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**Unit 8**

**Topic: Teacher's experience**

The teacher's experience approach to inquiry has multiple variables. A teacher preset notions about the larger world, their interaction with their students year in and year out, and their observations of their pedagogy impact their experience. Teacher's experience is highly suitable in the study of educational problems and issues. Through publications, partnerships with universities, and feedback the teacher's collective experience contribute, expand, and refute educational approaches to pedagogical approaches to student and personal inquiry.

Before a teacher ever steps into a classroom, they can have preset notions about the world in which they live in. While Abraham Lincoln was not teacher, an examination of his youth amidst personal and private tragedy revealed that his upbringing influenced his actions and disposition later in his life. In *Peripheral Visions*, Bateson's personal experiences around the world amid other cultures had a unique influence on her personal and professional career. In **Whale Rider** we see how the larger cultural factors can influence and hinder growth. Gender roles and cultural traditions are only a few cultural influences that can influence the way a teacher will create their lessons. It is the cognition of teachers past experiences that in part shapes the direction of their classroom even before they start their career.

The interaction with students and their varying personalities influences the teacher's experience. In *The Girl With The Brown Crayon*, Vivian Pauley, a teacher at the end of her career is still impacted by the students in her classroom. The insightful thoughts, creativity, and compassion of Reeny brought out the best attributes of her fellow classmates and even Pauley. Pauley, an avid journal writer often times wrote about Reeny's ability to influence her classroom lessons. She never would have spent an entire year focusing on the books of Leo Lionni but the student's desires impacted the direction of the classrooms. Nel Noddings in *Caring in Education* suggested that a caring teacher directs their motives to the students needs and wants. Without validation, albeit emotional or pedagogical, the learner can also be scorned. Noddings wrote, "How good (or bad) I can be depends in substantial part on how you treat me." John Dewey also commented on how the interaction between the student and teacher is vital. *My Pedagogic Creed*, Dewey noted that failing understand can be detrimental. Dewey wrote, "Without insight into the psychological structure and activities of the individual, the educative process will, therefore, be haphazard and arbitrary. If it chances to coincide with the child's activity it will get a leverage; if it does not, it will result in friction, or disintegration, or arrest of the child nature." The experience in the classroom, the bulk of the teacher's career, is influenced by their student's needs, behaviors, and actions. It is the attitudes and behaviors by both the teacher and student that determine the long term success or failure. A teachers experience will lead to an examination of the learners psychological, emotional, and social needs to best facilitate inquiry.

Observation of various pedagogical approaches in the classroom enhances the teacher's experience. The best example of how inquiry unfolds through observation comes from the experiences of Mary Bateson, Vivian Paley, and John Dewey. In *Learning from Strangers*, Bateson was filtering her own private feelings amidst her interactions with different cultures and individuals. During her interaction, she was quick to avoid short sided judgments that steamed from her own values. Likewise teachers in the classroom need to be able to look past their personal values and see how their students have varied cultural and personal values that sometimes impact the learning process. To Bateson it is only through repeated exposure and experience that brings her to understanding.

To Vivian Paley, her observation of her teaching comes in the form of journals and tape recordings. Paley wrote, "(t)he tape recorder trains the teacher, not the child". By analyzing the words of a misunderstood idea or concept, she can begin to look at how she failed to teach the idea or how the child failed to make the connection. It is through this very analytical analysis of dialogue, and substantial amount of practice and experience that Paley learns about her teaching. Teacher can tape record, video tape, and journal to understand their strengths and inadequacies.

John Dewey was perhaps the ultimate examiner of pedagogical approaches in regard to inquiry. His work entitled *My Pedagogical Creed* is the culmination events and experience regarding teaching. His years of work as a philosopher resulted in a focus on student centered work was best seen in the University of Chicago progressive elementary schools that had a lasting impact on education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Education experience has been, and will always be, suitability for the study of particular kinds of educational problems and issues. The elephants in the room for education have been perennial constants but they are tackled by the collective experience of educators. Like Paley, who looked at how ideas or concepts are misunderstood, educators often times examine disconnect in order to make changes. The recent issues in education are numerous but the two major problems and issues in education are cultural bias and the unknown role or future of technology in the classroom. Cultural bias in the American education models reinforce capitalism, class structure, and gender roles. Bias is found in some textbooks, through political agendas that influence education, and sometimes through state standards or district standards which have to be taught. It is the educators who sees first hand the disconnect. Bateson was quick to note that society needs to move away from the status quo. "Today survival depends on a willingness to move away from familiar patterns, but we do not emphasize often enough that new patterns must satisfy ancient needs for harmony and that familiar graces also contribute to an evolving aesthetic of adaptation." (Bateson, 224) As long as educators are willing to look at the disconnect in the curriculum and then embrace new models that are more culturally responsive, teachers can practice new or revamped pedagogical methods in the same way John Dewey revamped the curriculum and approach to learning at the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The last area that is an issue pertains to the rise and technology as the main tool for teaching in the classroom. Recently schools are starting to use software programs like

e2020 (online courses) for credit recovery and everyday classroom use. In school districts that are facing budget cuts, educational software programs like e2020 are quickly replacing the number of teachers that a district employs. The teacher is slowly being weaned out of the classroom. Furthermore, the one sided approach of programs like e2020 have dangerous ramifications to students who learn differently. Howard Garner was skeptical of this one size fits all approach. The curriculum should focus on depth, use a particular field(s) to guide the curriculum, and it should leave the learner with a set of skills to engage in a lifelong quest to explain “perennial truths” and mysteries. To what extent the dept of issues will be explored in a virtual format is unknown. The teacher who will undoubtedly act as an evaluator and facilitator of this new approach will need to rely on their expertise and previous experience to assist in student inquiry. While school districts sort out to what extend technology makes its way into the classroom, it is comforting to know that teachers will use their experience to examine if the “new” method is working.

Teacher’s experience and it accessibility and utility of the results of inquiry to groups such as teachers, scholars, administrators, and other groups with interests in education comes in a variety of forms. Teacher mentoring, partnering with university researchers developers, teacher evaluations, and publications are a few ways that a teacher’s experience is shared with other groups. Teacher mentoring is a process by which inexperienced teachers are partnered with veteran teachers. Through years of practice, observations of effective teaching strategies, and experience with a variety of learners, seasoned teachers experiences is accessible to new teachers. Throughout this process it is critical that mentorship process is consistently practiced and that the master teachers examines the younger teacher’s personal approach of inquiry as well as the manner in which they begin to build inquiry among their students.

Partnership with universities is an effective way to look at inquiry. Participation in research analysis of ones own teaching methods and its impact on student inquiry is an effective model for feedback. Educational studies not only give the participating teachers invaluable analysis but they also publish and share their results and findings with the entire learning community. The results can reinforce strengths and deficiencies in pedagogical approaches to student inquiry. Educational experience identifies the need for independent, third party analysis of teaching methods.

Another form of independent feedback comes from feedback within the organization a teacher works. Evaluations by a principal, assistant principal, or fellow staff member of a teachers pedagogical approaches provides insight. Throughout the teachers career they will have countless observations that can influence their approach to student and personal inquiry.

Personal reflection and subsequent publication is a worth idea that should also be considered by teachers with years of experience. Publications provide accessibility and utility to various groups concerned with education. While the tape recording and journaling were outstanding ways to investigate student inquiry used by Pauley, they never would have gone beyond her own school if she did not publish her work. While all teachers might not have the same dedication to review each day’s tape recording and then

write subsequent books, teachers can submit their work to educational journals and publications. Various pedagogical approaches, notable lessons, or creative ideas are topics that often times appear in educational journals and publications. It is through these publications that teachers, scholars, administrators, and other groups with interests in education develop, expand, and refute pedagogical approaches to inquiry.