Theater as Representation (TAR) in the Teaching of Teacher and Administrator Preparation Programs

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ABSTRACT: Theater as representation (TAR) has been used in pre-service and in-service teacher and administrator preparation programs since 1998. This paper places TAR within a pedagogical arena that further solidifies its place as an instrument for leadership professional development in B.Ed., M.Ed., and in-service programs.

Maxine Greene (1995) challenges us to seek the use of imagination within our pre-service teacher preparation programs.

… It is difficult for me to teach educational history or philosophy to teachers-to-be without engaging them in the domain of imagination and metaphor. How else are they to make meaning out of the discrepant things they learn? How else are they to see themselves as practitioners, working to choose, working to teach in an often indecipherable world? (p. 99)

The use of imagination and metaphor are foundational infrastructure girders in teaching pedagogy. But more often than not, our pre and in service teachers and administrators have seen their imagination and understanding of metaphor in creative adventures somewhat stifled (if not put into stasis) with their secondary school and undergraduate educational experiences. The field of educational administrator preparation is going in different directions in a number of provincial and state jurisdictions. Clearly with many politically and fiscally conservative minded governments coming to power, much of the current legislation has skewed the field to what seems to be a more right-wing, rules-based approach to school governance.

For many Masters students, the degree itself is more of a means towards a financial scale upgrade or job requirement more than for true professional development. For pre-service teachers, a surface knowledge of such administrative tasks as classroom management, negligence liability, reporting responsibilities and due process in student academic and behavioral assessment(s) have become virtually obligatory.

There are a variety of teaching mediums employed in both pre-service (teacher preparation) and graduate educational administrative programs. (Here in Nova Scotia, Canada, a first cycle Bachelor's degree is required before a pre-service candidate enters the two-year Bachelor of Education, B. Ed., licensing program). Along with prototypical classes and lectures, such

experiential learning as student teaching practicum, case studies, in-basket exercises, role-playing, leadership games, and simulations are also used in the learning experience.

The use of such classroom experiential learning experiences as role-playing (either alone in contrived simulations) certainly has more human interaction in its live participatory format than typical solely teacher directed class lectures. Students in the latter respond as they assume an expected response to a situation by applying what they understand the involved situation (schools and administrations) may or may not require. But they do so within a confined array of conventional or suspected conclusions compelled by the confines of the format. The challenge of participating in a simulation is that it requires its participants to be creative on-their-feet, to perform or to improvise within a pre-determined set of variables. In many of my classes over the years, both at the secondary and pre-service levels, I have seen many students hesitant to participate in role-play situations. They may feel embarrassed or inadequate in their interpretation of the factors (actions and content) of the simulation. In other words, the focus is not on what is to be learned by participating, but on the angst of participation.

This paper explains an additional use of drama as an experiential learning experience for pre-service teachers and masters students in educational administration. By using dramatic scenarios inspired by research findings within a scripted dramatic piece, students can affectively, experientially, and cognitively engage in the exploration of chosen issues within the safety of a hand held non-memorized script. This technique is Theater as Representation or TAR (Meyer, 1998, 2001a, 2001b; Meyer, & Macmillan, 2003) which has been used successfully in different learning settings.

Goals of this Paper

In this paper, the TAR theory will be explained more in a theoretical context than in a how-to-create-the-scenario-itself context. (For scenario creation protocols, interested readers should see Meyer, 1998 or Meyer & Macmillan, 2003). The theory itself is established on two primary foundations and a third supporting one. The first is specific artistic drama, Theater and production practices as passed down through centuries of performance practice along with concepts espoused by such theorists as Beckerman (1970), Bolton (1979), Brecht (1948/1964), and Warren (2002) to name a few.

The second foundational view comes from a fusion of social constructivist learning theories (Fosnot, 1996), Goleman's (1995) notion of emotional intelligence, and Hutchins' (1995) thoughts of cognition. When TAR is used as a teaching tool, all students have the opportunity to take on character roles in the piece (either as actors or readers) and to be audience members. Each TAR incorporates in it fundamental aspects of administrative and organizational theory (e.g., sources and uses of power, micro-politics) fleshed out through the use of research and through analysis of extensive interviews with in-service practitioners. Because the TAR piece is also grounded in interview data, dialogue is based on real phraseology and pacing that helps to create the sense of verisimilitude necessary to immerse both actors and audience into the scenario. This would be supported to some degree by McCammon, Norris, and Miller (1998) where, "the goal of most teacher education preparation programs is the development of reflective teachers who can examine and re-examine their knowledge, beliefs and values about teaching

and learning" (p. 1). The interview data used in a TAR scenario instigates honest reflection for participants.

The third supporting concepts come from a fusion of educational leadership and power drama (Theater) power relationship ideas. The former is mostly influenced by Hodgkinson's theories of value leadership (1983, 1991), ethics in leadership (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001), and current theories in transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Sergiovanni, 1990), and Leithwood's (1999) ideas on de-centralizing, and the design of future schools. The latter is formulated on ideas of Brecht's alienation theory (1964/1974), Boal's political Theater concepts, and to a lesser degree some drama education theory on performance (Boal, 1985), group creation and structures (O'Neill &Lambert, 1982; Jackson, 1993) and drama group dynamics and story telling (Booth, 1994; Neelands & Goode, 2000).

This paper will also present two scenarios. Each scenario has been derived from interview data derived from direct observation and or from interviews with either teachers or administrators. The final section will present some conclusions.

TAR vs. the Drama-like Experiential Learning Protocols

Unlike case study (Kowalski, 1995) or simulation-role play (Maier, Solem, & Maier, 1975), or leadership games (Kaagan, 1999), TAR allows participants, in a readers' Theater format, to assume a role without the need to improvise. This gives the dialogue a sense of presence and immediacy which flat text cannot convey. Once immersed in the role, students are provided with a perspective which may be very similar from the one they will experience as a student teacher or practitioner allowing them to lay bare their own assumptions about and understanding of teaching or administration. As audience, participants are presented with a three-dimensional exposition of theories and contexts that cannot be easily duplicated by text or simulation. Along with the overt administration issues that arise in discussion, other more covert issues such as those of race, gender, leadership modeling and corporate (school-board) decision-making and their effect on political power brokering within a public school board also come to light.

Drama and Theater Foundations

Theater as Representation uses dramatic imagined acts as driving organic forces of reality in a presentational medium of live representation. For TAR to succeed as a research and or a teaching methodology, it must clearly and successfully manipulate both drama and Theater techniques to a high degree of performance execution. There have been many definitions of drama and Theater over the years – all valid to some degree regardless of their inception dates.

Bernard Beckerman's (1970) definitions are somewhat cutting:
Theater occurs when one or more human beings isolated in time and space present themselves to another or others. (p. 9)
Drama occurs when one or more human beings isolated in time and space present themselves in imagined acts to another or others. (p. 20)
According to Beckerman, drama is a sub-form of Theater. In a Theater presentation, the participants and viewers must be isolated from each other in some fashion. The function of each

and every person present in a theatrical performance is inherently defined. The phrase in imagined acts rest within the drama definition. I interpret this to mean that an imagined act is the contrived act to make a concept realistic S in other words to make believe. A Theater act is the spectacle itself and does not require a script or rehearsal. A child having a temper tantrum is a theatrical act; an actor in a role contemplating suicide, is presenting an imagined act within a theatrical context because the audience realizes that the actor is not actually committing the suicide act but interpreting the dramatic act of suicide. Theater and drama, in Beckerman's view is contextually laden S the former in actual daily life, the latter in fabricated daily life.

David Booth (2003) views Theater and drama much more closely.
The field of Theater encompasses such variety: children playing in a sand box, students in the school musical, young people who have entered a university drama program, students exploring a script in the classroom…Drama is an ubiquitous force in our present world, an everyday and everywhere occurrence, as evidenced by the dramatic performances we view and listen to….Drama has become our principal means of expressing and interpreting the world as we explore and communicate ideas and information, social behaviors, values, feelings, and attitudes… (p. 18).
Many artists and non-artists use these terms interchangeably. For a TAR definitional parameter, I fuse the two together using the Theater pre-name as the lead one. For me, Theater conjures a more structured contrived piece of art than drama. In a TAR scenario the line between real and imagined is somewhat translucent. There is no separation between actor and audience because the goal of the TAR scenario is to provoke in both a cognitive non-static sphere of analysis as opposed to the more static separation between actor and audience. In a TAR exercise all participants are simultaneously both observers and active participants giving a TAR scenario diverse perspectives. "Drama is a social art form that demands taking multiple perspectives' (Norris, McCammon & Miller, 2000, p. xix). Eric Bentley (1964) would probably take this further:
Events are not dramatic in themselves. Drama requires the eye of the beholder to see drama in something that is both to perceive elements of conflict and to respond emotionally to these elements of conflict. This emotional response consists in being thrilled, in being struck with wonder at the conflict. Even conflict is not dramatic in itself. Should we all perish in a nuclear war, there will continue to be conflict S in the realm of physics and chemistry. That is not a drama, but a process. If drama is a thing one sees, there has to be one to see. Drama is human (p. 4) [emphasis in the original].
Perception becomes the catalyst for the viewer to formulate responses on individual psychological, intellectual and professional levels. "The conflict" is not confined to a confrontation of ideas, however; it should also be placed in a temporal context. Quoting Langer, Gavin Bolton (1979) states that time never stands still. It either looks backward or forward in the theatrical context. "It is this sense of time, that does not rest in the present but is continually looking backwards and forwards that carries a tension of commitments and consequences"(p. 76).

Human responses occur almost simultaneously while viewing a theatrical piece. The human visual, spoken and aural experience of live theatre intrinsically places the viewer into the persona of an adjudicator without putting him or herself at risk. The use of theatre, either in the observer role or in the more active participant role, can aid in the praxis evolution in educational

administration.

Human responses occur almost simultaneously while viewing a theatrical piece. TAR is similar to the Bertold Brecht (1948/1964) theory of alienation. His a-theory exists in light of his social justice belief that Theater and drama practices could and should be used as a vehicle for bringing about social change. He also believed that Theater practitioners (actors) in varying degrees should ignite a participatory distance between what is portrayed (characterization) and what is perceived (content). This is liberally interpreted for TAR's benefit because a TAR participant is not a professional actor but an educational practitioner and does not require an onstage persona. In a-theory the actor and, or, participant must:

… in order to unearth society's laws of motion, this method treats social situations as processes, and traces out their inconsistencies. It regards nothing as existing except insofar as it changes, in other words in disharmony with itself. This also goes for human feelings, opinions and attitudes through which at any time the form of men's lives together finds its expression. (p. 193)

The participant here should be able to "unearth" society's foundations (in most current TAR scenarios- this would be schooling, leadership, pedagogy, and decision making) and simultaneously feel, to some degree, the character's actual angst. This is accomplished by the participator's dual roles of observer and participant in a non-judgmental (of acting talent) capacity. This simultaneity parameter can provide the participant to further explore emotional and, perhaps, professional attitudinal decision making protocol possibilities that could assist in the sculpting of future and existing leadership and pedagogical behaviors.

We participate and observe drama presentations every day of our lives (Goffman, 1959). The designed or programmed ones are those we experience through the media: television, cinema, live Theater and the like. The non-programmed ones are those in our daily life at home, the workplace or at other locales. This is an important aspect of Theater as representation. Part of its raison d'être is for the observer to be empathetic with the aesthetic Theater experience itself. A familiarity with such presentational formats is critical for the success of this application. Whether conscious or unconscious, viewers inherently use judgmental and intellectual protocols. These create a sense of security of sorts, to sit and pass judgment on the presentation without fear of personal reprisal or loss of face before another viewer, peer or superior. Whether or not the viewer is so moved to make a true change in his or her personal belief (in view of the content of the presentation) is not open to scrutiny by anyone other than him/herself.

This freedom to form a self-designed impression is critical to the change process because it creates within the viewer this sense of empowerment. Participation in the TAR artistic experience without being critically judged as an actor permits the participant to consciously assume the portrayed role of a change agent within the world of the TAR scenario. The participant's character is the character being judged not the participant. Here, the participant can intellectually be both judge and jury on the moral, ethical and decision-making parameters or aspects of the portrayed character within a specific scenario without any actual real-life retribution.

Knowledge, Theater and Drama Practices as Communication

Not to belabor the point, drama and Theater practices have (consciously or unconsciously) been employed as communicative devices since the beginning of human existence. Whether it be parents communicating to their children through singing and storytelling, a traveler requesting directions using a mélange of verbal and sign languages, or a leader grimacing to his or her subordinates, idea transfer between humans is not only commonplace S it is a natural human phenomenon.

As communication rituals became more standardized with some such practices evolving into entertainment media, an inherent distinction between informal communication rituals use for the common person and formal usage in the entertainment and spiritual (in the sense of shamans to priests) came about. As a formal teaching device, the acquisition of knowledge resulted from a structuring of daily life relevance between a person and all those around and an interaction from both human and physical natures, "my knowledge of everyday life is structured in terms of relevances" (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 45). Goffman (1959) in discussing teams and team work alludes to the likelihood that all team members even though they are individuals must work together within a tight community for such a relationship to be successful (p. 82). How does this affect the student or observer of a dramatic piece in the field of education? How can a TAR approach foster insights for the student into both visualizing and empathetically bonding with the characters of a factually based scenario?

The simultaneity of the participation of the artistic experience with the analysis of the experience permits this experience-fusion to stimulate workable solutions that are initiated by the scenario's characters. In effect, creativity (on the part of the participant and/or observer) becomes an emotion catalyst for conflict resolution for the participant/observer. The experience itself has its own sense of aesthetic as well as emotional attachment to the scenario and to real life (Dewey, 1934, pp. 41-43). By this exploit, the act of creativity becomes twofold.
The act of innovation is both cognitive and emotional. Coming up with a creative insight is a cognitive act- but realising its value, nurturing it, and following through calls on emotional competencies such as self-confidence, initiative, persistence, and the ability to persuade. (Golman, 1998, p. 100)
This trait becomes an important determinant for future teachers and educational leaders because they must learn to modulate their emotions to become effective leaders (Cherniss, 1998). Clearly emotional intelligence is a factor in good leadership. A TAR approach fosters this attribute by the fusion of participatory experience, the surrealistic creative, emotional considerations in a non-competitive, non-self disparaging situation.

Csikzentmihlyi (1996) defines creativity as, "any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one…a creative person is: someone whose thoughts or actions change a domain, or establish a new domain" (p. 28). He goes on to say that "knowledge mediated by symbols is extrasomatic; it is not transmitted through the chemical codes inscribed in our chromosomes, but must be intentionally passed on and learned" (p. 37). Knowledge and the creative act, it would seem, must be triggered. If we believe this, then the learning process (from an education acquisition perspective) must be pathologically homeostatic in the sense of logic, knowledge, spontaneity and creativity. Here knowledge

acquisition (within the context of the school community) takes on a sociological parameter and is defined for our present purpose as "any and every set of ideas and acts accepted by one or another social group or society of people-ideas and acts pertaining to what they accept as real for them and for others" (McCarthy, 1996, p. 23).

Constructivism

Within this societal environment, we turn to a constructivist design to further focus a TAR application.

In the constructivist model, environment has two quite distinct meanings. On the one hand, when we speak of ourselves, environment refers to the totality of permanent objects and their relations that we have abstracted from the flow of our experience. On the other, whenever we focus our attention on a particular item, environment refers to the surroundings of the item we have isolated, and we tend to forget that both the item and its surroundings are parts of our own experiential field, not an observer-independent objective world. (Von Glasersfeld, 1996, p. 3)

One of the key aspects here is a fusion between the environment (however described or identified) with the contents of elements found or evolved from within that environment. Within the TAR construct this is a critical parameter because the participants of a TAR scenario are surrealistically involved in a setting that is designed to purposely provoke reaction. It invokes the participants to take a stand (morally or politically) on the ramifications of what is both seen (within the objects of the environment) and its possible ramifications with other internal-related or external-related environments, agencies, or constituencies. The learning of the participant requires them to make decisions that cannot be teacher mandated. Every query must be explored into where (in a somewhat surreptitious, clandestine and surrealistic manner) the participant imagines a possible endpoint. Continuously and simultaneously participants must reflect on the real and perceived connections between the actual world of their professional reality and the assumed reality of the scenario. In both mind and spirit, participants have one foot in each world.

In many cases, where participants are both working practitioners, pre-service or graduate students, they must dialog the concerns of the scenario to bring to light this duality. Discourse becomes an ongoing deconstruction and reconstruction of possibilities and interpretations using the surrealism of the scenario as its focal point. Learning becomes both an individual and communal phenomenon within the classroom: all participants are teachers and learners.

In administrator preparation programs, the deconstruction and reconstruction of possibilities and interpretations focus specifically on the problems and issues that are generic to the principalship. Through TAR scenarios, we can expand problem solving and situation analysis to highlight specific aspects that students and others need to grasp. I have found that the data from participants' reactions to various TAR scenarios leads us to define that the participants' zone of understanding expands multi-dimensionally within the self-reflection during the live participation or observation. The falls into a Vygotsky like (1978) direction or interpretation of knowledge and awareness development. This follows to some degree Wertsch's (1990) "socio-cultural" concept where he looks at Vygotsky's approach to how the "human mental functioning reflects and constitutes its historical, institutional, and cultural setting" (p. 115). Liberally applied

here, a TAR participant's functioning attempts to take into account the reality of schools and their community while reflecting on the substance and emotions represented by the scenario's characters and content. This could be expanded further if we adapt Moll and Greenberg's (1990) ideas of students creating "knowledge zones" based on their accumulated life, or in this case professional knowledge, with their direct experience and analysis of a TAR scenario. Clearly the experience of participation, either as a passive observer or an active reader or participant in a TAR scenario, expands his or her knowledge by creating an internalized network of how-would-I-act-or-react-in-a-similar-situation? It can also create theoretical pro-active or re-active actions, reactions, and directions within with a social network of sorts of both people and institutional (other than their own) examples and possibilities for scenario problem and content question resolution.

 Two Original TAR Scenarios

Scenario 1- *The Practice* ©

This scenario, *The Practice*, was used as the first discussion vehicle in conjunction with a detailed study of the Province of Nova Scotia (Canada) Education Act (1995) in particular those specific sections that concern student and teacher responsibilities. This scenario has been used primarily in pre-service education law modules in conjunction with two of our required B.Ed. courses: Principles and Practices; and History and Philosophy of Education. This scenario is based on an actual event in an urban Canadian secondary school. The author had first and second accounts conversation data from many of the actual participants of the event. They have been fictionalized in this scenario. The content and storyline are contrived but follow the actual history of the event to a very large extent. The scenario has been used in conjunction with its follow-up scenario, The Incident © (Meyer, 2001b). The Practice focuses on the conflict and its fallout between the male coach and the members of the senior girl's basketball team of an urban secondary school. There are many questions and issues that concern morality, professionalism and mutual respect that arise from this scenario. Students either in small discussion groups or in a large forum discuss them after the scenario has been presented in class. The class discussions began with the open question by the professor, "what just happened here?"

CHARACTERS: *The girls basketball team:*
Adrienne, Jill, Bes, Martha, Jill, Karen, Miffy
Coach Mark Jackson
SCENE: *It is the final practice of the Senior Girl's Basketball team late in the afternoon just before the final tournament of the season. It is after a break. All the team members are female. They consider themselves as "high over-achievers" The coach is teacher Mark Jackson, a veteran teacher and coach for many years. Please note the reference to "Jappy" refers to the slang expression "Jewish American princess."*

JILL: *We don't need this practice.*

ADRIENNE: *You can say that again. He nailed us last week with that lame "beat the press" drill. Shit. Why don't we just cancel this practice, we are all just too busy.*

BES: *Fat chance.*

MARTHA: *Regardless - we demanded to be in this tournament and the school has arranged all types if schedule changes S the play rehearsals, some due dates for papers...*

JILL: *OK, OK Let's just get it over with; we all have a million things to do.*

MARTHA: *Fine. I missed Banggor's class yesterday.... does anyone have the notes?*

KAREN: *(to Adrienne) Yeah, we know. We also know that this practice is not going to be cancelled. That's not going to happen. So let's just deal with it. That tournament is this weekend. Every little bit might help.*

ADRIENNE: *Come off it, you need the practice. I do not.*

KAREN: *What is that supposed to mean?*

ADRIENNE: *Exactly that, Karen- you are the weakest member of the team. You have 2 left feet and you can't dribble worth shit. We're here to support you.*

MIFFY: *Come off it Adrienne, If I recall, you have not been shooting anything close to 50% for weeks. At least Karen hasn't been giving Coach any crap. If you're so pissed off, then quit and stop with the "Jappy" attitude, it's giving us all a bad name...*

JILL: *(to Martha) Not again (to Miffy and Adrienne) Can you guys just stop. Give it a rest. We're sick of hearing you go at each other...*

MARTHA: *...all the bloody time...*

ADIRENNE: *(ignoring Jill and Martha – focuses on Miffy) Don't get so high and mighty with me bitch. I can play you under the table any time, anywhere. Talking about losing time and not being with it, if you weren't screwing Bobby every hour on the hour, maybe your game would improve a bit.*

MIFFY: *Who the fuck do you think you are? My game is on and, furthermore, Miss "I'm the greatest thing since sliced bread" at least I'm getting some. I hear you've been dry for months since David dropped you.*

ADRIENNE: *You slut (lunges at Miffy; a fight begins, other players try to break it up)*

KAREN: *(pulling off Miffy who is besting Adrienne; Bes pulls away Adrienne) Enough. You guys want to get suspended! The Coach would do anything to cancel this trip. Grow up. Fighting will get you off the team.*

ADRIENNE: *(screaming at Miffy) Just stay away from me slut. That goes for all of you. Without me you'd all be no-where.*

(The group all stares at Adrienne- no one speaks- Adrienne realizes what she has said and

attempts to apologize.)

ADRIENNE: *Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean that…really, I didn't. I'm sorry Miffy, I just lost it. I've just had it up to here and… (Coach enters)*

COACH MARK: *OK girls, Let's get going. Bes, start the pattern drill … (no one moves) …Girls, I said "move!" (They begin to move towards the center of the gym)*

ADRIENNE: *Coach, I really don't want to practice this stupid drill any more. We know it cold.*

COACH: *I disagree with you, Adrienne; you do not. And we play our first game against Cliffordville. They will cream us unless we get our defense up.*

ADRIENNE: *Oh, come off it coach, we won this tournament last year…*

COACH: *No, Adrienne. We barely squeaked through the round robin last year. Cliffordville was the team that beat us and we have lost to them twice this year already. Now if you don't want to practice today, don't bother getting on the bus on tomorrow after school when we leave. Understood?*

ADRIENNE: *That's not fair. I'm work 300%. How dare you talk to me that way?*

(Everyone stops and stares)

COACH: *I do not agree. You haven't been working, co-operating, or contributing. You have hogged the ball all practice and, not just this one but all season, your shooting has been abysmal and, you don't pass the ball. Frankly, and I've told you this many times before, your heart is not in this team.*

ADRIENNE: *How dare you say that? Give me one example of how I haven't contributed?*

COACH: *Adrienne, We have no time for this. Now get to practice.*

ADRIENNE: *No, I want an example.*

COACH: *Adrienne, we don't have time for that. Now, (to everyone) can we please finish off this practice?*

ADRIENNE: *No. We are not going to finish off this practice until you give me an answer.*

MIFFY: *(aside to Adrienne) Adrienne, stop it, you're pushing him.*

ADRIENNE: *Bullshit, Coach, I'm waiting for an answer.*

COACH: *I am not going to respond to you. (to the team) Now let's start drill pattern Omega.*

ADRIENNE: *I'm not doing this stupid, lame drill.*

COACH: *Adrienne, you're benched for the remainder of the practice.*

ADRIENNE: *You can't do that.*

COACH: *Yes, I can.*

ADRIENNE: *How dare you? Who do you think you are?*

COACH: *(after a few moments and staring her down) ... You know the rules: if you're not going to work, you sit.*

ADRIENNE: *(screaming at Coach) Well, if I sit, we all sit.*

COACH: *What is that supposed to mean?*

ADRIENNE: *Well if YOU bench me, the team walks.*

COACH: *(to the team) Is this true? (no one responds). Then you have decided. Fine, The tournament's off, and so is the team, I'm withdrawing the team from the conference. Leave your uniforms in the gym office. (he turns away and begins to walk out)*

ADRIENNE: *You have some God damned nerve, you can't just drop the team, who the hell do you think you are?*

COACH: *(exasperated) The coach, "little Miss bitch."*

ADRIENNE: *Well this "little Miss bitch" is pissed off, Coach Asshole- I'm going to nail you with the Principal.*

MIFFY: *Stop!*

KAREN: *Please, both of you - this is out of hand!*

BES: *Adrienne, Chill! Sir, please I'm sure Adrienne didn't mean what she said.*

KAREN: *Sir, please... I'm sure you didn't mean to call her a "bitch" We really do want to go to...*

ADRIENNE: *Listen, he called me a bitch, (turns towards Coach) and my parents are going to get you fired Coach Asshole and that's that.*

COACH: *Just because you are a spoiled "Jappy" bitch who can manipulate your friends and parents, does not equate to manipulating me. Now, all of you - the team is finished, the season is ended and leave your uniforms in the office. I will inform the Principal (End of scene).*

Scenario 2- Interdepartmental Warfare ©
This scene is designed for graduate level educational administration courses such as Foundations of Educational Administration; and, or, Educational Change. The scenario is based on research taken from a series of detailed open-ended interviews with six different Nova Scotia senior school board administrators and seven junior and senior school principals from three different Nova Scotia School Boards. This research was funded by a St. Francis Xavier University Research Grant in 2000. The purpose of the research was to obtain how in- service front line school administrators defined the obstacles that challenged the success or lack of success of the execution of their individual responsibilities. They were also asked to describe actual events they had each experienced. Each interview was about 1.25 hours long.

Of the many themes that evolved from the data, two genres, so to speak, arose from the people interaction area – the genres of school culture and personnel conflict were very present. When interwoven, three themes surged forward: (1) the necessities for clear communication between all school constituencies, (2) teacher to teacher conflicts, and (3) their resolution. From the contextual area three areas of concern were constant: (1) educational change, (2) inclusionary practices1, and (3) the constant expanding government intervention in terms of curriculum and student achievement. In searching for a story line for class use within the graduate level educational administration domain, I recalled the many times I found myself, as a secondary school department head, in curricular and administrative conflict with my department head counterparts. I searched through the data to capture glimpses of such conflicts. The occurrence of inter-department wars emerged many times. The discussion questions that have arisen after the reading of this scenario centered on leadership, consultation, and personnel conflict resolution.

SCENE: The Mideastern Secondary School Conference Room. It is the weekly Department Head Meeting. It's 3:30 in the afternoon. Everyone is tired, angry and expecting a very volatile meeting. There is general grumbling and small talk. In 3 distinct groups sitting around the conference table are:

Patricia Sampson, Principal
Gerard Lennon, Vice Principal
Virginia Catalina, Guidance and Student Services Department Head

Kent Hopping, the Math Department Head
Gillian Pauper, the English Language Arts Department Head
Dorothy Brescia, the Science Department Head

Geoff Isling, the Fine Arts Department Head
François Côte, the Second Language Department Head
John Bolton, the Phys Ed. Department Head

PATRICIA: *OK Ladies and Gentlemen, let's get this started. Outside from the usual items that we will deal with later on, the major item for discussion is the provincial rankings that you have all seen. Needless to say we do not look well. I'll ask our vice- principal to begin the discussion.*

GERARD: *Before some of you scream, "I told you so," let me bring to your attention that we did*

not do as poorly in the grade 12 rankings.

KENT: *Oh come on, Gerard, the grade 12's have been a stellar class since grade 9. There is no comparison...*

GERARD: *Kent, let me continue, please...*

KENT: Sorry…

GERARD: *As I was saying, regardless, no one buys the fact that low rankings are ever anything but due to bad teaching.*

GILLIAN: *One moment here, the fact that when we went to semestering2and lost contact time, consistency time and cutback in resources can not have this disaster blamed on us.*

GEOFF: *Maybe our outcomes are not as high as our objectives.*

KENT: *I believe it is the other way around, but then again you artsy types have never understood that.*

VIRGINIA: *Oh, here we go again.*

PATRICIA: *Can we just stop the bickering for at least 5 minutes? We can sit here and list many, many, probable causes, all legitimate. In truth however, we will all take the fall, as we always do and be given threats and ultimatums from parents and the school board to get the rankings up. The issue is what will be our plan to counter the allegation that we have failed the students?*

VIRGINIA: *Regardless of what we say or do, we will be considered as useless and responsible anyway. So, we should just take it up front and publicly state that – we are responsible we know that things will change.*

GERARD: *That's kind of obvious, isn't it?*

FRANÇOIS: *Maybe. In the end the rankings really do not mean that much anyway. The students' individual marks are considerably higher anyway.*

KENT: *They may be true for a handful of students. When the transcripts go out for university entry, or when they take the S.A.T.S. they students will probably do no better than they did on the rankings exams. Let's face it, we can not cover this up.*

VIRGINIA: *Kent is correct. If we have a weak class in math and language arts, it's generally consistent throughout their tenure in the school. The parents and the Board know this. They are going to demand some changes, especially the parents of the students most affected.*

GEOFF: *(To FRANÇOIS) Here it comes.*

GILLIAN: *We know what has to be done. We must re-configure the timetable for next year. We need, no demand, more contact time.*

KENT: *Smaller classes and additional sections for math as well. This present disaster has been a direct result of our alterations to the timetable over the past four or five years. As nice as it may be to offer mediocre drama, music and visual arts courses, they are expensive and take up too much time within the timetable.*

GEOFF: *Oh, come off it Kent...*

JOHN: *May I say something here, please?*

PATRICIA: *Of course John.*

JOHN: *Five years ago, every student in this school took a minimum of two, closer to three periods of Physical education per week...*

DOROTHY: *... Not the poor jock tale again...*

JOHN: *No, Dorothy. It is not "the poor jock" tale. It is the overweight, lethargic, complacent student body tale. No - let me finish please. I always put up with you guys' bilge every meeting. You can give me the courtesy of listening to mine...*

GILLIAN: *Oh come on John, we've heard this woe month after month. It is not an issue. If you offered lunchtime and after school intramurals, the students would have their dose of jumping around and playing joe-jock!*

GERARD: *Gillian, please, allow John to finish before you spit bullets at him.*

JOHN: *Once again for the sake of world peace, I'll ignore your rude and useless remarks.*

GILLIAN: *OOOH, a big word, useless- kind of like your curriculum.*

KENT: *(towards Gillian) very good, Gillian.*

JOHN: *(making a real effort to control his emotions) Big words or not, curriculum-worth aside, every time we have expanded the general academic programs, academic or elective, we have seen the physical education program take the fall to make room in the time table. Less than one half of our student population takes any type of physical education past grade 10. The Ministry of Education does not require it first of all, and our school board's graduation requirements are higher than the Provinces minimum. The students have almost no choice not to select phys. Ed. And by the way almighty Miss Intellectual (towards Gillian), On a split lunch period where the students are crowded into a small cafeteria and have less than forty minutes to eat along with half the school population being bussed does not permit any kind of intramural program.*

VIRGINIA: *I'm impressed John, I didn't realize you were so analytical for an athlete.*

FRANÇOIS: *(exasperated) That's it! This meeting is a waste of my time if you three (gesture towards Kent, Gillian, Virginia) can not be respectful to your colleagues you are more infantile than the grade 9's. And, by the way, Miss Science-Know- It-All, John has a Masters degree in human biology and has published several excellent articles in....*

PATRICIA: *Stop, all of you. If you can not be civil, this discussion will end now and, under my jurisdiction as Principal, Gerard and I will make all decisions without consultation with any of you. Am I clear?*

(Silence and a felt tension in room)

PATRICIA: *Unless you can contribute in a professional manner an idea that is logical, I do not want to hear your voice. (Pause) Good, Virginia please relate the contents of your fact sheet to us.*

VIRGINIA: *(very cautiously) The rankings indicate several interesting things. In Grade 10 we have 3 levels of Language arts and math courses. The Foundations courses ranked actually high to mid range. The Academic levels were low to mid range. The General courses were slightly below mid-range. If you take the pragmatic approach, we only have to raise the rankings 10-15% and we would be back in the above mid-average range. We may not have to take such drastic actions as altering the time-table.*

KENT: *Yes we do have three levels of courses. However, the academic level encompasses almost two thirds of our student body. The negative implication is much more severe. We have six sections in each course offering. Out of 400 grade 10 students, slightly under 300 are in academic. These are all university bound. Their parents are going to hit the roof.*

VIRGINIA: *We cannot forget that most of these students are and will be taking lab science courses as well as advanced lab courses required for university entry. They need more math skills. The grade 10 program is a the critical program in terms of preparation for Grade 11 Chemistry, Physics and the grade 12 advanced science courses. If they are doing poorly in grade 10, they will struggle in Grades 11 and 12.*

GILLIAN: *Perhaps we should give more exams at mid term for example.*

GEOFF: *Two additional exam timeframes will take up over two weeks of class time. That will be counterproductive. It would also interfere with any school concerts or Theater productions that we normally schedule just around those times.*

JOHN: *How would that be affected?*

GEOFF: *Every exam period requires review times, pre-tests, extra-help sessions after school, study days, study nights. We lose many students from rehearsals. The lag time is very bad.*

KENT: *Well what's more important. A dumb play or the student's entry into university?*

GERARD: *Can we keep the value judgments out of the conversation? May I remind you all that such artistic activities have great learning value to its participants, provide a fantastic public relations extension of the school, and truly add to the school culture.*

VIRGINIA: *They look very good on a student's transcript.*

DOROTHY: *Yes that is true, but in the end it's always academic marks. I think the extra exam times would be very good. But the loss of class time might prove difficult for the end of year completion of the courses. We'd really see a problem getting all the labs in.*

FRANÇOIS: *Well couldn't you folks in English and math cut down the number of tests and use that time in class instead. You both have required almost an assignment a week of some kind. That takes up a lot of time. And clearly it hasn't improved your students' grades.*

KENT: *We don't tell you how to evaluate your courses so don't tell us how to do ours.*

PATRICIA: *There is a point to what François suggests though. Perhaps a realigning of course content, evaluation, and teaching style may be a direction that could be explored.*

KENT: *That would take hours and hours of redesigning lesson plans, test schedules…*

GILLIAN: *Not to mention the creation new assessment rubrics, explaining all this to parents, the Board, and eventually the Ministry of Education…*

GERARD: *Perhaps. The Ministry really wouldn't care so long as their curricular objectives were minimally reached. The parents would view such a move as progressive. And the Board would be happy some kind of short-term action was taken.*

GILLIAN: *What would this …temporary… change really accomplish. We have spent years establishing an excellent curriculum and pedagogy…*

JOHN: *Not according to the rankings…*

KENT: *That is beside the point. We are talking about a tremendous amount of time here. Just give us additional class contact time, that is all we really need.*

PATRICIA: *I am not ready to alter the entire timetable at this point in time. We shall continue to explore this avenue first. Gerard, would you please take this project and direction under wing. Virginia, you will please explore any timetable possibilities for the future.*

GILLIAN: *Patricia, this is very radical.…*

PATRICIA: *Maybe? Maybe not? However, we shall start here. Now, onto the next item on the agenda……*

End of scene.

What Just Happened

In both TAR scenarios there are issues of leadership, ethics, pedagogy, micro-politics and decision making among others. They are contextual in terms of their actual settings within a school environment. Due to their actual (truth-like) settings, participants can formulate, using their own imagination, fairly accurate characterizations. This individuality permits a large degree of contrived interpretation of the characters in the somewhat controlled environment of the B.Ed. or M.Ed. class. It is in this environment that the instructor can facilitate discussions among the participants on these issues. Participants, depending on their own interpretations, can re-direct some of the dialog to see possible attitudinal changes in interpretation. In many applications, I have seen participants after discussion on an issue of the TAR scenario, revisit a specific scenario section and re-interpret a character(s) with different vocal or contextual rendering.

This expanded version, in its now re-worked inflection, spurs on additional storyline possibilities for the issues themselves. Not only to the participants' analytical skills expand and sharpen, their personal interpretative skills and leadership potential also have expanded. This occurs due to the justification element that participant must employ to warrant the character's new stance on a particular issue. These discussions always have led to very lengthy "what if…" debates on possible alterations to the scenario's plots. It is also in these usually very heated class discussions that possible alternative decision-making protocols and resolutions of the issues come to light. In turn, these are then experimented with and debated. Clearly, from a pedagogical parameter, the use of a TAR scenario expands the understanding of its stated issue(s) and their ramifications for its participants.

Toward a Convergence of Theory, Practice and Knowledge

Tom Barone (1991/2000) furthers the thought of expanding the creative energies in our pedagogical and curricular designs. In a discussion on Norman Mailer, Barone suggests two "signposts on the road to pedagogical maturity" to clarify dimensional two constructs:
The first…When we arrange the learning environment and select the activities in which we recommend that students engage, we are not performing a merely technical exercise. The humanities, the arts, the sciences…none of these areas of study are comprised of value-neutral content or thinking skills to be acquired by students in a moral vacuum…the second…pay attention to history. (p. 67)
Much of our teaching in educational administration is theoretical, abstract and prescriptive. The dissemination of data, legislation, guidelines and the like tend to be rushed, massive and many times somewhat oblique in terms of their use. Barone suggests here that content is not "value-neutral" and that the choices that will be made by teachers will always have ethical ramifications to all its involved constituents. History is also a great teacher in itself. Using TAR scenarios, based or inspired by actual events bring a reality to the teaching pedagogy. This, by its nature as a piece of art, forces a value or moral stand on the part of the participant and or viewer. It fits the constructivist pedagogical framework discussed earlier because the onus of the learning experience falls more squarely on the learner than the instructor. In effect the TAR scenario is

what Latta (2001) would refer to as "aesthetic play" (p. 100). In the classrooms of pre-service teachers and pre-service administrators, we (professors) must make sense of their present world and their eventual teaching or administrative environments by having them interface with a collection of literary non-fictional characters in believable situations that confront any pre-supposed perceptions of value and moral challenges. Their participatory experience evokes a new level of emotional response and transforms it into a new relationship (Dewey, 1934, p.79) of the event (or data) and themselves. This participatory experience fuses with content knowledge and creates a surreal reality for the student.

Eisner's words come to mind here: "….representation must give way to the primacy of experience. In the end, it is the qualities we experience that provide the content through which meaning is secured" (Eisner, 1988, p. 16). With the convergence of experience, theory, practice and knowledge come together within a TAR scenario application. Both the student and the instructor deconstruct the work to re-construct both value and moral endgames. These endgames, the consequences of data results, ad hoc surveys or simple discussions, fuse art with reality and force an emotional, perhaps pedagogical, learning dilemma for the pre-service and graduate students to resolve within a praxis orientation. Here, perhaps, the TAR scenario, "evokes sensibilities that are otherwise masked" (Edelman, 1995, p. 53) from other genres because the student participants become more than linear two-dimensional thinkers, they become a corporeal voyeurs with a moral prerogative.

NOTES

1. The Nova Scotia Education Act and subsequent legislation state that public education classes (K-12) will consist of all students, regardless of any individual student's learning or behavioral challenges.
2. Semestering, in this context, is a two semester academic school year: September-December and January to May. Each semester is scheduled for five courses in 90 minute blocks.

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