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Surrendering to Curiosity": Impacts of Contemplation for Resisting Rationalized Experience in Teacher Education

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Abstract
The authors explore what constitutes contemplative space in the context of teacher education and how free space can be created so preservice teachers experience contemplative learning practices amidst the intensified and alienating processes they have often experienced within their own education. Through data collected from student projects and semi-structured interviews, the authors explore a hermeneutic perspective on and analysis of teacher education and how providing opportunities to experience contemplative space helps deepen student understanding of education leading to a further, intersubjective form of thinking. Students described the uniqueness of the experience that was characterized by dialogic opportunities wherein they had occasion to "contemplate together" through inclusive and non-coerced communication. They shared knowledge, experience, perspective, and opinion as participants in a practice aimed at mutual support in the pursuit of insight. Findings show that preservice student teachers recognized the object of contemplation was far less important than the orientation and conditions under which they contemplate. The authors' findings spur hopefulness that contemplative space in teacher education will better equip subsequent generations of teachers to counter the marginalization inherent in rationalized schooling.

Keywords: Teacher education; Contemplation; Interpretive research; Rationalization; hermeneutics.

Introduction

> We should have no illusion. Bureaucratized teaching and learning systems dominate the scene, but nevertheless it is everyone's task to find his free space. The task of our human life in general is to find free spaces and learn to move therein" (Gadamer, 1992a, p. 59).

Hans-Georg Gadamer challenges educators to identify "free space" within the bureaucratized and rationalized system that is formal education. Such space opens possibilities for contemplation as speculative thinking about the nature of teachers' work and their role in social transformation. In addition to supporting the work of inservice teachers, creating free space for preservice teachers amidst the intensified and alienating processes they experience is an attempt to encourage and sustain a contemplative orientation to teaching – an active pushing back and resisting of the noise and fragmented busyness that subordinates the emancipatory potential of educational practice. We view this approach to teacher

education as a thoughtful repositioning of contemplation squarely "within the range of ordinary human experience" (Arendt, 1958, p. 304) and as a necessary feature of human flourishing: "contemplation in both the highest form of activity and also it is the most continuous" (Aristotle, *Ethics*, Book Ten: vii). As such, our research raises a fundamental question, "What constitutes contemplative space in the context of a highly-rationalized teacher education system?"

In answering this question, we offer a hermeneutic perspective on the process of teacher education. We explore what it means to find, create, and promote free and contemplative space for preservice teachers to develop a meaningful and authentic connection with the practice of formal education. In this sense, we understand contemplation to be an end in itself for teachers (as it should be for all persons) but we also view contemplation as an opportunity for reflection and interpretation – as an educative practice that resists rationalization while supporting collaboration and authenticity. From this dual perspective, contemplative space aligns what Greene (1995) argues is "the importance of wide-awakeness, of awareness of what it is to be in the world" (p. 33) with a means of undermining the instrumental reasoning that separates teachers from a meaningful and authentic vocation.

In addition to providing a theoretical framework for resistance and authenticity, our research offers a number of specific, empirical findings that support the practice of contemplation for preservice teachers. First, it has become clear in our research that identifying and creating contemplative space in teacher education is more an attitudinal and communicative enterprise than a substantive matter of course content. That is, whether teaching in the natural or social sciences, the object of contemplation (i.e., the curricular or subject matter) is far less important than the conditions under which students are encouraged to contemplate. A contemplative space, as such, is one in which students hold a positive attitude towards indeterminate thinking, and engage in sincere and reciprocal communication. Contemplative spaces permit students to be honest about their knowledge and beliefs, to seek the ideas and perspectives of others in a cooperative search for enhanced understanding, and to free their reasoning from predetermined (and often assumed) teaching objectives.

Recognizing this has led us to develop a second area of interest that distinguishes contemplative space in teacher education from the customary practice of contemplation. Unlike traditional contemplation, which is generally practiced as an act of individual cognition leading to personal insight, contemplative space in the context of teacher education invites a further, intersubjective form of thinking. This form of thinking is characterized by dialogic opportunities wherein students have occasion to "contemplate together" through inclusive and non-coerced communication. In such spaces, students share knowledge, experiences, perspectives, and opinions as participants in a practice aimed at mutual support in the pursuit of practical insights and greater solidarity. In this way, contemplative spaces serve to build a sense of community and agency around issues identified as meaningful in the lives of preservice teachers. Though preliminary, these findings spur our hopefulness that the incorporation of contemplative space in teacher education will better equip subsequent generations of teachers to counter the alienating and dehumanizing effects of rationalized schooling.

How Do I deliver the Curriculum?

This presumptive aim of becoming a teacher is common amongst our students. For many of them, earning a "teaching degree" simply means knowing the curriculum and how to teach it. In turn, students readily translate this predetermined end into countless, busy hours spent studying the provincial curriculum documents and the latest instructional techniques. Moreover, feeling constrained by time and an excess of assignments, students will quickly begin using their reasoning skills to strategize and plan the most efficient means of learning the curriculum and its delivery. From their perspective, this seems a natural process – other students are doing it and instructors, for the most part, are encouraging and even requiring this application of instrumental reason as part of their course work.

What is rarely explained to our students is that, even at this early point in their careers, they have eagerly (though, perhaps, unwittingly) become contributing parties to formal education's process of rationalization. German sociologist Max Weber first theorized the process of rationalization as the innate spirit of capitalism (Poggi, 2006; Weber, 1958) but later generalized rationalization as a much broader social phenomenon (Sica, 2000). Modern Western societies, Weber argued, have a tendency to organize their institutions around the efficient achieving of predetermined aims. This tendency in the West, has the effect of turning human reason – in this case, the reasoning capacity of preservice teachers – into an instrument for the efficient attainment of given ends. As the active driver of the process of rationalization, instrumental rationality harnesses calculation and control to first gage and then adapt organizational practices to efficient and predictable means of production. In the process of calculating and controlling for greater-and-greater efficiency, bureaucratic systems (such as formal education) offer fewer-and-fewer opportunities for engagement in other forms of rationality. Values clarification, communicative rationality, and contemplation, as examples, all become frivolous indulgences from the vantage point of rationalization.

Alienation and the Dehumanizing Experience of Rationalization

The initial sense of rationalization can be intoxicating for our students. Finally, the purpose of schooling, teacher education, and the role of the teacher are made clear. This clarity of purpose comes at a cost, however, as incompatible aims and values are suppressed and marginalized in favor of acquiring and demonstrating a capacity for curriculum delivery. In this rationalized setting, many preservice teachers will begin to feel a strengthening of the bureaucratic cage and an intensification of obligatory tasks as their understanding of teaching narrows. For some, rationalized schooling will be deeply felt as dehumanizing. They will see their chosen career filled with accountability measures and standardized expectations, and they will sense mounting pressure to apply such measures and standards to their own students during teaching practicums. For these preservice teachers, time spent in the classroom will be short and many will move in directions that take them away from teaching in formal education systems.

Others will be more resilient. They will create routines, preplan, and acquire individualized coping strategies. They will jettison everything in their practice but the essentials of curriculum and instruction. They will master the professed characteristics of a good teacher and the intensity, structure, and single-mindedness of this instrumental activity will alienate them from their daily work. For these, the "more-capable" students, the enchantment of becoming a teacher will fade and the wonder of the world will reduce to curricular objectives. They will be successful in "the organization of thought and action into regimented forms" (Sica, 2004, p. 112) for efficient instruction but the meaning of teaching they once held – the self-determined and authentic meaning that guided them to this vocation – will be lost.

Resisting Rationalized Experience Through Contemplative Space

To create free space for contemplation as identified by Gadamer, we arranged and provided two different sets of experiences for our students. In what follows, we provide a brief outline of the activities central to these experiences, examples of student responses to each activity, and discussion of how these responses support the value of offering free space within teacher education. One of the experiences, which we refer to as *Beauty and Aesthetics in Science Education*, invited students in two different science curriculum courses to participate in our research. The students could choose to participate by having the project they completed for the course included in our study and/or by agreeing to a semi-structured interview. From the two classes, with a total of 59 students, 46 agreed to have their projects become part of the research while 8 students agreed to be interviewed. Another student experience on which we based this research took place in a two-week course titled *Ecopedagogy and Experiential Education*. Again, students were offered a choice to have their course project included in the study and/or to give an interview on their experience with the course. From this class of ten students, all agreed to allow their projects to be included in the research and four agreed to be interviewed.

The student interviews and projects were explored using a hermeneutic framework. Hermeneutics is the "tradition, philosophy, and practice of interpretation" (Moules, 2002, p. 4). Researchers who take a hermeneutic epistemological perspective pay attention to what happens in the space where the person and the experience or the listener and the speaker meet. This is consistent with Gadamer (2006) who argued that the first necessary condition of hermeneutics occurs when someone or something addresses us and from this point forward the process of understanding can begin. As Davey (2006) further reminds us, "philosophical hermeneutics is not interested in the acquisition of facts and information but in what happens as a consequence of embarking upon such a quest for knowledge" (p. 38).

In relation to the current study, we were interested in identifying aspects of the students' work and words that provided a sense of authentic engagement as a consequence of having contemplative space. McCaffrey, Raffin-Bouchal & Moules (2012) describe the process of studying a topic hermeneutically as including reflexivity, dialogue, and interpretation in a search for authenticity. As such, we cycled between reading the interview transcripts, listening to the audio recordings, viewing student projects, reading the accompanying reflections, and

reading deeper into the literature on contemplation and rationalization. While themes can emerge from such activity, systematic coding and theming is not necessarily the goal of the hermeneutic process (Moules, McCaffrey, Field, & Laing, 2015). For our purposes, therefore, we concentrated on interpreting the data for expressions of personal authenticity and resistance of rationalized experience.

Read in this way, the students' work and interview responses lend positive support for opportunities to push back against rationalized experience and to resist the frenetic and fragmented act of focusing solely on curricular outcomes. Through the cycle of interpretation, we also came to recognize an important aspect of free space in teacher education that moves from a traditional conception of contemplation as a solitary practice to a more interdependent and dialogic conceptualization. This dialogic facet of contemplative activity, as we saw it develop for our students, values intersubjective exchanges of perspective and insight. In this sense, we came to view the free space needed to counter bureaucratized teaching and learning systems as one that accommodates both an individual and collective approach to revealing and making meaning.

One of the main roadblocks to contemplative experiences in teacher education programs are discourses that "[reduce] teaching to curriculum, to strategies or recipes for organizing students to know some target knowledge" (Lave, 1996, p. 158). In an effort to push back against these tendencies, we began by considering what it would be like for a classroom to be a living, contemplative place, where free space is available for students to delve deeply into the field of science: A place open to pondering, to wondering, and to asking questions. What if students in our courses were given opportunities to experience what contemplation felt like and to connect these experiences with their own understanding of teaching and learning? Could this approach influence their own ideas of teaching and meaningful teaching practices?

In the Ecopedagogy and Experiential Education course, the initial contemplative activity we organized encouraged students to simply experience being in the world and to draw on this sense of being to identify and engage relevant subject matter for science education. Early in the Fall Semester during a science curriculum course, we took students for a walk around the university campus. The only instructions given prior to the walk were for them to use their senses and pay attention to their environment. The class of thirty students concluded their walk at the edge of one of Southern Alberta's many coulees. From this point, the students could see across the Old Man River to the prairie beyond as it blended with the horizon. A similar activity was offered to a class of preservice teachers at St. John's, Newfoundland. Here, the students walked along a wooded path to a pond adjacent to the university campus. This walk ended at a short dock that jutted out from the edge of the pond. At the end point of both walks we sat together for about fifteen minutes. No specific directions or instructions were given to the students – except to "notice your surroundings". Silently, some students gazed out into the distance while others looked carefully at the nearby plants and terrain.

When we returned to the classroom, students were given materials and asked to create a "map" that represented their experience by depicting key things

they had noticed and important impressions made by the walk. For well over thirty minutes students worked in self-regulated and near-total silence, drawing, coloring, and contemplating the experience. In this sense, the classroom became a space for extending the contemplative activity of the walk as students engaged in the process of meaningfully mapping their sense of being in the world. After this occasion for thought and self-expression, many students said they could not remember the last time free space had been given them to generate their own connections to the world with no criteria for assessment or worries about doing it "right". Moreover, each map form each student from each walk was remarkably unique in drawing attention to things of personal relevance that had meaning for the student and for their relationship with the world.

Figure 1. Sample Map

Figure 2: Sample Map showing young child

Figure 1 is from a student at St. John's. It illustrates four key impressions of her walk – the multiple experiences that stayed with her. The map shown in Figure 2 depicts a particular moment that was meaningful for another student during the same walk. On our way back to the classroom, the class walked past a

large construction site. At one corner of the site there was a young boy with his mother holding his hand. The boy was so engaged in the trucks and the big machinery that he stood pointing and repeating "Wow!" His mother was trying to move on but he was not going anywhere. He was rooted to the ground: captivated. Over half the students paused to watch the boy and his mother. Upon returning to the classroom, many of the students were struck with how mesmerized and enthralled with the machinery this little boy had become. A discussion began among the students as they compared that moment of sheer wonder to their teaching experience during their internships. They lamented how that sense of wonder and presence in the experience was absent in the classroom. This led to a deeper discussion about their feelings of being disenchanted with much of what they were asked to do to children in the classroom and how this "teaching" did not feel right to them. From this contemplation and discussion of a moment of wonder the students themselves suddenly became aware of what was missing for them in schools. They became conscious of a disconnection between the view of teaching that had drawn them to teach and the rationalized activity of schooling they encountered.

The next step in the mapping exercise, was to ask students to shift from thinking about "What did you notice?" to considering "What did you wonder about?" Our intention, here, was to encourage students to identify questions and objects of inquiry that emerged through going on the walk – questions of interest and meaning to them. As Gadamer (2006) maintains:

> Questions always bring out the undetermined possibilities of a thing. That is why we cannot understand the questionablesness of something without asking real questions… This is the reason why understanding is always more than merely re-creating someone else's meaning. Questioning opens up possibilities of meaning, and thus what is meaningful passes into one's own thinking on the subject (p. 368).

By providing a space to wonder, we hoped that students would reconnect with the open questioning that leads to meaningful understanding. To connect this process of starting with a sense of wonder to a more formal practice of enquiry, the students were further asked to choose one of their questions (i.e., points of wonder) and expand on its implications for general areas of curriculum – to create a "mind map" that lead outward from a self-generated question about the world to encompass relevant areas of curriculum.

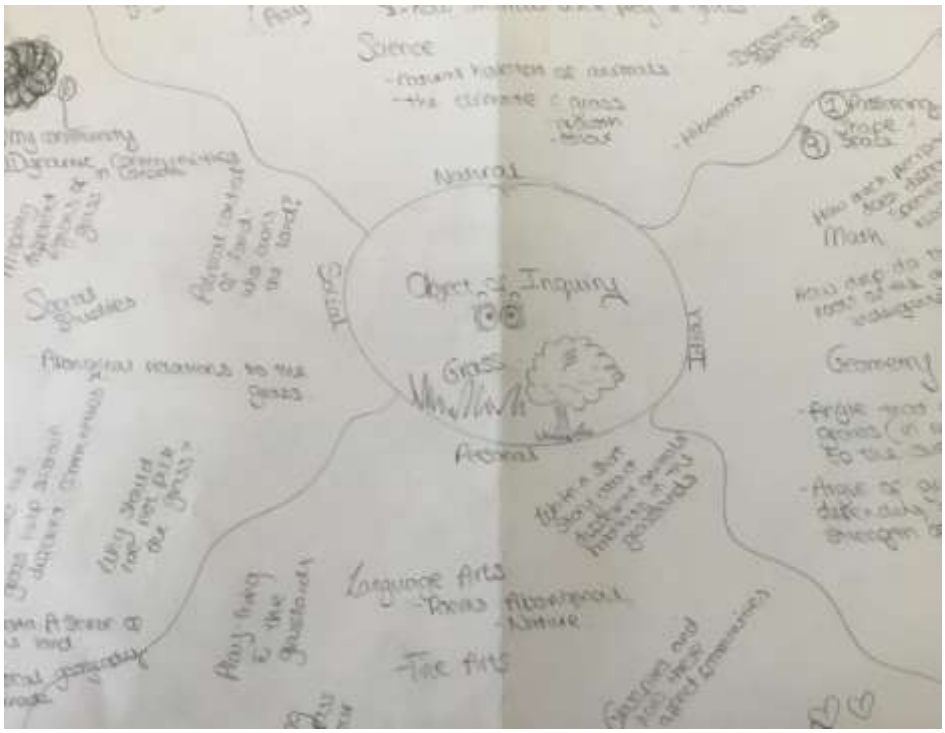

Figure 3. Mind Map of object of inquiry

These general areas included exploration of the natural world (science), the realm of ideals (mathematics/geometry), the personal perspective (language and fine arts), and the social world (social studies). The purpose of using these groupings was to allow new questions to emerge that were meaningfully related to the students' own subject interests. As the students shared and discussed their questions with each other, they uncovered new insights such as the interrelatedness of subject areas. Following this process the students were asked to find connections to the Program of Studies. In this way, students could see how starting from a point of contemplation and wonder could lead to authentic engagement with curriculum. Many students realized that the fragmented appearance of learning outcomes could be reinterpreted through contemplation of being in the world. As one student explained:

> (Anna) [M]y entire concept of teaching changed… how I once approached learning and how I want to approach this stuff has totally changed. Why wouldn't you interconnect [curriculum] with different things? I was talking about the fluidity of curriculum. I think that's the big thing I took from this, that there is no concrete way to teach something that everything can be interconnected and there is always overlapping…

Exploring curriculum with a sense of wonder profoundly impacted many students' understanding of the way subjects could be approached. The frenetic and alienating activity of covering outcomes could be overcome by authentic engagement with the world. By building meaningful connections to curriculum students placed themselves at the centre of their teaching and began again to care about what they taught (Greene, 1995). In this sense, the contemplative space allowed students to resist rationalized teaching practices and reclaim the curriculum as meaningful.

We contend that when understood hermeneutically, an authentic experience is the point when understanding takes place. Davey (2006) describes learning as having a transformative capacity through being part of an experience or event that changes our fundamental understanding of something. As Gadamer (2006) observes, understanding is what "happens to us over and above our wanting and doing" (p. xxvii). For Gadamer, "Understanding is not a method which the inquiring consciousness applies to an object it chooses and so turns it into objective knowledge;...understanding proves to be an event," (p. 308). Creating opportunities for preservice teachers to experience an event and then map the interconnectedness of their experience with curriculum transformed their understanding of "the curriculum". Curriculum became a series of pathways for exploring the complexity of their question, as opposed to a predetermined list of sequential outcomes to be memorized and delivered (Pinar, 2015). As a result of this authentic engagement with curriculum, preservice teachers began to recognize the "inner interwoveness of one field of research with another" (Gadamer, 1992b, p. 45).

A further example of providing moments for contemplation comes from a project called *Beauty and Aesthetics in Science* which was originally developed by Dr. David Blades at the University of Victoria (2015). The practice asks students to begin with a question – in this case, a question about nature – they have always wondered about and then to research and answer. Students further create a journal to record their new understanding of the subject, their feelings about what they were learning, and how this knowledge has impacted them. Biologist Benjamin Moore (1912) claimed that learning about nature and exploring its beauty kindles something "sacred within the mind akin to reverence and love" (p. 253). The practice culminates in asking students to create an aesthetic representation of their learning, whether it be a representation of the topic or of their journey through the research process. Providing an opportunity for students to have contemplative space to explore a topic from an aesthetic perspective creates deeper connections with the topic and with the natural world. Many students described how they became emotionally invested in the topic, and how surprisingly complex and open-ended the answer to seemingly simple questions can become.

One student, for example, explored why her beta fish made bubbles in the tank. Hanna described how she came to her question:

> (Hanna) I had acquired a beta fish and he was always making bubbles on kind of the surface of the water and I never knew why. So there's not really a better question than something I'm genuinely wondering about that's right in front of me.

Later, she described how she become emotionally connected to something that she initially thought was a simple question:

> (Hanna) …There was now an emotional connection to something that was um, a decoration before so... [The] biggest takeaway was it led me to question the impact, or the ethics of sort of pet ownership and the ethics of globalization and the ethics of all these big topics.

Another student described his new understanding of how science is connected to the social world. This insight helped him deepen his overall

understanding of science. From his study of cenotes he soon became passionate about preserving them, and about their role and importance in Mayan culture.

> (Darren) So I find that [snorkelers are] very strong advocates for preserving the [cenotes]. Then I also learned a lot about Mayan culture and how important cenotes were to both spiritual and physical things that they had to participate in… I have really come to believe that science is connected to everything in a sense. That, science is so much more than just gaining an answer but it's asking different questions now.

The opportunity to study something they were genuinely interested in and to use an open-ended approach to learning about that topic was, initially, very foreign for most students. One student stated that the ambiguity she first encountered was difficult to embrace, "I found myself initially aiming for the exact and concrete answer to my question, but ultimately I surrendered to curiosity and experienced the more messy and indeterminate side." We read such statements as evidence of a reversal in the experience of teaching and learning as alienating. We see this especially in the vivid expression of "surrendering to curiosity" as an act of regaining an authentic relationship with the subject matter.

Another student's aesthetic representation focused on her insights into the process of learning (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Aesthetics representation

As she explained:

> Allowing myself to embrace the curiosity was the hardest part and yet, when I finally did, it was the most enjoyable. I became so involved in the project I would find myself dreaming about it, talking about it with friends, constantly researching new aspects and never settling for a simple solution. My entire outlook on science shifted from one where there is a simple solution, to a complex web that needs to be explored.

Again, the sense of a process that returns ones curiosity and reconnects the self to the world in an authentic relationship is strikingly evident for this student.

Still other students detailed how this practice of contemplation allowed them to explore what held personal meaning. In this sense, they arrived at a place of learning that was not performative but was of authentic interest to the student:

> (Darren) I feel like I've been taught, not intentionally, by teachers in the past but ah, I still feel that I've been taught to create projects or papers [for] the teacher who will be grading it or marking it… So once I got over that barrier or mentality of it had to be done a certain way, that's when I really was able to indulge in it. So I was worried about expectations at first and then I didn't care anymore and just went my own way.

Melanie also shared how her understanding of learning was shaped by preconditioned and preconceived ideas of educational activity. She realized that these impressions restricted and confined her possibilities for learning. The process of schooling alienated her from her own impulse to be curious and to pursue lines of interest – so-much-so that she required a sense of receiving permission to resist in order to meaningfully reorient herself to the subject matter.

> (Melanie) I kept trying to relate it back to my first question, I was trying to put it, keep it in a square, keep it locked into one area. My professor was like "don't do that, go on those streams, some of them will be dead ends and some of them will lead to great things." So that was really a huge new experience because all of a sudden I was learning about a lot more things.

The experience of uncertainty and continual reinterpretation, what Gadamer (1992a) describes as "living with ideas" (p. 53), was foreign for students that were used to attending lectures, and completing readings and assignments as predetermined by the instructor. Living with ideas, Gadamer contends, resists the form of alienation that students experience when their education is seen as "only the preparation for a real place in society, and that means for a profession" (p. 53).

> (Hanna) Seeing the fact that you could go from really distanced indifference to becoming quite passionate on a topic just because it's your own discovery process. [This] was the most surprising part for me. We're used to having to do things we don't enjoy for school sometimes. Like having to read 20 page papers on one topic that really in the end you're not really processing any of it. With this one you actually have the freedom to not take that route. So kind of letting go of these preconceived notions of what I was supposed to be doing in university… It was a big step in finding that groove.

Contemplative space in teacher education as distinctly dialogic

Reacquainting students with the art of asking questions is a key aspect of the contemplative space we seek to provide in teacher education. This is also an important first step to supporting a dialogic process that we argue is an integral part of contemplative space for preservice teachers. Gadamer's philosophic hermeneutics focuses on the practice of dialogue (Grondin, 2003): "The art of questioning is the art of questioning even further – i.e., the art of thinking… It is called dialectic because it is the art of conducting a real dialogue" (Gadamer, 2006, p. 360). This dialogue, Gadamer contends, is the "art of thinking" and is the central task of hermeneutics. In the cases above, the initial dialogic relationship

was between the student and the object of interest drawn from their walk or between the student and the topic they choose to explore.

The relevance of the dialogic process became more pronounced and extended for us, however, when we overheard students describing the experience of sharing their aesthetics project with other students. On the day the project was due, students were invited to sit in a circle and briefly share their question, how they came to decide upon the question, some key learning that emerged from their research, and how this experience impacted their understanding of science. The high degree of involvement and inherent passion of the ensuing discussions between students was palpable. Many students found this exchange of ideas had a positive impact on their understanding of the topics, the process of learning, and their relationships with each other. Hanna, for example, described the dialogue occurring in this space as one of her most profound experiences in the education programme:

> (Hanna) I think the most interesting and revealing part of the whole thing was the sharing at the end. I think that was the part that really got me excited about it all. Because when you're sitting in your own room and you're googling beta fish you may be interested in it but it's not until you start talking about it to someone you realize that like five minutes isn't enough time to actually say everything you think and feel. I didn't realize until that point that I actually had something to say.

Hanna's comments reflect Grondin's (2003) argument that a danger of isolated reflection (or contemplation) is that it can become a "thought that listens only to itself" (p. 116). Hermeneutic knowledge, he argues needs to be open to interpretation from others. In this sense, the students' intersubjective, dialogic exploration of the topic lead to deeper comprehension than their subjective, isolated reflection. By providing students an opportunity to share their learning for the sake of mutual interest and exploration a free space for joint contemplation opened. This free space tapped the collective knowledge, creativity, and curiosity of the students as they delved into and formed deeper relationships with their topics and with each other. Hanna explains:

> (Hanna) Initially you are sitting there with your picture of a beta fish and everyone else is holding these like funny looking different things and you don't know what anyone is gonna say. Then they start talking about it and you can see them progressively more excited… That's when you realize that there was progress, something happened during the course of your sort of study. As soon as we shared it made it meaningful. So I would say that that was the most crucial part. You learn through sharing and having an audience…

For us, Hanna's comment that "something happened during" this process is at the heart of blending the dialogic with the contemplative for teacher education. As Gadamer (2006) emphasises, the focus of understanding is not on "what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing" (xxvi). Jardine (2012) reiterates the transformative nature of this process in the context of education: "you become someone in the difficult cultivation of free spaces in teaching and learning" (p. 19). For our students, the transformative power of participating in a real dialogue as an act of collective thinking is further exemplified by Melanie's description of the process. Melanie

felt that the sharing experience changed the dynamics of the relationships within the class.

> (Melanie) When we presented our projects we sat in a circle and we presented one by one and it was really like touching to me how much of a community was built through that by having us all present and we were very respectful and watching each other learn and learning about our struggles and also inspiring other students to find out more about it.

What started as an opportunity to share the projects became an integral part of the contemplative process – a process that went well beyond learning to building a greater sense of community and solidarity in the pursuit of understanding. Gadamer (1992a) states, "students become the teacher and from the activity of the teachers grows a new teaching, a living universe, which is certainly more than something known, more than something learnable, but a place where something happens to us" (p. 59). And, we would add, a place where future teachers can teach each other how to resist the alienating experience of teaching in a rationalized school system.

Concluding thoughts

In keeping with a hermeneutic spirit, we would like to return for a moment to our fundamental question, "What constitutes contemplative space in the context of a highly-rationalized teacher education system?" Through the process of writing this paper we have come to recognize certain characteristics of contemplative or free space that resist the rationalized and alienating experience of preservice teachers. Such spaces, we contend, encourage and sustain both subjective and intersubjective learning that is meaningful and authentic for each student. The process of generating these spaces begins with heightened awareness of being in the world and wonderfilled questions about the workings and relations of things around us. From this vantage point, students can "map" and "create" connections to and between elements of the curriculum. In this way, the curriculum is approached and addressed in a holistic, interwoven, and dialogic manner, and, perhaps most importantly, in a manner that preserves the agency and authenticity of the student's engagement.

The culminating effect of providing contemplative space within the context of teacher education is open and inclusive dialogue – a recognition of and thinking with others through dialogue that leads to deeper understanding and more meaningful learning. For us, many of the most satisfying moments in the process of contemplation occur when students suddenly shift away from a rationalized perspective, reorienting themselves to their learning and to their understanding of teaching. As one student exclaimed, "It was like blinders were removed and now I wonder about so much more."

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