaps it is not always stated, but rather felt or expected, that presence or visibility implies productivity. Hallway whispers about faculty members who are "never around" imply that those people must not be working or doing their job. Seldom, if ever, is it reasoned that those non-visible faculty members may be taking advantage of much needed and deserved "periods of unbroken time and freedom from distractions to perform their [thinking and writing] duties well" which, according to Bowen and Schuster (1986), is a necessary condition for academic freedom. Creativity and academic productivity are not governed or governable by clocks and bells and require temporal as well as intellectual space.

A constraining working condition with which there is likely to be an even higher level of resonance, however, is that associated with workload demands. Feeling overwhelmed by and unable to meet high expectations and demands of the work of being a teacher educator are widely experienced. Accounts of such challenges are reported in the literature on the teacher education professoriate (e.g., Acker, 1997; Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Cole, in press; Cole, Elijah, & Knowles, 1998; Weber, 1990; Whitt, 1991). For example, in this volume, Jennifer Sumsion writes:

> My plans to stay home tomorrow to write have long since evaporated. If I put in at least another 12 hours in my office instead, I *might* be able to salvage a writing day later in the week. I had such high hopes of the writing that I would do during the semester break but these were eroded by an onslaught of assignment marking and faculty meetings; on-campus sessions for distance education and post graduate students; obligations arising from a recently awarded teaching development grant; and the vast number of telephone calls associated with coordinating a practicum, and supporting students, cooperating teachers and university advisers through the personal and professional crises that a practicum so often precipitates. The debris of those various responsibilities surround me now. (2000, p. 78)

These comments concisely summarize the demands on teacher educators. No wonder so many become disillusioned, frustrated, and overwhelmed.

A group of teacher educators, in writing about their work and its demanding nature, connect their disillusionment with their work environment with the concept of, what they call, "professorial autonomy":

> We came to the professoriate with false impressions about the work environment. We thought university teaching would offer more personal and professional autonomy than it does.... While many of us teaching in the program are convinced that we are preparing a better beginning teacher, the effect on personal and professional autonomy is significant.... [Striving for] programmatic integrity in teacher education may mean abandoning notions of professorial autonomy. (Kleinsasser, Bruce, Berube, Hutchison, & Ellsworth, 1998, pp. 308-309)

Whether it is due to outdated management practices and associated workplace conditions or simply a matter of too much work for too many diverse purposes, few teacher educators would argue that there is just not enough time to do all that is required of them, especially when what is required is rooted in two very different perspectives on academic life and work.

Commitment, Creativity, and Academic Freedom

Carl Rogers, for one, presents a view on personal freedom that stands in stark contrast to the conventional scientific, behaviorist, and oppressive views that seem to underpin operations in some, even many, schools of education. He asserts that freedom is a fulfillment by a person of the ordered sequence of her or his life, a freedom which a person courageously uses to realize her or his potentialities: "The free man [sic] moves out voluntarily, freely, responsibly, to play his [sic] significant part in a world whose determined events move through him [sic] and through his [sic] spontaneous choice and will" (Rogers, 1969, p. 269). It is this kind of freedom that teacher educators do not enjoy both because of controlling work conditions, such as heavily structured work agendas and an overabundance of committee work, and because of the unrealistic demands placed on them in general. One teacher educator comments:

> I have no freedom and yet I do have freedom. I have freedom moment by moment in that I'm not in a classroom from nine to three-thirty [like I was when I was a public school teacher] but...there is an assumption that I have all this extra time and so can do four hundred other jobs. At school I was confined in time and space whereas now I have much more freedom of time and space but it is filled up with other people's agendas.... I [am supposed to] take my calendar [or appointment book] everywhere with me in case a meeting is set up. When we look at our calendars, if there is any open space it is assumed that we are available.

Skolnik (1998), in a critique of the university reward system, observes that professors do not work as hard as they do for extrinsic rewards but rather their motivations are rooted in their ideological and moral commitments to themselves, students, programs, departments, institutions, disciplines, society, and the global community. This argument fits Rogers' definition of commitment which he associates with creativity.

Rogers defines commitment as a

> ...total organismic direction involving not only the conscious mind but the whole direction of the organism as well..., the functioning of an individual who is searching for directions which are emerging within himself [sic]..., the individual creation of a personal truth through action. (1969, p. 273)

This is the kind of commitment that teacher educators refer to when they talk about their work, the kind of commitment that Rogers asserts is possible to express only when a person can be fully functioning as an integrated, whole, unified individual, in other words, free. Freedom to be creative and the freedom required for creativity implies opportunities to fully engage in intellectual (broadly defined) pursuits in an area of one's choosing.

Most teacher educators do not experience this kind of freedom; hence, creativity and commitment are difficult to express in a meaningful way. Says one teacher educator:

> I get renewed by the kind of work that I love to do. Work is such a central part of my life and who I am. I wouldn't want to be not working but I've spent a lot of time doing work that doesn't renew me. [For the seven years prior to receiving tenure] I was badly exhausted, under stress, and suffered serious health problems. Creative work does not do well under those conditions. [Creativity] is about being playful with words and ideas and I don't play under stress. If you're going to be creative you have to have loads and loads of failed experiments. [Before receiving tenure] I could never afford the time to have one let alone five failed experiments. I had to have a product at the end of a certain number of hours of work. That burns you out because when you grind out a product that you're not absolutely delighted with you don't have time to go back and work on it until you are. You think, "Oh God, now I have to do another one."

This comment is reminiscent of Park's (1996) and Skolnik's (this volume) observations that the academy values quantity over quality, a comment that an outgoing

editor of a reputable scholarly educational research journal recently underscored. In her final editorial comment as journal editor, Beth Young is highly critical of the quality of many of the manuscripts submitted for peer review. She states:

> In the press to publish or perish...some academics and aspiring academics are much more interested in pumping out articles than in making a scholarly contribution; much more willing to "talk" about their work than to read anyone else's, however it might inform their own; much keener to be published in a widely indexed and circulated journal...than to support the journal by subscribing to it themselves. (1998, p. 250)

My sense is that her comment reflects a sad-but-true reality for education academics. They simply do not have the time (and, in some cases, the commitment) to fully engage in the consuming and creative task of producing high quality scholarly writing.

The above comments are also a commentary on the inappropriateness of the conventional definition of academic freedom, especially as it is tied to the university's reward system, for schools of teacher education. The following excerpts from the experience-based writing of teacher educators further elucidate this notion. First, a published journal entry of one teacher educator from the Arizona Group:

> Being a teacher educator in a U.S. research university does not mean spending one's time educating teachers. Though that work may be the most socially important work I do, and the work to which I feel the highest moral obligation, it becomes only one isolated piece of my position. It is also not the one that "counts" the most in terms of establishing job security. (Arizona Group: Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar, & Placier, 1998, p. 177)

And another:

> I cannot allow myself to be cultivated into the academic teacher education community at the expense of losing the value I attach to classroom practice.... I cannot forget my place as a classroom teacher...since this is the place from which I am educating my students. (Olson, 1998, p. 167)

When life is fractured and the various pieces splinter off in different directions, it is difficult to operate as a wholly engaged and committed individual. When the fragments do not even appear to fit or belong as one, it is a challenge to do much more than try to hold the bits together. For many teacher educators, creativity, commitment, and academic freedom, as defined above, remain lofty ideals.

Freedom to Choose and Follow One's Passions

> There are so many hidden things about the tenure process. We have a form that has seven areas that we are supposed to be working on showing our confidence or skill in and we have to do them all. If you do just those, and become almost robotic in the way you do [your work], then you're going to lose sight of your passion and

> your ethics and your goals.... If I were going to be strategic and concentrate solely on getting tenure I'd take on things that don't interest me or that I don't have a passion for but I need to be able to pursue things that I care about, things that are connected to my areas of interest.

Teacher educators have one thing in common—a passionate commitment to the improvement of education for teachers and students. This passion and commitment is articulated differently by virtue of people's individual differences. Not all expressions, however, are accorded equal value or worth according to the university's reward structure. Therein lies the publish or perish paradox for many teacher educators. As one teacher educator put it:

> I have been very strategic in the things that I've chosen to write because they are almost guaranteed publications. The kind of writing that I'm actually interested in doing is exploratory kind of writing. [With that kind of writing] I wouldn't set out with any kind of guarantee about where it was going.... I'd have a lot more fun.... It's what I want to do.... Academic publications–who reads those? I want to write what people will read and what will help people understand things that I think are of value.... I'm not going to do that now. I've put that on the back burner.

Most contemporary teacher educators share a passion for teaching and field-based activities related to the betterment of teacher education. Indeed, "for teacher educators who want to fundamentally change the ways in which teachers are prepared and how, as professors, they play out their roles in the academy, *teaching* is 'the heart of the matter'" (Cole, Elijah, & Knowles, 1998, p. 9). It is the case, however, that, as Park (1996, p. 48) notes, "The decisive factor in tenure and promotion (and salary) decisions is research." Many teacher educators find themselves torn between their survival as academics and their ability to flourish as creative and productive teachers, teacher educators, and reformers. The enormous time and energy demand required to meet the university's standards of academic worth is time and energy taken away from the work they most want to do and the work that they feel that they do best. They do what they have to do to stay employed or to gain status within the university and to gain the "freedom" associated with those rewards; however, this investment is often at the expense of their own passions and interests (in teaching, program development, and/or community work). Often, teacher educators find themselves in a no-win situation, *perishing by publishing*. In the words of one teacher educator, "There is an environment of choice here [at the university] but with huge obstacles. It's a real paradox, like being given an opportunity to run a marathon but with your legs tied."

Some teacher educators have a passion for research or for writing, perhaps in non-conventional ways to reach other than academic audiences; others find challenge and joy in creative moments associated with program development; still others crave more time to spend on understanding and improving their teaching as part of a broader teacher education agenda. However the commitments are articu-

lated, each is in the interest of the mandate of serving the professional community and field of education. These are not, however, necessarily viewed by the academy as meritorious activities–a situation that seems like an inherent contradiction to the definition of academic freedom stated earlier, that is, "the right of faculty members to substantial autonomy in the conduct of their work, and to freedom of thought and expression as they discover and disseminate learning" (Bowen & Schuster, 1986, p. 53).

As a very young child I experienced tremendous satisfaction and contentment when engaged in solitary activities and when alone with my thoughts and actions. I created or found spaces where I could be alone and I developed a need for such spaces and times. Now, more than ever perhaps, because of the steadily and ever-increasing demands on personal time and space, I crave solitude and a chance to work through thoughts and problems free from distractions, usually through writing, in a private space. When I am deprived of this opportunity too much or for too long, my whole system gets thrown off balance. I begin to feel stifled, that too much of my time is being spent on routine activities or those that require a lot of me but do not give much in return, that too little of my efforts are channeled into creative and learning pursuits.

Several years ago we purchased property including a 150-year-old rum-runner's house on an island off the coast of Nova Scotia in Atlantic Canada. In part this was an expression of my need to maintain ties with my home and cultural roots after my parents passed away; it was also in part a response to our strong connections with the sea and affinity for islands. Over the years, well before we bought it, the house had had a number of additions built on; a small section—the old kitchen—had been cut off and dragged several feet from the main house to make way for one of these additions. When we purchased the property, the 150-year-old kitchen sat empty and in a sorry state of repair, the previous owner having used it as a shed in which to make and store wine. "That'll be my writing shed," I declared almost at first sight as we surveyed our newly purchased property. "It'll take a lot of work," came the response, "new roof, new floor, everything needs a lot of work." "So?" I retorted, so as not to be too easily put off.

The shed sat empty and untouched for a few years until it finally worked its way up to the top of the priority list one summer, which meant that we had some time, a bit of money for materials, and family members to help with the labor. In the intervening years my yearning grew; I could see myself in that space, my space, a shed of my own. For eight days four of us worked from early in the morning until well past dark, stopping only for an evening meal and sleep and paying only cursory attention to other things that needed tending. On June 14th I "moved in."

That first day in my writing shed was almost Zen-like. I sat for what seemed like hours at my writing table looking out at the ocean—a stone's throw away—and just letting myself be, in the silence and peacefulness of the space. I was overwhelmed with contentment and comfort in that shed of my own surrounded by me-ness. Even

the pencil I held poised on paper felt right. Periodically I glanced up and around; each time I could hardly contain my emotion, my happiness with the me-ness of the place.

We papered the walls with images and text from back issues of a national news magazine. What started out as an inexpensive and efficient method of wall covering, not to mention a clever use for old magazines, became a personal project. I selected and we tore out thousands of images and pieces of text and, though the process of selection was not overly-systematic or pre-meditated, the walls of my shed turned out to be a personal statement. They reflect elements of who I am–my values, perspectives, likes, and dislikes.

I moved into the shed things that had special significance for me; some things to which I had a sentimental attachment and other things which I felt attached to and comforted by because they had been part of me for so long. Some of these things for years had been relegated to storage or some obscure location in the house because they just didn't go or fit. They do now. They always had in my view but, when you share a space, decisions about what does or doesn't fit also are shared. In their new home there was no question.

It was almost love I felt for that refurbished shed. Perhaps it was the beauty of the space itself or perhaps it was just because it was mine. I felt my eyes well with tears as they danced around, momentarily lighting on special photographs and carefully selected books sitting on the shelves of the old, refinished, built-in cupboard, the small cast iron ship's stove purchased years earlier for precisely the corner spot in which it now sat, the antique spool bed made into a sofa and that was covered with the last bedspread my mother knit before she lost that capacity.

It was raining the day I moved in—a typical rainy summer day on the Atlantic coast of Canada, still cool because June is that way in that part of the world, a day like so many I remember as a child. It was a day like the many I spent indoors by the wood stove coloring, copying Hit Parade songs, doing jigsaw puzzles, reading, playing records over and over to learn the words by heart; the days I spent alone. My memories of those days are fond ones.

Almost four decades later I sat alone in my shed, pencil resting on paper, warmed by the air from the tiny electric heater not far from my feet. As I gazed outside rain blew across the window in front of me, urging me to stay inside. I did, physically warmed by the air gently caressing my feet and radiating its heat upwards, and warmed and comforted from within by being in that space—that shed of my own—peaceful and alone, surrounded by me-ness.

It is in this kind of literal and figurative space that I am most thoughtful and productive. Informed and bolstered by significant interactions and relationships, I retreat to my solitary space for long periods of unbroken time to clarify and crystallize my thoughts. This is my way toward understanding. It is essential to my learning and creativity and to the advancement of my thinking. Each of us has a way. We need freedom to honor it and have it respected.

We all need to be free to operate from our own vantage point and to pursue our passions (assuming that we do not intend to harm others); yet, institutional structures such as schools and universities do not always afford such freedoms. I periodically wonder how I would have fared if I had located in a different kind of institutional context. I know my self, my way of being in the world, and how the two come together in my commitments to teaching, teacher education, and educational research. And I know that, in order to thrive (not just survive) in the academy, I need to be able to honor and respect myself and my way. We all need to feel honored and respected for our ways of being and doing.

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