The Hermeneutics of Teaching and Lesson Conferencing

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Student teachers on field experience may sometimes be bemused by the kind of lesson feedback they receive from school mentors and supervisors, especially when it seems to miss the target of their real concerns, or when mentors and supervisors provide conflicting advice. This paper argues that both teaching and lesson conferencing should be viewed as essentially hermeneutic. Hermeneutic theory, particularly as found in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, provides student teachers, mentors and supervisors with a framework, for observing teaching and discussing lessons when lesson conferencing. It views conferencing as a mutually beneficial professional conversation that enhances the professional development of all who participate, the student teacher, mentor and supervisor.

Introduction

This paper is premised on the view that learning to teach is primarily a practical activity, informed by theoretical reflection. Also, that field experience should be the core component of initial teacher education programs, and all other components should be planned and conducted in relation to that core. [1] This contrasts with the priority given to learning established

educational theory in the theory-into-practice model that dominated teacher education for much of the twentieth century, but which came under increasing criticism in the 1990s (Carr, 1995; Kemmis, 1995; Wilkin & Sankey, 1994). The theory-into-practice model assumes that:

- established educational theory is largely unproblematic;
- student teachers need to be well grounded in theory before they are able to teach;
- the main purpose of teaching when on field experience is to provide student teachers with classroom experience where they *apply established theory* in tackling the problems they encounter in the classroom.

This paper, in the way it conceptualises teaching, theoretical reflection, and the conduct of lesson conferencing, is largely in conflict with each of these assumptions. It therefore agrees with Wong Wan-chi's (1998) assessment that the "idea of applying theory into practice may be a totally misplaced notion" (p. 110). The main aim of the paper, however, is not to address these three assumptions directly, but instead to sketch out an alternative theoretical and conceptual base for understanding classroom teaching and lesson conferencing, cut free from those assumptions. It will argue that teaching is essentially a hermeneutical activity, and that the supervision, mentoring and assessment of the teaching component of teacher education programs should be conducted within a hermeneutical, conceptual paradigm.

The paper will begin by briefly outlining and discussing some essential features of that paradigm, as represented in the work of one of its most distinguished advocates, Hans-Georg Gadamer. These features will then be mapped onto the practice of teaching and learning, and, more specifically, the teaching component of teacher education programs. [2] Developing this hermeneutic model will set a framework in which post-lesson conferencing is viewed as a professional conversation, where all participants are engaged in enhancing their professional development. This should help to clarify the nature and purpose of the field experience component of teacher education, including the roles of those involved. It should also go some way towards resolving the tension that exists for supervisors on many teacher education

courses, between the need to support student teachers when undertaking their teaching practice, while at the same time acting as their examiner.

Hermeneutics and the Prejudice Against Prejudice

The death of Hans-Georg Gadamer in March 2002, at the age of 102, marked the end of a distinguished career that only really began when he was sixty years old. The publication, in 1960, of his book *Truth and Method* brought philosophical hermeneutics to a wide audience. It was closely in tune with the post-modern spirit of the time, in undermining objectivist notions of "knowledge" and "understanding" that had predominated since the onset of the scientific revolution in the seventeenth century and on through the Enlightenment. Hermeneutics has its origins with such intellectual giants as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and the concerns raised by the interpretation of ancient texts, particularly Biblical texts. Gadamer's account of hermeneutic theory takes it beyond the confines of textual interpretation to embrace all forms of knowing and understanding, in all areas of inquiry. [3]

One of his central insights was that all acts of reasoning and knowing involve prejudice and pre-judgement, and, as Richard Bernstein explains, this is indeed a very radical thesis:

> If Gadamer is right in claiming that not only understanding but all knowing "inevitably involves some prejudice" then it is difficult to imagine a more radical critique of Cartesianism, as well as the Enlightenment conception of human knowledge. For in these traditions there are sharp dichotomies between reason and prejudice, or between knowledge and prejudice. (Bernstein, 1983, p. 128)

Gadamer is striking at the very heart of the Enlightenment project and its conception of science. [4] Since the onset of modern science, we have been taught that if we are to gain knowledge and understanding we must *bracket-out* and overcome all prejudice and preconception, so

as to become detached, impartial and "objective" in judgement. Gadamer claims that far from being inhibitions to knowledge and understanding, as the Enlightenment project supposed, prejudice and prejudgement are an inevitable and potentially productive part of it. There are two ideas here. First, the idea that we cannot completely escape our preconceptions and prejudices, except at the point of death. Second, the idea that a distinction needs to be drawn between *blind prejudice* and what we might call *enabling prejudice*, and it is the latter that is productive.

This point leads Gadamer to further question the Enlightenment conception of knowledge, for, when asked how one can make the distinction between blind and enabling prejudices, he re-invokes notions of *authority* and *tradition* that had been discredited by the Enlightenment (Gadamer, 1995, p. 277). He argues that one encounters enabling prejudice when entering into dialogue with tradition, and accepting authority that is properly grounded in knowledge and understanding. In the seventeenth century, when science was striving to establish itself against the domination and authority of the Aristotelian tradition, the call to systematically eliminate prejudice and to reject all tradition and all authority may have been reasonable, but Gadamer argues that this was actually a prejudice against prejudice. [5] Instead, we should recognise that all reason necessarily functions within traditions. Though traditions may become a dead weight from the past, living traditions are the very opposite in that they are dynamic, productive, and always in the process of becoming. Moreover, while authority can be an instrument of domination and power in the hands of tyrants, when it is properly anchored in knowledge and understanding, and not in persons in positions of power, it becomes both enabling and liberating. As Gadamer notes: "This is the essence of the authority claimed by the teacher, the superior, the expert" (Gadamer, 1995, p. 280).

We may now begin to see how some of this might map onto teaching. Teachers quite clearly operate within traditions of inquiry that inform their practice— their subject traditions, for example, and established notions of "good practice", involving generally agreed strategies, norms and values.

Teachers also act as authorities in regard to their expertise, their knowledge, understanding, and skills, and it is this expertise, and not their personal status as teachers, which should ultimately ground their authority. They also bring their own prejudices to their practice; prejudices that may sometimes be blind, but, at best, are enabling. So, as teachers, perhaps we constantly need to monitor our prejudices, so far as we possibly can. And so forth.

The Concepts of Understanding, Interpretation and Application

Gadamer's notions of prejudice, tradition, and authority are directly related to a second strand of his thought, his interpretation of "interpretation". The word hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word for interpretation ἑρμηνεια — hermenia. So, perhaps we can say that hermeneutics is the study of "interpretative theory". Arguably, Gadamer's main insight is that hermeneutics is at the heart of all inquiry — not only within the human sciences but also the natural sciences. [6] He therefore opposes the notion that *method* is the defining characteristic of human rationality. Instead, whatever methods the human and natural sciences may adopt in gathering information, and these historically have been many and varied, *all forms of human rationality and inquiry are essentially hermeneutic*; for all are engaged in processes of interpretation, understanding and application.

Gadamer places the notion of understanding at the heart of his account of hermeneutics. Traditionally, within hermeneutic theory, interpretation, understanding, and application had been considered as distinct and independent entities, but Gadamer argues that they are all moments in the single process of *understanding*. "Interpretation is not an occasional post facto supplement to understanding; rather understanding is always interpretation, and hence interpretation is the explicit form of understanding" (Gadamer, 1995, p. 307). This is totally contrary to the Enlightenment view that there can be "objective understanding", freed from all prejudices and not con-

taminated by interpretation. Gadamer insists that our prejudices, prejudgements, our relationship to authority, and our being situated within traditions, are all part of the process of interpretation and coming to understand, and cannot be bracketed out. It is only by embracing them that we will understand that which we seek to understand. This idea comes close to Thomas Kuhn's (1970) notion that science always and inevitably operates within paradigms. These paradigms, "research programs" (Lakatos, 1970), "research traditions" (Laudan, 1977) are harbingers of prejudice, prejudgement and authority, but they also provide the necessary theoretical framework within which the participant observer is situated in her/his quest for deeper understanding.

Understanding is therefore not just one activity among others; rather it underlies all other human activities and is strongly implicated in the creation of meaning. "Meaning is always *coming into being* through the 'happening' of understanding" (Bernstein, 1983, p. 139). Understanding, Gadamer argues, constitutes the very mode of our being in the world. In that sense, we are what we understand. Moreover, language is the medium of all understanding and all tradition. It should not be viewed simply as a tool of communication; rather it is the medium in which we live. Authentic understanding, therefore, cannot be detached from the interpreter for it is rooted in his or her very being, and is manifested in what he or she does, in practice. "In Gadamer's eyes, theory is… a kind of human practice. Any genuine human practice is at the same time an expression of theory" (Wong, 1998, p. 108). So, on this account, there can be no radical divide between understanding (theory) and application (practice). [7] What we do is always and inevitably a combination of theoretical reflection and action.

The point of this for teacher education is that when mentoring student teachers, we need to recognise that prejudice, preconception, and what Michael Polanyi (1966) called "tacit knowledge" is already embedded in the student teacher's practice when they undertake their teaching practice in schools; they could not begin to practice without it. One of the shortcomings of the theory-into-practice model is that it tended to view student teachers

as devoid of theory. By emphasising the learning of established theory, it overlooked the prejudice, prejudgement and tacit theory the student teacher relies on, if only to survive. One key aim of lesson conferencing should therefore be to make it explicit and open to analysis.

The Fusion of Horizons and the Hermeneutical Circle

We come to our practice, and attempt to understand it, from our own particular vantage-point, with our many preconceptions and biases, our present understandings, knowledge and skills. That is our horizon. "The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (Gadamer, 1995, p. 302). Like all horizons, it is both limited but also changing and fluid. "In fact the horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices" (p. 306). In the process of trying to understand we become aware of those prejudices that blind us to the meaning and truth of what we are trying to understand, and those that enable us to understand. By sifting our prejudices, and engaging with the object of understanding, we begin to forge what Gadamer calls a *fusion of horizons*, between our horizon and the object of understanding, or, when engaging with other persons, between our horizon and theirs.

Though Gadamer is not using the concept of fusing horizons in the context of teacher education, but in relation to historical understanding, his point seems directly applicable. He is concerned to combat the idea that in trying to understand something of the past we can somehow escape our own situation and empathetically jump into that of another time. Similarly, we cannot escape the limitations of our own horizon and simply stand, empathetically, in the shoes of another, though we may try. "This is the reason why understanding is always more than merely re-creating someone else's meaning" (Gadamer, 1995, p. 375). It is not empathy that is needed, even if it were possible, but a meeting point that takes each participant to a higher level of understanding, where each individual horizon is enriched

and enlarged by the other. As Gadamer notes:

> Transposing ourselves consists neither in the empathy for one individual for
> another nor in subordinating another person to our own standards; rather, it
> always involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own
> particularity but also that of the other (p. 305).

Furthermore:

> The person with understanding does not know and judge as one who stands
> apart and unaffected; but rather, as one united by a specific bond with the other,
> he thinks with the other and undergoes the situation with him (Gadamer, 1975,
> p. 288).

I will return to this again later, because I believe it has a particular
bearing on how we should view the relationship between supervisor, mentor,
and student teacher when in school on teaching practice. But first we need
to say something about the concept of the hermeneutical circle. There is a
kind of circular, to and fro, movement of thought between the parts and the
whole that we are seeking to understand. One finds this same idea in Ge-
stalt psychology, and in the work of Michael Polanyi, in relation to under-
standing in science. In teacher education one sees this in the process of
post-lesson conferencing, where the focus of debate will continually shift
between particular moments in the lesson and the lesson as a whole.

The hermeneutical circle of understanding is one in which interpreta-
tion is constantly played off against alternative interpretations in the proc-
ess of deepening understanding. Of course, from the point of view of those
who require hard data as the touchstone of truth, this will seem like a vi-
cious circle in which we simply trade off interpretations without any chance
of reaching the truth. To assume that, however, is to assume that all inter-
pretations carry the same weight, but this relativist conclusion should be
strongly resisted. There is no touchstone of truth, no one true account of an
observed lesson, for example, but there are differences in the quality of
interpretations and in their truth content. Some interpretations are concep-

tually richer, better informed, more intellectually rigorous, more elegant, less contrived and thus more able to aid understanding and yield greater truth. And it is against the background of established tradition and authority that these differences of quality, and differences in truth content, will inevitably be hammered out in the process of hermeneutical conversation.

The Hermeneutics of the Classroom

Though I am all too aware of barely scratching the surface of Gadamer's thought, I have, I hope, represented a number of his key themes in ways consistent with his own thinking. Along the way, I have given some indication of how his ideas may relate to education, but I now want to map them more directly onto the classroom and student teachers' teaching practice when on field experience.

Learning to teach is frequently conceived in terms of learning appropriate teaching methods. At least, teaching methodology is thought to be a considerable part of it, and there is some merit in this claim. One reason a lesson may fail is because the methods employed are not appropriate ways to achieve the object of learning — the main foci of learning for that lesson. But an obsession with method can become a blinding rather than an enabling prejudice, when, for example, it is believed that there is one correct and legitimate method to teach a particular subject, or when it is decreed that there is one correct way to plan a lesson. The extent to which this can become a blinding prejudice was clear to Joseph Dunne, a teacher educator in Ireland, when the behavioural objectives model became fashionable in the early 1970s.

> My difficulties with the behavioural objectives model concerned not just its emphasis on behaviour but more fundamentally the concept of objective from which this emphasis derived. Written into the concept of an objective was the requirement that the latter's achievement should be verifiable — that unequivocal evidence should be available to establish it; and confining objectives to observable behaviour ensured that this requirement could be met. The verification

being insisted on was of a kind that could be carried out by a detached observer who could not be assumed to have any familiarity with the teacher's situation or background. The language in which objectives were to be formulated was to be precise and explicit and thus *able to preclude the possibility for misinterpretation by removing the need for interpretation itself.* (Dunne, 1993, p. 3. Italics added)

Dunne is identifying the kind of method, and the very attitude to method that Gadamer so opposed. Here is a classroom constrained by the rigidity of its own "objective" methodology to the point that it removes the need for interpretation, in order to avoid misinterpretation.

By way of stark contrast we can consider the hermeneutics of the classroom along broadly similar lines to those identified by Shaun Gallagher (1992, pp. 34–39). He describes how the teacher has a certain body of knowledge that she wishes to convey to her students. That subject knowledge, however, has to undergo a process of reinterpretation, for she cannot teach it to the students at the level that she knows it herself. Moreover, she may also be using a textbook, which is also providing an interpretation of the subject matter, perhaps somewhat different from the teacher's own interpretation. She seeks a mediation of interpretations — a fusion of her immediate horizon with that of the textbook and what she judges to be the possible horizons of her intended students. In doing so, in the dialectic of question and answer as she engages with these other horizons, her own horizon is enriched and enlarged.

Her reinterpretation of her subject content is then put to the students in the classroom, who, in turn, seek an interpretation of the reinterpreted knowledge put to them. In part, their ability to understand this content will depend on their previous exposure to the same subject, or similar ideas garnered from other subjects. In part, it will also depend on students "guessing" what the teacher wants them to learn, and how she wants them to interpret the subject matter. There is a constant movement of parts to wholes, pupils to pupils, to teacher, to subject matter. As a result of engaging in this hermeneutic circle, each pupil will hopefully forge new understandings by

engaging dialectically with the new content. Each student will inevitably come to his or her own understanding, informed by different previous experience and present understandings. The sharing of a common language, however, will place a limit of individual differences in understanding. These understandings enrich and change each pupil's horizon, but understanding is never complete, the hermeneutical circle never collapses. Something of that process, I believe, is going on in every classroom where genuine learning is occurring.

The Problem of Supervising Field Experience

In contrast to the behavioural objectives model, which wanted to remove all traces of interpretation from our observation and understanding of classroom practice, a hermeneutical perspective on education puts it centre-stage. "Educational experience is always hermeneutical experience. Put another way, learning always involves interpretation" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 39). This is no less the case in teacher education, when attempting to understand and evaluate the teaching practice of student teachers when on field experience.

There is a view, allied to the "theory-into-practice" model of teacher education, that the main purpose of field experience is to provide student teachers with the opportunity to apply their knowledge of theory to their classroom practice. Correspondingly, the role of the supervisor, from the teacher education institution that taught them the theory, is to provide an objective judgement of how well the theory was applied. The theory may be pedagogical, psychological, sociological, subject-methodological, and so forth. Typically, in Hong Kong and elsewhere, the supervisor would arrive a short while before the lesson and would view the intended lesson plan. Special attention would be given to the stated objectives of the lesson and the methods to be employed. The supervisor would then sit at the back of the classroom to carefully observe the lesson, and when it ended would give her or his considered assessment. There may or may not be an opportunity

for the student teacher to comment on his or her own assessment of how the lesson went. In any event, the supervisor would provide written comments on whether the objectives were achieved and whether the methods employed were carried out efficiently, and would then grade the lesson before scampering off to see the next student.

If this description comes anywhere near the experience of student teachers, then I suggest there are many problems. The main problem is with the way that teaching practice and supervision are being conceptualised, especially in regard to theory, as we will shortly note. Another is that supervisors are often expected to play a supporting role beside their role as assessor, and that can be difficult. One reason for the difficulty stems from the authority vested in the judgement of the supervisor as the "expert" in the situation. However friendly and supportive he or she may be, the student teacher is fully aware the supervisor has the power to decree a "pass" or a "fail". And it is not a level playing field for all, as some supervisors are known to be tougher than others. And the reasons behind the judgements they make are not always transparent, and often they are not negotiated, and they come with all the power vested in the supervisor's person and position. And the theories and the methods that are to be applied to practice do not always seem to work, but cannot be contested. So the student teachers blame themselves. And all the time, they may be trying to cope with the stress caused by pupils' behaviour they cannot seem to control.

The Hermeneutics of Teacher Education

I am not claiming that what I have just described is typical, but neither is it fantasy. Elements of it will be familiar to many student teachers. I am, however, claiming that things need not be like this if we recognise the hermeneutics of teaching practice. This perspective will change the way we view education theory, just as it changes the way we view practice. Theory is interpretation — not fact, as it is often portrayed in teacher education courses, and theory can be wrong. Indeed, if we follow the advice of Karl Popper, our proper role should be to *try to falsify* it and not to verify it in

practice, as the theory-into-practice model seems to require. [8] Recognising the hermeneutics of teaching practice also undermines any objectivist assumptions that may be informing the role of the supervisor, in handing down non-negotiated judgements. In fact, the whole scenario will be recast into one that is primarily concerned with the hermeneutics of practice — its interpretation, understanding and application — such that even troublesome behaviour by pupils is viewed as part of the hermeneutical situation, and not separate from it.
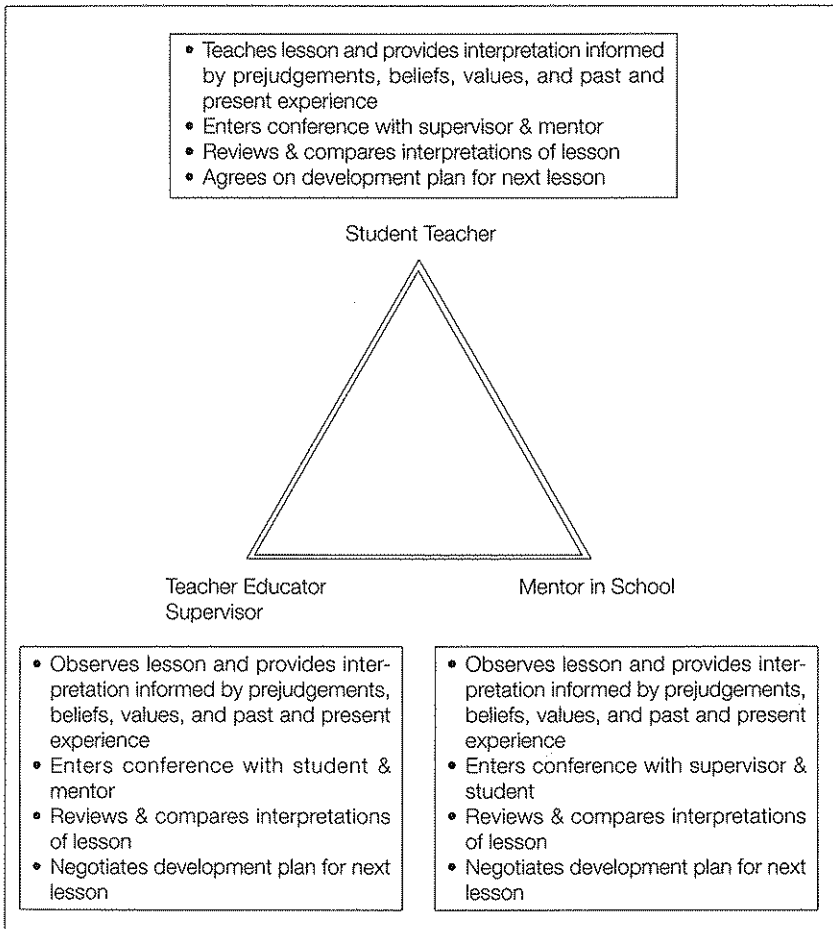
One can clearly sense something of the hermeneutical problem in situations where a student teacher attempts to reconcile her or his own interpretation of acceptable behaviour with that of the regular teacher, supervisor, pupils, and school principal. What may be interpreted as a controlled yet boisterous lesson by one observer may, for another, be interpreted as a classroom out of control. Dealing with the range of interpretations, in all aspect of the teaching practice situation, can be perplexing for student teachers to cope with, unless their hermeneutical character is made clear. Making the hermeneutical context of the professional conversation clear is therefore a necessary first step.

Student teachers should be encouraged to provide their own interpretation of their own practice; indeed the ability to do so is an important hallmark of their professional competence and a crucial aspect of their professional development. They should be helped to appreciate that there can be no one correct interpretation of any given lesson and no one correct way to teach it. At the same time, they should be encouraged to see that, while there is no ultimate touchstone of truth, there are better, more informed, more intellectually rigorous interpretations, and that is what supervisors and mentors are attempting to bring to the analysis of their lessons. Moreover, they should be encouraged to see that the role of supervisor and mentor is to help them improve the quality of their interpretations of their own practice, through engaging in a hermeneutical conversation.

Let us imagine that in every school where student teachers are placed for teaching practice there are able and articulate teachers who have ac-

cepted the role of a mentor. The discussion of any particular lesson can then involve the school mentors, subject or professional studies supervisor, and the student teacher herself — forming a triangle of professional conversation. Figure 1 attempts to show that in process.   This approach accepts that the student teacher, the supervisor and the mentor may not share the same interpretation of the student teacher's lesson. Indeed, it makes a virtue of it, for the differences in interpretation provide the opportunity for discussion.

Figure 1 The Hermeneutical Triangle of Lesson Conferencing — fusing different perceptual and interpretative horizons, where each participant is engaging in professional development

- Teaches lesson and provides interpretation informed by prejudgements, beliefs, values, and past and present experience
- Enters conference with supervisor & mentor
- Reviews & compares interpretations of lesson
- Agrees on development plan for next lesson

Student Teacher

Teacher Educator
Supervisor

Mentor in School

- Observes lesson and provides interpretation informed by prejudgements, beliefs, values, and past and present experience
- Enters conference with student & mentor
- Reviews & compares interpretations of lesson
- Negotiates development plan for next lesson

- Observes lesson and provides interpretation informed by prejudgements, beliefs, values, and past and present experience
- Enters conference with supervisor & student
- Reviews & compares interpretations of lesson
- Negotiates development plan for next lesson

The purpose of the professional conversation will be to understand the lesson in all its complexity. The raising of open questions is the first hermeneutic priority, for unless the questions are open there can be no true conversation and no real understanding. However, the openness of a question is not boundless, it needs focus. The "first condition of the art of conversation is ensuring that the other person is with us" (Gadamer, 1995, p. 367) and we are not talking at cross purposes caused by our different horizons. The focus of the conversation and analysis will move from selected moments in the lesson, its parts, to a consideration of the whole and back again, each time adding to the totality of understanding. No one party will be considered to have the monopoly of truth. The best, most valid and productive assessment of a teaching episode, or of the whole lesson, will be one in which each participant's understandings are raised to a new level, as individual horizons become fused.

The status of the judgements made by the supervisor or mentor, in the hermeneutical conversation resides not in their role nor in their person, but in their expertise, their classroom experience, their understanding of teaching and learning, and their knowledge of education theory that *they* bring to *their* role. It is they, not the student teacher, who should mainly be applying established theory-into-practice, as they help the student teacher reflect more deeply on their lesson. But while acknowledging their expertise, it should always be viewed as in process and developing, just as the levels of expertise brought by the student teacher to the conversation are developing. The realisation that all are engaging in professional development should help participants forge a degree of common understanding. Though the consensus reached may not be complete, as differences remain, the levels of agreement should be sufficient to enable a development plan to be drawn up, for action in subsequent lessons.

Conclusion

I began this paper by expressing the hope that it may go some way

towards clarifying the nature and purpose of field experience, and resolving the tension that may exist for supervisors on many teacher education courses, between the need to support student teachers when on teaching practice, while at the same time acting as their examiner. To take the extreme case, nothing can totally eliminate the pain felt by a student teacher when told that he or she has failed the teaching practice component of his or her teacher education course. Nevertheless, I think it is fair to say that engaging in the kind of practical conversation illustrated above makes a qualitative difference to how the assessment of teaching practice is conducted, how the decision is presented, and hopefully how it is received. For the decision to fail the student teacher is not taken over and above the conversation of support that has been conducted in the lesson conference, but instead arises out of it.

Where there is a genuine hermeneutical conversation, assessment is not handed down from a position of authority; rather it has authority because it is rooted in a shared understanding of what constitutes good teaching. It should be handled with sensitivity for the student teacher's feelings and the difficulties of her situation. We can recall Gadamer's words, cited earlier, in regard to shared understanding and judgement, though this time I will substitute the word *supervisor or mentor* for Gadamer's word "person", and *student teacher* for his "the other".

> The supervisor or mentor with understanding does not know and judge as one who stands apart and unaffected; but rather, as one united by a specific bond with the student teacher, he/she thinks with the student teacher and undergoes the situation with him.

Perhaps those words should stand as part of the job description for supervisors and mentors, but if so, it will encompass what many of the best supervisors and mentors are already doing. The framework provided by hermeneutics is able to accommodate much good practice that already exists. And that is not surprising, for my argument has been that teaching and lesson conferencing is essentially hermeneutical, whether we recognise it as such, or not. In this paper I have tried to begin to tease out the main features

of the hermeneutical model, and show what it might look in practice.

Teaching and lesson conferencing is set within the twin contexts of tradition and authority, and beset with both blind and enabling prejudice. We experience the constant interplay between interpretation, understanding and application, which Gadamer identifies as essentially hermeneutical. We sense the to and fro movement of the hermeneutical circle, the creation of shared meanings and, at least to some degree, the fusing of our different horizons. And though teacher educators may perhaps find it difficult to acknowledge their prejudices, Gadamer would tell us that this is the beginning of wisdom.

Notes

1. That is not to deny the importance of subject studies, but learning the subject within the context of teacher education should bias its focus towards the practice of teaching that subject in the classroom. See, also, Sankey (1996).

2. It is, I believe, at this level of debate that the notion of applying or relating theory to practice is appropriate in education, and not as an exercise for student teachers to attempt when caught up in the demands and perplexities of doing their teaching practice, where their main aim may be simply to survive.

3. Schleiermacher was the first to argue for the general significance of hermeneutics, though he did not develop the idea. Dilthey applied hermeneutics to the study of history and the nature of historical study, and also used it as a way of arguing against positivistic claims advanced for science, that science alone constitutes real knowledge.

4. It is important to note that he is not arguing against science, as such, but against a particular conception of it.

5. "Actually 'prejudice' means a judgement that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined" (Gadamer, 1995, p. 279). However, in the Enlightenment, this implied it is an "unfounded judgement", because the "only thing that gives judgement dignity is its having a basis, a methodological justification (and not the fact that it may actually be correct)" (p. 271).

6. That is how he has been generally understood, though there are strands in his

work that suggest he retained the Enlightenment notion of "scientific method" for the natural sciences and saw hermeneutics as the alternative to method for the human sciences. The national and historical context of Gadamer's argument may contribute to this confusion in his writing. Dilthey had previously demarcated between the sciences and the humanities in order to offset the claims of positivism. However, in German, the word science has a broader meaning than it came to have in English, where it was influenced by British Empiricism. In the nineteenth century, the German Academy used the terms geisteswissenschaften and naturwissenscahften to distinguish between the humanities and the natural sciences, but notice that both are referred to as wissenschaft — science.

7. Gadamer makes this point with reference to differences drawn by Aristotle between the Greek concepts of phronesis (φρονησιζ), episteme (επιστημη) and techne (τεχνη). Phronesis is a kind of practical reasoning, in contrast to the knowledge we may have of scientific laws (episteme) or technical know-how (techne). Understanding, Gadamer believes, is essentially a form of phronesis. The importance of this can be seen in the claim that the concept of understanding as employed in hermeneutics is not the same as, and indeed "is opposed to the narrowly defined, epistemological notion of cognition" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 39).

8. Popper, often considered to be the greatest philosopher of science in the 20th Century, consistently argued that unless a theory is falsifiable it cannot be considered scientific, and that science should systematically attempt to falsify its theories. See, for example, Popper (1972). At a practical level, a theory that appears to work in the classroom may not work for the reasons we suppose, and we may remain unaware that it is false. A theory that appears not to work, however, immediately alerts us to its being problematic.

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教學的詮釋學與課前課後會議

申德澤

摘 要

在教學實習的過程中，教學啟導教師和導師會向實習教師提供回饋和意見。
面對這些回饋和意見，實習教師有時會感到混淆，尤其當他們認為意見搔
不著癢處，或是教學啟導教師和導師各持己見，令他們無所適從。本文作
者認為教學及課前課後會議本質上宜視為一個詮釋過程。詮釋理論，特別
是加達默爾(Hans-Georg Gadamer)的觀點，可為實習教師、教學啟導教師和
導師提供一個框架，指引觀課及課前課後會議的方向，令會談成為彼此都
受益的專業對話，促進參與各方的專業成長。

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