

LANDSCAPES, EDGES, AND
IDENTITY-MAKING

ADVANCES IN RESEARCH ON TEACHING

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ADVANCES IN RESEARCH ON TEACHING VOLUME 33

**LANDSCAPES, EDGES, AND
IDENTITY-MAKING:
NARRATIVE
EXAMINATIONS OF
TEACHER KNOWLEDGE**

**Featuring the scholarship of
C. L. Clarke and D. A. Hutchinson**

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SECTION I

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CHAPTER 1

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES OF THE MUSKEG: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF LANDSCAPE IN SHAPING TEACHER KNOWLEDGE

Elaine Chan and Vicki Ross

ABSTRACT

We introduce this volume featuring the work of C. L. Clarke and D. A. Hutchinson with references to existing literature addressing complexities of teacher knowledge development. Drawing from their metaphor of the muskeg, we write about ways in which notions of teacher knowledge intersect with prior personal and professional experiences across time, place, and social interaction. Clarke and Hutchinson write about ways in which identities that they view as having developed at the edges of their communities have contributed to shaping their sense of professional and personal identity in profound ways. They examine the potential impact of these experiences in: shaping their research and the building of research relationships with their participants using a narrative inquiry approach; and developing ways in which the use of poetic expression and word images enriched their understanding of the development of teacher identity and knowledge and informed their curriculum making. A chapter written by their dissertation supervisor offers further insight into ways in which their use of a narrative inquiry approach shaped their research work and writing, and offered a unique glimpse into their research phenomenon. We position this work in relation to existing research in the area of teacher knowledge and highlight ways in which this work contributes to knowledge in the area, as well as contributing

to ideas about how narrative inquiry methodology has informed the examination of their research phenomenon.

Keywords: Teacher identity; teacher knowledge; teacher development; professional identity; gender identity; narrative inquiry; poetic expression; word images; curriculum-making; story

THE MUSKEG: A METAPHOR FOR EXAMINING INFLUENCES SHAPING TEACHER KNOWLEDGE

The Muskeg Metaphor

We begin with an idea of the muskeg, with its uncertain boundaries and fluid, though peaty, movement beneath a somewhat more substantial and stable surface layer, as a metaphor for the shifting body of professional knowledge of teachers examined in Clarke and Hutchinson's writing. This notion of the muskeg is interwoven throughout the volume as a way of tracing the development of teacher knowledge across time and context, sometimes in unexpected ways, as teachers draw from personal and professional experience as students, members of families and personal and professional communities, to inform their work as educators.

Teacher Knowledge Informed by Personal Practical Knowledge

We know from existing research that learning to become a teacher begins long before a teacher steps into their first classroom to begin their teaching career. In fact, much of the learning about the work of teachers is acquired while teachers are attending school as students. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) referred to this expansive body of knowledge as 'personal practical knowledge' and reinforced the idea that teacher knowledge is informed by experiences lived by a teacher over the course of their careers, and indeed, over the course of their lives.

Clandinin (1986) explored the idea of teachers' knowledge as being shaped heavily by knowledge developed in their lives outside of school. She contended that practices used in the classroom with their students reflect their personal image of what the work of teachers should involve. In this work, using the term 'teacher images in action', Clandinin (1986) documented and wrote specifically about the ways in which ideas about teaching held by her teacher participants, Aileen and Stephanie, were reflected in their practices. Aileen, for example, referred to work in her classroom as being compared to that of nurturing a garden, while Stephanie's practices reflected her idea(l)s about teaching as being akin to working among family members in the home. Their teaching and work with their students, accordingly, included practices such as gardening and creating a classroom environment where students felt as comfortable as they might as they work in their own homes and gardens. This early work in teacher knowledge suggesting ways in which teachers' professional knowledge develops across

a range of temporal, spatial, and social–personal contexts is supported in later work as well.

Turner-Bisset (2001) explores expert teaching and the bodies of knowledge, including knowledge of self, upon which teachers draw as they make teaching and curricular decisions; building on Shulman's (1986) introduction of the term, "pedagogical content knowledge" (PCK) helped to illustrate the interconnected nature of content knowledge and pedagogical approaches in teaching. Cochran Smith (1991), Lampert (1985), Shulman (1986), Valencia, Martin, Place, and Grossman (2009), Schwab (1959/1978) and Zeichner and Liston (2013) all write about complexities of learning to teach, while Loewenberg Ball (1990) and Heaton (2000) present detailed writing about work in classrooms between teachers and students. Ross and Chan's (Chan & Ross, 2009, 2014; Ross & Chan, 2008) work examining the day-to-day decisions of two teachers in a diverse urban school offer a glimpse into some of the tensions underlying curricular decisions made by teachers and administrators. Ciuffetelli-Parker, Grenville, and Glessa's (2011) work focusing more specifically on teacher education in high poverty school communities offers a glimpse into far-reaching impacts of out-of-school challenges for some students who may be identified as 'at-risk'. Craig's (2003) work examining the work of teachers and the difficulties of school reform further emphasize the complex intersection of influences that render change, even when presented as a means of improvement, highly challenging.

Teacher Knowledge Builds Over a Lifetime of Professional Experiences

Cohen (1989) and Loewenberg Ball (1990) expressed teaching practices and beliefs as 'deep-seated dispositions, simmered over the years of a teacher's experience and seasoned by cultural assumptions about and images of teaching and learning' (p. 274). This recognition of the development of teachers' knowledge over the course of their professional career further supports Clandinin and Connelly's (1996) argument of the distinction between 'teacher knowledge' that is gained through interaction and work with specific students and incidents in their teaching and learning communities that interact to form a body of knowledge and the 'knowledge of teachers' that is more commonly seen as being acquired from 'expert sources' such as books, professional resources, or interaction with experienced colleagues.

Narrative Studies of Teacher Knowledge Growing from Personal and Professional Experience

The growing body of research conducted using experiential approaches provides further insight into the role of experiences in contributing to building teacher knowledge. Ross' (2003) in-depth observations of classroom life with her teacher participant, Janine, offered a glimpse of the intersection of many factors that an urban, elementary-level teacher might draw upon to inform her implementation of curriculum – math curriculum, more specifically – for her students of diverse

social and cultural backgrounds. Chan and Ross (2009) examined complexities encountered by two middle school-level teachers as they developed and implemented academically and culturally relevant curriculum for their students in a diverse, urban middle school context, while at the same time abiding by educational equity policies governing school and school-board practices. Their presentation and analysis of students' stories of experience in school offer a glimpse into complexities that students might bring to their schooling; knowledge and understanding of these stories, in turn, inform their teachers' knowledge about how they might engage these students in the school curriculum. Chan and Ross' (2014) examination of tensions that arose among teachers and parents in the urban elementary school where a schoolyard fight broke out between two students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds further allude to challenges that teachers might encounter. Chan and Ross offer ways in which we, as educators, might develop professional knowledge communities as a means of sharing knowledge about students in our own school contexts in order to support one another professionally. Craig's (2003) work examining school reform from the perspective of stakeholders in a school community offers further insight into the intersection of multiple influences involved in attempts at change in a school context. This work alludes to the complexity of knowledge held by teachers about their work and the contexts in which they do their work with administrators, parents and students.

This existing research offers a look into some of the many factors that might inform the body of knowledge from which teachers might draw to inform their work with their students. This intersection of experiences contributing to shaping a teacher's body of professional knowledge is highly complex, in that teachers draw from a vast body of influences and experiences to inform their work.

Dewey's (1938) theory of experience and education as being organically interconnected forms the foundation for the work in this volume. This stance supporting the critical role of experience in shaping one's knowledge extends to the body of research addressing teacher knowledge and ways in which experience informs the work of teachers with their students. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) built upon this interconnection in the field of curriculum studies to highlight the role of experience in teaching; more specifically, they argued that teacher knowledge is shaped by personal and professional experiences that teachers bring to their work and that this knowledge is the foundation for developing and implementing curriculum for their students (Connelly & Clandinin, 1992). Craig and Ross (2008) further outline connections between Connelly and Clandinin's (1992) notion of teachers as curriculum makers and Schwab's (1969, 1983) work describing teachers' work of curriculum development, and referred to ways in which teacher knowledge about building a curriculum for their students is grounded in their own experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Clandinin and Connelly (1996) recognized that teacher knowledge develops over space and time; how this knowledge is understood and used, however, remains somewhat mysterious in that the ways in which prior experiences contribute to shaping teacher knowledge is not yet well understood. Given that teacher knowledge is

shaped by the experiences a teacher has lived in their personal and professional life, learning about teacher knowledge, then, should include an examination of experiences that have contributed to the development of their body of teacher knowledge.

This work recognizes the human dimensions of teaching and learning, acknowledges the need to move towards a ‘curriculum of human beings’ (Greene, 1993), values a feminine approach to ethics and moral education that is based on caring in teaching and learning (Noddings, 1984), and recognizes the value of intersections of narrative and professional development as a space where educators are encouraged and supported in their work to claim the creative space of praxis (Macintyre Latta & Kim, 2010).

We recognize the implementation of curriculum as a multi-storied process (Olson, 2000) involving many perspectives (Chan & Ross, 2014; Valenzuela, 2005), and that we would benefit from recognizing the constantly shifting nature of these narratives across time and place (Huber, Li, Murphy, Nelson, & Young, 2014) through a process whereby individuals have the opportunity to relive prior experiences through the telling and retelling of stories of particular importance to them.

Teacher Knowledge as a Construct Shaped by Context

Teacher Knowledge Develops across a Range of Spatial Contexts

There is also much literature acknowledging the potential influence of the school landscape – the professional knowledge landscape of teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Craig, 1999, 2004; Elbaz, 1981) – in shaping teacher knowledge. Ross, Chan, and Keyes (2017) address the space between teacher knowledge and subject matter knowledge in a volume of research studies where the authors examine the intersections of teacher knowledge, subject matter knowledge, teacher identity, and exigencies of practice to highlight complexities of teacher knowledge. Ross, Guerrero, and Fenton (2017), for example, consider ways in which differences in the landscapes in which scientists and practicing elementary-level teachers develop their professional knowledge might contribute to shaping their subject matter knowledge about Science instruction for elementary-level students differently. Stoehr, Carter, and Sugimoto (2017) explore subject–matter tensions, focusing more specifically on intersections between gender, math and math anxiety, while Novelli and Ross (2017) explore the theory–practice divide in the instruction of fifth-grade Math. Persinger and Ross (2017) address complexities at the intersection of subject matter knowledge and teacher knowledge for a Social Studies teacher who grappled with finding a balance between the prescribed curriculum in Social Studies and her understanding of the needs of her students in her curriculum-making space. Each of these pieces offered a glimpse into complexities of professional landscapes that might contribute to shaping teacher knowledge and identity.

Franklin’s (2017) writing about ways in which she drew upon knowledge gained through experiences with her brother who had special education needs to inform her subject matter knowledge as a special education teacher, offers

further insight into the complexity of the development of teacher knowledge across time, context, and interaction with specific individuals. Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, and Murray Orr (2009) use narrative inquiry methodology to highlight and then to examine complex, relational plotlines between teachers and their students that underlie teaching and teacher education. These accounts of teacher experiences capture tensions in the development of teacher knowledge and subject matter knowledge, and may be considered a response to Cochran Smith's (2003) call to learn more about the 'unforgiving complexity of teaching'. These teacher stories offer a glimpse into the complexities of learning to teach referred to in Brandt (1992), Gatti (2016) and Zeichner and Liston's (2013) work outlining some of the many ways in which the process of learning to become a reflective teacher is inherently challenging.

The "Impossible Role" (Schwab, 1959) of the Progressive Teacher

Other researchers also allude to the weight of the multiple influences upon which teachers need to draw to inform their teaching decisions. Elbaz-Luwisch (2004) bemoans the overwhelming number of factors contributing to shaping teacher knowledge, asking 'How is education possible when there is a body in the room?' In asking this question, she acknowledges not only her own significant experiences from which she might draw to inform her teaching, and from which decisions may need to be considered, but also the complex, and possibly conflicting, understandings that her students bring to their schooling, all of which intersect when meeting in the classroom. Lampert (1985), similarly, asks the question, 'How do teachers manage to teach?', as she outlines dilemmas that teachers might need to consider in their work with their students, recognizing the potential for tensions in the implementation of teaching decisions and practices that intersect with prior experiences of students and teachers. Schwab's (1959/1978) references to teaching under such circumstances as being described as 'the impossible role of the teacher in progressive education' (p. 167) may be an apt description of the work of teachers.

The prospect of needing to consider so many factors in making decisions about how best to teach their students, when combined with the inevitable tension of not being able to simultaneously please all of the many stakeholders with whom a teacher regularly works, may contribute to the possibility of some teachers feeling paralyzed in their work if they find it difficult to come to terms with uncertainty. Indeed, realizing that many of these influences may be beyond one's control, when contrasted with the professional need to teach in a way that reflects their version of their 'best-loved self', may further challenge a teacher's work of finding a balance between personal and professional identity. Auzenne-Curl (2017) examines this notion of the "best-loved self" (Schwab, 1954/1978, pp. 124–125) in her exploration of the development of a professional identity of an English language arts teacher, while Persinger and Ross (2017) refer to the complex journey of finding the best path forward in the midst of so many influences shaping the work of teachers. Li and Logan (2017), referring to Greene's (1993) notion of 'seeing big', examined nuances of personal and professional identity in their work with an