DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 296 976 SP 030 382

AUTHOR Richards, Janet C.; Gipe, Joan P.
TITLE Reflective Concerns of Prospective Teachers in an Early Field Placement.
PUB DATE 24 Apr 87
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Washington, DC, April 24, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Concept Formation; *Developmental Stages; Field Experience Programs; Higher Education; *Personal Narratives; Preservice Teacher Education; *Student Teachers; Student Teacher Supervisors; Teacher Student Relationship; *Teaching Experience; Vocational Maturity

ABSTRACT

Prospective teachers in early field placements may gradually develop more mature concerns for pupils if they are given opportunities to reflect upon classroom experience. This study provides information concerning a reflective inquiry model compatible with early field placement. Participants were 12 student teachers engaged in classroom teaching who wrote their reflections on the day's events in their journals. Their supervisors read and then wrote feedback comments in the journals. The comments were, for the most part, supportive and encouraging. The reflective statements gathered within the dialogue journal inquiry model lent support to the idea of a developmental conceptualization of teachers' concerns. Four levels of concerns, progressing from "self" to "students", were apparent. Appendices contain excerpts from the student teachers' journals, including supervisor comments. (Thirty-five references are listed.) (JD)

REFLECTIVE CONCERNS OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS IN AN EARLY FIELD PLACEMENT

Janet C. Richards
New Orleans Public Schools

Joan P. Gipe
University of New Orleans

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (session 53.05), Washington, D. C., April 24, 1987.

ABSTRACT

Prospective teachers in early field placements may gradually develop more mature concerns for pupils if they are given opportunities to reflect upon classroom experiences. Yet, reports of reflective activities associated with field placements are few and somewhat vague. The present study provides information concerning a reflective inquiry model compatible with early field placements. Within that inquiry model, the nature of prospective teachers' developmental reflective concerns is documented and analyzed.

There is a mistaken belief that early field experiences automatically will help prospective teachers to think more like experienced teachers (Erdman, 1983; Goodman, 1985). Most experienced teachers are concerned for students and student progress, while novice teachers usually are concerned with self-adequacies and survival (Fuller, 1969; Goodman, 1985). Unfortunately, prospective teachers do not always get a chance to develop more mature concerns for pupils. Prospective teachers may not get an opportunity to function at what Van Manen (1977) terms the second level of reflectivity; that is, to examine, analyze, and clarify classroom practices.

Too often, prospective teachers in early field placements simply assist the classroom teacher. They may run off dittos or listen to children read. Regrettably, no personal meaning can be applied to these technician-type chores. And, future teachers may never enlarge upon a narrow, self-oriented, managerial view of teaching (Tabachnick, Popkewitz & Zeichner, 1980).

Of course, there are critics who assert that reflective activities as a component of early field placements are a waste of time. For example, some ethnographers note that many experienced, effective classroom

teachers are not particularly reflective. The structure of the schools does not permit much time for reflection (Brophy & Good, 1974; Clark & Yinger, 1977; Elliott 1977; Jackson 1968; Lortie, 1975; McCay & Marland, 1978; Posner, 1985). Rather than seriously and analytically consider events, teachers must quickly react to unpredictable student-behaviors and immediately adjust schedules to innumerable interruptions in school routines.

It also is suggested that reflective activities conducted within the context of the schools are powerless against the institutional and societal force of those schools on participants (Halperin, 1976; Hoy & Rees, 1977). Studies indicate that many teachers conform to school pressures and constraints. (Richards, 1985). Field-based experiences may serve "merely to socialize prospective teachers into established patterns of school practice" (Zeichner, 1981-82, p. 2).

Other researchers interested in stages of teachers' development say that it is natural for student teachers to be preoccupied with self and self-concerns. Developmentally, student teachers may not be ready to learn how to reflect upon experiences or question existing routines until later on in their professional lives (Fuller, 1969; Fuller& Bown, 1975;

Fuller, Pilgrim & Freland, 1967; Katz, 1972).

However, some researchers believe that when prospective teachers are encouraged in some way to address their thoughts and feelings about classroom experiences, they gradually develop more altruistic pedagogical concerns. They become less preoccupied with self and more directed toward helping students learn (Erdman, 1985; Fuller, 1969; Zeichner, 1981-82). In fact, tentative evidence suggests that novice teachers may move through specific stages of conceptual concerns which can be documented according to which concerns are dominant at a particular time. More importantly, the process of reflecting about teaching activities actually may help expedite prospective teachers' concerns from self to students (Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Goodman, 1985; Zeichner, 1981-82).

The idea of reflection for education majors certainly is not new. As far back as 1904 John Dewey cautioned that without reflective inquiry field experiences might arrest or distort prospective teachers' professional growth. And, over the years, a multitude of reports have echoed Dewey's views (Association of Teacher Educators, 1973; Flowers, 1948).

Recently, reflective activities more emphatically have been called for

from a group of educators who believe that "just placing students into classrooms does not provide a meaningful educational experience" (Goodman, 1985, p. 7). There also is little doubt that, if asked, most practitioners currently in charge of education majors would say that they want their students to be reflective about their work (Zeichner, 1981-82).

Yet several studies show that rather than include reflection on the agenda, universities conservatively tend to emphasize how things are done to the exclusion of why (Hoy & Rees, 1977; Lacey, 1977; Tabachnick et al., 1980). In fact, prospective teachers often are evaluated not on their abilities and motivation to become more actively involved with students' learning, but primarily on their abilities to keep students quiet and on task (Fox, Grant, Popkewitz, Romberg, Tabachnick & Wehlage, 1976; Gibson, 1976; Iannaccone, 1963; Tabachnick et al., 1980).

Perhaps teacher educators who are accustomed to direct, didactic instructional strategies are hesitant to employ more elusive dialogical methods. After all, human interaction cannot be preplanned or articulated in advance (Diamonti, 1977). Or, teacher educators may not know how to initiate and guide prospective teachers' reflections. Descriptions of reflective dimensions in early placement programs are somewhat vague.

For example, researchers say that seminars, partnership teaching, miniethnographic studies and journal keeping engender reflection (Fuller, 1969; Goodman, 1985; Zeichner & Teitelbaum, 1982). However, explicit directions for conducting these activities are not provided. More importantly, analyses of "the meanings constructed by preservice teachers about their experiences are lacking" (Erdman, 1983, p. 31). There are a paucity of data which specifically document and examine changes in prospective teachers' concerns. Therefore, teacher educators have little measurement criteria of the educative worth of reflection. They may be averse to include an activity of little known value to an already overcrowded student teaching schedule.

In an effort to provide some definitive information the present study was conducted.

Method

The participants in the early field placement were twelve elementary education majors enrolled in reading/language arts courses which were taught in an inner-city school. Class activities (e.g., lectures and demonstration lessons) were conducted at the school two mornings a week. Dialogue journaling was chosen as the primary mode of reflection.

Recent research on journal writing supports the value of journals as a vehicle for reflective thinking (Erdman, 1983; Flower & Hayes, 1980; Yinger & Clark, 1981). The journals were not graded in order to encourage the prospective teachers to write freely and without constraints their thoughts and perceptions concerning their experiences.

Each week two university supervisors in charge of the field program read and then wrote feedback comments in the prospective teachers journals. The comments varied according to what the supervisors intuitively perceived might promote and encourage reflections (i.e., to inspire, remind, praise, suggest, support, explain, question)(e.g., "They'll like that. Keep up the good work.", "Great! Was this your vocabulary lesson?", "I know. I'm sorry. You'll get another chance.", "What do you mean, horrible?", "What was it about this classroom that you liked so much?", "Why?") (Appendix A).

Analysis of Data

The twelve journals were carefully reread at the end of the semester. Consistent with qualitative methods, no preconceived hypothesis was formed about the content. Four categories or levels of reflective concerns were tentatively identified after the first journal was read. The reflective

categorical statements were coded (1-4). A 'Constant Comparative" method of analysis was then used to review the remaining journals. With this method, findings from further investigations are compared to initially identifed categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1975; Goodman, 1985). Through "Constant Comparisons" four consistent categories or levels of reflective concerns emerged.

Most of the statements written at the very beginning of the semester reflected concerns with self and self-adequacies (e.g., "Somehow I am afraid. I feel very vulnerable.", "I am nervous about the whole thing.", "I am getting more tense. Last night I woke up every hour on the hour.") (Appendix B). Most of the statements written immediately after the first few weeks of the semester reflected concerns with self and self-satisfaction (e.g., "I really enjoyed myself today. This made me feel good.", "I hope my lessons go this easily when I get my job.", "The whole thing is so exciting to me.") (Appendix C). Most of the statements written nearer mid-semester continued to reflect preoccupation with self-concerns and blamed others for events not going well. (e.g., "My experiences have been filled with disgust. My first grade class is horrible. They are like monsters.", "It's very hard to work with all these kids at once.", "There

were a couple of kids who would not shut up. I am not used to this type of discipline problem.") (Appendix D). Most of the statements written near the semester's end reflected concerns for students and for the teaching profession. (e.g., "Every child has creative potential. The main thing is to meet one's students with respect for their humanness.", "It was my fault they did not understand.", "Teachers must be very special people.", "Either go into the field with dedication or don't go into it at all.") (Appendix E).

Discussion

The results of the study suggest that dialogue journal experiences as a component of early field placement can document and may possibly promote prospective teachers reflections. The reflective statements gathered within the dialogue journal inquiry model lend support to the idea of a developmental conceptualization of teachers' concerns (Fuller, 1969). That is, four levels of concerns were identified which gradually changed over the semester from self to students.

The idea that prospective teachers in field placements may move through specific developmental stages of reflective concerns is consistent with fundamental human behavior and reactions to events (Erickson, 1956; Maslow, 1968). It is natural for human beings who are confronted with

new situations to feel threatened and apprehensive about self-adequacies. "Safety needs are prepotent over growth needs" (Maslow, 1968, p. 49). As people become more familiar with their environment, they feel relieved and somewhat euphoric at having faced and partially conquered the unknown. Still, apprehension lingers which encourages introspection and egocentrism (Dow, 1979). As newness and excitement wear off, social reality becomes clearer. Yet self-doubts and vulnerability remain. And, events which go wrong are felt as assaults on self. Finally, when earlier concerns are resolved, human beings emerge from the experience less vulnerable, more secure, and capable of assuming mature perspectives.

The findings suggest that teacher educators may need to become more sensitive to the subtle yet perhaps powerful force of concerns which are manifested when prospective teachers are initiated into classrooms. Dominant stages of developmental concerns may determine what and how prospective teachers learn about their profession.

More research which examines prospective teachers' reflections needs to be conducted. Will other groups of prospective teachers in early field placements move through similar stages of developmental concerns as those identified in the present study? Will the subjects in the present

study regress to earlier stages of concerns when they are in the student teaching experience? To what extent do university supervisors personalities, journal comments, and beliefs about reflective activities promote or constrain prospective teachers' reflections? Questions such as these need to be answered. However, there is little doubt that heretofore the technical/managerial side of teaching has been overemphasized. It is time to reconsider Dewey's conceptions of the reflective nature of learning and of teaching.

REFERENCES

Association of Teacher Educators. (1973). Guidelines for clinical experience in teacher education. Washington, D.C.: Association of Teacher Educators.

Brophy, J. & Good, T. (1974). Teacher-student relationships: Causes and consequences. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Clark, C., & Yinger, R. (1977). Research on teacher thinking. Curriculum Inquiry, 7, 279-304.

Dewey, J. (1904). The relation of theory to practice in education. In The relation of theory to practice in the education of teachers (Third Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I, pp. 9-30). Bloomington, Il: Public School Publishing Co.

Diamonti, M. (1977). Student teacher supervision: A reappraisal. Educational Forum, 41, 477-487.

Dow, G. (1979). Learning to teach: Teaching to learn. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Elliott, J. (1976-77). Developing hypotheses about classrooms from teachers' personal constructs. Interchange, 7, 1-22.

Erdman, J. (1983). Assessing the purposes of early field placement programs. Journal of Teacher Education, 34, 27-31.

Erickson, E. (1956). The problem of ego identity Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 4, 56-121.

Flowers, J. (1948). School and community laboratory experiences in teacher education. American Association of Teachers Colleges.

Flower, L., & Hayes, J. (March, 1980). A cognitive process theory of writing. Paper presented at the Conference of College Composition and Communication.

Fox, T., Grant, C., Popkewitz, T., Romberg, T., Tabachnick, B., & Wehlage, G. (1976). The C. M. T. I. Impact Study. Technical Reports Nos. 1-21. Madison, Wis: USOE/Teacher Corps.

Fuller, F. (1969). Concerns of teachers: A developmental conceptualization. American Educational Research Journal, 6, 207-226.

Fuller, F., & Bown, O. (1975). Becoming a teacher. In K. Ryan (Ed.). Teacher education (The seventy-fourth NSSE yearbook). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fuller, F., Pilgrim, G., & Freland, A. (1967). Intensive individualization of teacher preparation. In R. Taylor (Ed.). Mental hygiene and teacher education (The forty-seventh A.S.T. yearbook). Cedar Falls, IA: A.S.T.

Gibson, R. (1976). The effect of school practice: The development of student perspectives. British Journal of Teacher Education, 2, 241-250.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1975). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. Chicago: Aldine.

Goodman, J. (Nov.-Dec., 1985). What students learn from early field experiences: A case study and critical analysis. Journal of Teacher Education, 42-48.

Halperin, M. (1976). First grade teacher goals and children's developing perception of school. Journal of Educational Psychology, 68, 636-648.

Hoy, W., & Rees, W. (1977). The bureaucratic socialization of student teachers. Journal of Teacher Education, 28, 23-26.

Iannaccone, L. (1963). Student teaching: A transitional stage in the making of a teacher. Theory into Practice, 2, 73-80.

Jackson, P. (1968). Life in classrooms. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Katz, L. (1974). Issues and problems in teacher education. In B. Spodek (Ed.). Teacher education: Of the teacher, by the teacher, for the child. Washington, D.D.: NAEYC.

Korthagen, F. (Sept.-Oct., 1985). Reflective teaching and preservice teacher education in the Netherlands. Journal of Teacher Education, 11-15.

Lacey, C. (1977). The socialization of teachers. London: Methuen.

Lortie, D. (1975). School teacher. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Maslow, A. (1968). Toward a pyschology of being. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

McCay, D., & Marland, P. (1978). Thought processes of teachers. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto.

Posner, G. (1985). Field experience: A guide to reflective teaching. New York: Longman.

Richards, J. C. (1985). Theoretical orientation and first and third grade teachers' reading instruction. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

Tabachnick, B., Popkewitz, T., and Zeichner, K. (1979-80). Teacher education and the professional perspectives of student teachers. Interchange, 10, 12-29.

Van Manen, M. (1977). Linking ways of knowing with ways of being practical. Curriculum Inquiry, 205-228.

Yinger, R., & Clark, C. (1981). Reflective journal writing: Theory and practice (IRT Occasional Paper No. 50). East Lansing, MI: Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University.

Zeichner, K. (1981-82). Reflective teaching and field-based experience in teacher education. Interchange, 12, 1-22.

Zeichner, K., & Teitelbaum, K. (1982). Personalized and inquiry-oriented teacher education. Journal of Education for Teaching, 8, 95-117.

Appendix A
Examples of Supervisors Comments

1. "Being the first day, she was probably just a bit confused."
2. "Yes, I spoke with her."
3. "Good! Good choice!"
4. "And, we need people like **you**!"
5. "Great! Was this your vocabulary lesson?"
6. "Their own definition could be added to the printed one."
7. "Also -- give them the opportunity to use these reference materials appropriately. Direct experience will help them remember what these words mean."
8. "I felt the same way in my demonstration lessons."
9. "Such as? Yet, what?"
10. "I saw you smiling."
11. "Great!"
12. "I know. I'm sorry. You'll get another chance."
13. "Perhaps all of you paid more attention to teaching than to lectures?"
14. "I wouldn't do this -- let them write when you aren't."
15. "Not only possible, but **wonderful**."
16. "What was it about this classroom that you liked so much?"
17. "Practice enough and you get used to it."
18. "Isn't it great to be able to write all of this in your journals?"
19. "Sounds like he's had problems."
20. "But don't give rewards all of the time -- they'll work harder when they never know if a reward is coming or not."
21. "Do it another way. Have kids write and then discuss their writing."
22. "I wonder why? What are your opinions?"
23. "I hope you will try the suggestions I shared with you for behavior of the first graders. And, don't hesitate to talk to the teacher."
24. "Oh, gosh!"
25. "But, we don't know all the facts. Define horrible!"

Appendix B

Examples of Statements Reflecting Concern with Self and Self-Adequacies

1. "How do I act, talk, dress, present myself?"
2. "I think my sweat measured a gallon."
3. "I was so nervous!"
4. "I felt very vulnerable."
5. "Is it possible to work in situations like this and not get involved?"
6. "Somehow, I am afraid."
7. "I am getting a bit nervous. I don't know if I could teach lower grades in an inner city school. They seem to have far less control than suburban students."
8. "Last night I woke up every hour on the hour. The question now is, 'What am I going to do?'."
9. "I'm wondering if I'm really prepared for tomorrow."
10. "I was so nervous."
11. "I started to panic."
12. "I am afraid."
13. "How or what are we supposed to teach them? They are all non-verbal!"
14. "I'm probably more nervous than they are."
15. "I was a nervous wreck!"
16. "I was really upset."
17. "I am a bit afraid. After the first week I will feel much better."
18. "I felt intimidated because I didn't know how to handle them."
19. "I don't know what to do with them."
20. "I was literally afraid, excited, apprehensive, nervous . . . most of all anxious."
21. "I am nervous about the whole thing. I don't know what to expect."
22. "I am getting more tense. They look at me and expect so much and I don't know what to do. I feel we were thrown into this situation without knowing what was expected of us."
23. "For the most part I'm scared of the neighborhood."
24. "I've been a nervous wreck all weekend worrying about what I was going to do and would they like it."
25. "I just keep thinking of all the lesson plans due and I get really nervous. I am still not really sure exactly what I must do."

Appendix C

Examples of Statements Reflecting Concern with Self and Self-Satisfaction

1. "I've learned so much in just one day."
2. "I was really impressed with the school in general."
3. "I love my first grade class."
4. "I did have a success."
5. "Boy, was I surprised . . . it is a normal looking building including the people."
6. "The whole thing is so exciting to me."
7. "This made me feel good."
8. "Mrs. Y had the cutest bulletin board!"
9. "I really enjoyed myself."
10. "I hope my lessons go this easily when I get my job!"
11. "I really enjoyed myself today. For the most part I had a successful week. Everyone sat in their seats and raised their hands during my lessons."
12. "This really made me feel good. Today went great, which was unbelievable!"
13. "I ended up feeling very comfortable with the situation."
14. "I thoroughly enjoyed myself today."
15. "I'm looking forward to getting started."
16. "I was very pleased."
17. "They are so cute!"
18. "I don't know if this class is an exception or not, but I loved it!"
19. "Why don't more professors give their students this type of opportunity for communication?"
20. "I sincerely hope that the rest of the semester is just like today was."
21. "I was really impressed with the school in general. This changed my opinion about what is involved."
22. "I didn't expect them to be able to read flash cards!"
23. "Boy, did this make me feel good!"
24. "Now I'm ready for Wednesday."
25. "The kids are great -- much better than I expected."

Appendix D

Examples of Statements Reflecting Concern with Self and Blaming Others

1. "My experiences have been filled with disgust."
2. "The first grade class is horrible. They are like little monsters."
3. "Half of them tried to do what they wanted. So far my sixth grade experience has been zero."
4. "Well, well, well .... This was rougher than I anticipated. Their attention spans were so short."
5. "I don't know. It seems as though the teacher is not able to teach too much."
6. "One child spelled 'pretty' as 'perry'. And I had to isolate one boy."
7. "I thought that it couldn't be that bad, but boy was I wrong."
8. "My day started off pretty good because two of my first graders were absent -- two of the many who give me trouble."
9. "I know why Mrs. V. volunteered for this project. She needs the break to keep her sanity. These kids should be in the E. D. class."
10. "There is this little boy that causes me trouble."
11. "Only three are good and want to learn. The other six are horrible."
12. "There were a couple of kids who would not shut up. I thought it was wrong of the teacher to leave us with all of those kids."
13. "The pre-school class was a mess. The teaching assistant just threw all the kids at us."
14. "It was like pulling teeth to get them involved and to get anything out of them."
15. "All of my five kids' writing is pitiful for that age and grade level."
16. "It is obviously a product of poor upbringing."
17. "I am not used to this type of discipline problem."
18. "I don't think BEV should be permitted in schools. In my classroom improper usage of 'be' would not be allowed."
19. "They get no consistent discipline at home so how can it carry over to the school atmosphere."
20. "These kids do not know that I do not enjoy teaching them."
21. "They are very hard to control at times."
22. "Call the paramedics. I had a horrible day."
23. "Perhaps they haven't realized how important what they are being taught is."
24. "The children can be horrible at times."
25. "I couldn't get them to shut up."