Stories to Teach By: Using Narrative Cases in TA and Faculty Development

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The Need for Reflective Practice

As Lambert and Tice's recent volume on the preparation of teaching assistants illustrates, new teachers of college writing courses receive training in a number of different venues—intensive, lengthy orientations; a required graduate course in composition theory and pedagogy; mentor programs in which new teachers collaborate with more experienced instructors; and informal "brown-bag" discussions that encourage teachers to reflect on their methods and share strategies and experiences. The content of the preparation also varies widely, from reviews of a course syllabus, conventional procedures, and materials for a specific course to credit-bearing graduate seminars that cover the rhetorical, linguistic, and pedagogical theories that support writing instruction and the literature of composition studies. As John Ruszkiewicz has pointed out, in just the past decade teacher preparation programs in colleges have grown from simple, "how-to" workshops to courses where rhetorical theory and research in composition sometimes overwhelm matters of classroom practice.

Ruszkiewicz' observation reflects the growing importance of weaving together both theory and practice in our teacher preparation programs. Regardless of the form that training and development takes, the typical WPA now faces a planning dilemma: How can we prepare new instructors, *in both theory and practice*, to design courses, to assign, coach, and evaluate students' reading and writing, and to interact professionally with peers and students? Few WPAs who prepare writing teachers would maintain that their new charges need not study, critique, and reflect on the theories and research that support classroom practice in composition. At the same time, the very real, pragmatic needs of the composition curriculum beckon: WPAs must prepare new teachers, usually very quickly, to be effective in the classroom. We believe that "cases"—real or realistic stories about teaching problems used for discussion and problem-solving—are one useful and engaging way to integrate theory and practice in teacher preparation.

Narrative "Lore" and the Improvement of Teaching

In almost any conceivable educational setting, teachers spend a great deal

of time telling each other interesting stories about their classes, students, programs, and campuses, stories to which their colleagues can immediately relate. These stories make up the daily fare teachers' work, and the issues come out of the immediate need to solve specific problems: what to do about a sexual harassment case prompted by an "electronic" revision session arranged in a computerized composition class; how to handle a tough instance of "group" plagiarism in a collaborative paper; what to recommend to a TA about a student who is writing pornographic journal entries; what advice to give in a workshop on how to respond to grammatical errors in students' papers; how to react to a freshman composition teacher who teaches everything through a thick lens of Marxist philosophy that makes peripheral the students' focus on their own writing. In many cases, these specific stories move us into more general philosophical and practical concerns of teaching and running composition programs. Just as often, some thorny general issue becomes real and tangible as we share specific cases of these issues at our institutions.

Recently, for example, a relatively inexperienced teaching assistant consulted one of us about a problem she thought she had incited in her composition class. Her students, she explained, were coming to class unprepared, often sitting mutely when she tried to begin a discussion of one of her many assigned readings. When called on by name, many of the twenty students would confess that they had not had time to study the assigned reading in detail. On the day in question, the teacher, pushed to the edge of classroom decorum, asked for a show of hands by those students who had finished the assignment. Eleven students—all women—had come prepared. The teacher promptly dismissed the remaining nine—mostly men—admonishing them not to return until they could participate fully. Three of the men protested, asking if they could stay in the class to hear the discussion and participate when they could. Holding her ground, the teacher refused to continue the class until all the unprepared students had left. Reluctantly, they gathered their things and filed out.

Embedded in this teacher's experience and crying out for interpretation are a number of issues that might be made "legitimate" in the scholarly community if presented theoretically, stripped of the immediacy and situatedness that gives them life in the teacher's classroom. The issue of student involvement and active participation, for example, plays itself out constantly not only in general approaches to college teaching but more specifically in models of writing instruction in the field of composition studies. Issues of teachers' and students' authority in the classroom (and especially as a function of gender) fuel much research and many scholarly debates about the nature of education. In the face of teachers' rights to set policy in their own classrooms, the issue of students' rights to the class time for which they have paid tuition provides snarls for even the best university attorneys. In short, this young teaching assistant's action and consequent internal questioning deserve their place among the most theoretically challenging discussions about teaching.

Such "lore" and storytelling saturates the field of composition, yet even

our highly practical discipline has not yet learned to accord much scholarly significance to narrative accounts like this teacher's experience. In *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, North defends the practice of lore as a mode of inquiry even as he acknowledges that "its credibility, its power vis-a-vis other kinds of knowledge, has gradually, steadily diminished" (21). Brannon has gone so far as to suggest a dichotomy between the "softness" of classroom narratives and the "hardness" of scientific truth that tends to inform the profession (especially in its journals). Yet in spite of this overarching disposition toward the nature of scholarly thought about teaching, Brannon predicts a growing awareness of the value of teachers' reflected practice as an arena of authentic research. Challenging us to redefine what should count as knowledge of the writing classroom, she asks, "Why aren't teachers' stories being written and heard?" To tear down the walls of the dichotomy between lived experience and scholarly research requires that each of these perspectives inform the other, so that our reflected practice— even in the form of stories about teaching—takes on a kind of inherent validity.

Together with a heightened accountability for good teaching, recent exploration of what counts as "thoughtfulness" in pedagogy supports a case-based approach to teacher development (Boyer). At their simplest, cases are classroom stories, narratives that engage teachers in dialogue, discussion and problem-solving. Cases directly address the dilemma of balancing theory and practice in teacher preparation. Each case presents a lifelike situation that mirrors what happens routinely in the lives of teachers, and offers a series of issues for discussion that grow out of the situation. The issues come to life in typical problems experienced by writing teachers—problems in designing courses, creating writing assignments, responding to student writing, or interacting with students in classrooms and conferences. By discussing how they might deal practically and concretely with the issues raised, instructors delve into the underlying beliefs, theories, or even research that support their practices.

Because cases are rich retellings of real classroom events, they encourage teachers to move beyond the "idea" of a teaching issue by seeing it played out in a particular context, enmeshed in various related circumstances. Instead of talking "about" leading effective class discussions (even if this topic takes the form of a hypothetical student who constantly dominates the discussion), workshop participants can read about an actual case of classroom dominance, in all its interpersonal complexity, and with all its connections to other aspects of classroom life. That complexity allows for an open-ended unpredictability—the very characteristic of a real-life teaching situation that makes our profession so continually challenging. Furthermore, while cases are particular enough to generate specific questions, they depict classroom events and interactions with which most teachers can identify. Experienced teachers can relate in some way to the kinds of problems a good case will raise, and they often recall other, equally compelling situations of their own. Finally, sharing experiences, reflections, and advice creates a strong sense of community among those who participate in case workshops. At a time when many WPAs and writing teachers express feelings of isolation on their own campuses, the case approach offers a space for dialogue,

collaboration, and social interaction.

Case studies have long been used in various educational contexts, perhaps most thoroughly in the Harvard Business School. More recently, however, cases have become a powerful a tool for faculty development. Several organizations, programs, and funding agencies around the country are devoting considerable resources to the development of cases. Pace University even has a Center for Case Studies in Education, directed by Rita Silverman and William Welty, whose mission is to develop and disseminate cases and information on cases, and to offer assistance to others who want to use or develop their own cases. Pat Hutchings, director of the American Association of Higher Education's "Teaching Initiative," has identified the case method as a major component of a recent project aimed at improving college teaching and learning:

> Serious attention to the improvement of teaching is on the rise on campuses. But what's the best route to improvement? How can faculty be most helpful to one another? What's the most productive way to talk about important pedagogical issues? One answer that looks increasingly promising is *cases*—narrative, story-like accounts of teaching and learning incidents that raise pedagogical issues in faculty discussion. (Hutchings 6)

Cases themselves come in many forms. In the medical professions, business, and law, for example, they often take the form of "case studies," which present real(istic) situations and then offer commentary, analysis, or solutions by experts, perhaps as a way to model problem-solving methods. A more useful kind of case for discussions of teaching will typically offer no answers to the questions and issues posed. The aim is for instructors--new, experienced, or mixed—to work through the cases in seminars, classes, and meetings, bringing their own experiences to bear and discussing how various bodies of theory and research, as well as the contingencies of local contexts, shape effective responses to the kinds of questions and issues raised by the stories.

Cases for faculty development can be relatively short and undetailed, or they may be several pages long and include information about the context that helps to make the case complicated and more interesting. The former type of case is sometimes called a "vignette." Because it includes little detail, it is designed to help participants connect the brief narrative to their own experiences, encouraging the sharing of stories and events. An example of such a vignette is "Coco Feels Raped," which focuses on issues of the right to privacy in the teaching of writing.

Coco Feels Raped

Several days after the end of his introductory writing class, Terry Macewicz was in his office, tidying up from a hectic semester, when Coco Stebbings walked into the room. The students in his class, both men and women, thought Coco was absolutely gorgeous, and Terry had trouble on

several occasions keeping the male students focused on the class work when he put them with her into small groups. He knew that some men in the class were constantly talking about Coco and were riveted to her when she spoke out in discussions. The women, for their part, seemed preoccupied with Coco's expensive clothes and chic hairstyle. All the attention to Coco's appearance was, Terry felt, unfortunate because she had a keenly analytical mind and an articulate way of speaking, but the other students seemed to pay much more attention to her good looks than to her ideas. Now she was in his office visibly upset.

"Hi, Coco," Terry said. "Congratulations on the *A*."

"Look, Mr. Macewicz," Coco replied firmly, "I haven't come to complain about my grade or anything about your teaching, and I did get a lot out of the class. But I feel that you have absolutely no sense of protecting people's privacy in your courses. First you suggested that we exchange phone numbers with members of our conference group so we can get together outside of class. Well, you should know that ever since the first week of class I've been getting nuisance calls in my dorm room and both my roommate and I are terrified. Then I started getting lewd notes under my door, and when I got together with Tom Bonaventure to work on our group project all he did was try making a pass at me and I had to finish it by myself. Then you read my paper about my ski trip with my boyfriend out loud to the class and I got all sorts of remarks from several guys in the class every time they saw me. Then you left our papers in a box in the hall outside your office where everyone can get at them, and someone has stolen my final project. And to top it all off you pinned your grade sheet up on your door where everyone can see my address and social security number and my grade. I feel like everything you've done in this class has just stripped me naked. I feel like I've been raped."

Issues for Discussion

- How should Terry respond to Coco's accusations?
- Which of Terry's actions do you find unacceptable in the context of Coco's rights to privacy? How would you describe those rights: psychologically? politically? as a matter of personal safety?
- Are any of Terry's actions defensible, and if so, on what grounds?
- What are Terry's legal responsibilities to maintain his students' right to privacy? Do you know of specific institutional policies where you teach that bear on Terry's actions and/or related activities in and out of the classroom?

<div align="right">(Anson, et al. 90-91)</div>

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In addition to their focus on issues of teaching, vignettes such as "Coco" are also very useful in helping new teachers to learn in an unbureaucratic way some of the policies and administrative procedures used at particular institutions. After discussing the underlying ethical or theoretical issues in the vignette, teachers can put policy statements or manuals into a real context.

Longer cases are designed to help teachers understand potential problems and work toward principled solutions. In this way, should a similar problem arise in their own teaching, they will have created strategies for dealing with it. To illustrate how such cases work to improve teaching, consider "Trudy Does Comics," a case designed for teachers who use writing in courses across the curriculum (Anson 1994).

Trudy Does Comics

"Great seminar!" Howard Pruett exclaimed to the group leaders as he and his colleagues filed out of the room. For the past two days, Howard had been participating in a faculty development workshop at his school (along with two dozen colleagues from various departments) focusing on integrating active learning strategies into classroom instruction. Inspired by the many ways that the seminar leaders had engaged the group in creative activities, Howard was determined to make some major changes in the way he taught philosophy. "I can't believe I've been so dull in my teaching," he observed to Amanda Shall, one of the seminar participants he had befriended. "Lecture, test, lecture, test . . . it's a wonder that my students have tolerated me for this long. And my writing assignments—sheer boredom!"

"Mea culpa," Amanda said, laughing. "I think this seminar has been a breath of fresh air. But are you ready to put all that work into redesigning your courses?"

"Actually, I'm looking forward to it," Howard replied as they left the building. "And the first thing I'm changing is the way I use writing in my 101 course."

For over a decade, Howard had assigned occasional short, formal papers in his introductory philosophy course. As a supporter of writing across the curriculum, he had become known in his department for his opinion that students should write regularly in all courses in order to improve their skills and become better learners. While he teasingly admitted to his English Department colleagues that he was not versed in the "higher arts of teaching the lower verbal skills," he had—until the faculty seminar—felt quite confident assigning and grading his short academic papers. In these papers, he expected his students to explain

philosophical concepts and provide examples for generalizations, or to argue a position on a philosophical controversy using a standard essay structure that included a thesis statement and carefully developed supporting paragraphs. His students rarely contested his grades and comments, which tended to be quite rigorous.

But now he was about to throw out what he had been doing for ten years: a course so "automatic" that he usually prepared for his new term the day before it began. Later that day, he dug out a copy of his syllabus from the previous term and began marking it up. Still inspired by the seminar, he found himself putting big slashes through the section describing his writing assignments, then jotting down lists of ideas on the back of the pages. He hadn't felt this excited about teaching since he collaborated with a close colleague on a team-taught course.

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"How can you say that?" Trudy almost yelled, clutching her second paper and looking defiantly at Howard as the rest of the class filed out of the room. It was a few weeks into Howard's introductory philosophy course, and not all was well.

"Look, Trudy, I wrote to you about this on your last paper," Howard replied, gathering his books and notes. "When I asked you to develop ways of understanding the material of the course, I had in mind all sorts of possibilities—traditional papers, invented dialogues with the philosophers we're reading, double-entry journals in which you critique major concepts. I did not have in mind comic books. I'm afraid I just can't accept what you're doing."

In redesigning his course, Howard had decided to give the students an opportunity not only to write in different ways about the course material, but to define these ways themselves. According to the leaders of his faculty-development seminar, providing such opportunities can help students to respond in ways that better match their learning styles and intellectual dispositions. In his syllabus, Howard had included the following passage reflecting his new expectations for students' writing:

> Writing assignments: These will be worth one-half of your final grade. There will be five assignments due on the dates specified. You will decide what kind of writing you would like to do; you may choose typical school writing such as essays and formal analyses of the readings, or you may be more inventive, perhaps writing an imaginary dialogue with one of the five philosophers we are reading, or a dialogue between two different philosophers, or perhaps a parody of an author's writings. Be inventive but insightful, and write enough to explore a subject well, please.

In drafting these new requirements for his course, Howard had worried a little that he would be unable to make clear judgments on the quality of the students' work. After all, they would be turning in different kinds of writing, some of which would not resemble papers he was used to reading in his course. Partly to reassure himself and partly to be more specific to his class about the assignments, he spent ten minutes during the first class meeting discussing what he meant by "free choice" in the assignments. "What will I be looking for in these, then?" he asked rhetorically. "First, that you have become engaged with the subject matter—not just that you have read the material but that you have actually reflected on it, swilled it around in your thinking like a sip of fine wine. These papers are first and foremost a tool for your own learning, and second, a tool for me to assess the extent to which you are actively and critically exploring the subject matter." He realized as he said this that he was echoing some of the terms of the summer seminar leaders, terms like "active learning," "critical thinking," "exploring the subject matter." But he had found it all so compelling that certainly his class would, too. A glance around the room at the thirty young students confirmed it, he thought: many of them seemed excited, eager to get to work.

But now, a few weeks into the term, here was Trudy, visibly upset, holding her paper and demanding an explanation.

"But it says right here," Trudy went on, searching through the syllabus. "Well, it says we decide about what kind of writing. Maybe it was what you said on the first day, but I remember reading or hearing something about just wanting to know if we were reading the stuff and thinking about it. And I'm doing that here. I mean, look at all the different things other people are writing. Why can't I use these little scenes as my way of showing that I've done the reading?"

Howard had to admit that he was intrigued the first time he saw Trudy's comics after the class had read Plato's allegory of the cave in the course text, *The Enduring Questions.* Most of the students had taken a safe path on this first essay, discussing the idea of Forms or critiquing the relationship between ideals and what is tangible in the world. A few students had tried something different, most notably Kurt Nichols, who had imagined himself being on the other side of the cave wall and seeing not shadows but what he called the Real Thing. When he reached Trudy's comics a few papers after Kurt's, Howard was excited to think that at least a few students were using alternative methods of analyzing the material.

In that first paper, Trudy had drawn two imaginary characters (Hap and Zap) shackled on one side of the cave. The drawings themselves were quite good—and he expected it: on the first day, during the introductions, Trudy had pointed out that she was a studio arts major

specializing in drawing, and wanted to enter the field of advertising as a commercial artist.

But as he read the comics, Howard began feeling unsure about how he should grade Trudy's work. The two characters spoke to each other in short sentences that appeared in the usual cartoon balloons above their heads. Their discussion seemed to Howard rather unsophisticated, rendered in a kind of teenage speech not characteristic of discussions in his course. It was hard to tell from the short exchanges just how much Trudy really understood of the Plato readings. When he had finished the page of comic frames, he was utterly at a loss to decide what to say to Trudy about her work. He had put the comics aside, finished the rest of the papers, and then returned to Trudy's work the next day. Finally, pressured by the upcoming class meeting, he jotted down some notes on the back of the comic page:

> Trudy—this is fine work visually speaking, and I like the idea (if not entirely the substance) of the comics. I think that in some ways, however, the choice of comics has limited your opportunities to explore the readings very fully. It's not clear, for example, whether Zap really knows what Plato means by Forms, and most of the time Hap is just saying "yup" to Zap's pronouncements (were you trying to be Socratic here? If so, it's not entirely clear to me). So while the idea is innovative, it may not work, finally, as a method of writing in the course. C-

When he had handed back these first papers, he noticed that Trudy seemed upset, but she didn't approach him. Now, after the second paper (and another, longer batch of comics on a reading by Kant), she was confronting him directly about his assessment. On this batch, Howard had given Trudy another C-, mainly to recognize that she had, in fact, read the selection and tried to say something about it in her comics. But again Howard had been at a loss to grade her work. Hap was clearly more vocal this time, and there were more frames in the comics as the two characters carried on their discussion about Kant's positions. But after all, Howard had thought, there was simply *less text* here than in the other students' papers. Trudy just wasn't writing as much, even in two or three pages of comics, and it was again impossible to know how deeply she really understood Kant.

"Trudy, I know how much you enjoy art," Howard had said softly, trying not to be confrontational. "But this is a course that turns around the written language, around words that stand on their own. Your comics are fun and interesting, but they go only halfway toward what I see as the proper way to explore the field of philosophy. Why don't you put the comics aside for the third paper and try something a

little different? Besides, you might find some other new ways of exploring the material and becoming engaged with it."

"Fine," Trudy said abruptly, thrusting the syllabus and her paper into her bag. "But I don't consider that freedom." And she swiftly left the room.

Issues for Discussion

1. Is Howard wise in asking Trudy to stop using the comics in her responses to the required writing assignments? How do you assess his course of action?

2. Should Howard have been more explicit in his expectations to students for their experimental writing? If so, could that squelch the "freedom" he wants to give them? What could he have said about his expectations?

3. Is there a way for Howard to recognize Trudy's strongly visual learning style (and creative talents) in his expectations for students' papers?

4. Could Trudy have done anything in her responses to meet Howard's expectations, as these are expressed in his syllabus and in what he said to the class?

5. What issues does this case raise about diverse forms of writing, teachers' expectations, criteria for assessing learning, power vs. freedom in discourse, and the relationship between learning to write and writing to learn?

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"Trudy Does Comics" illustrates an important principle about cases: it is an engaging story based on a real classroom situation. Unlike much theoretical work in composition studies, the case is immediately present, peopled by a real teacher whose earnest idealism is challenged in a temporarily uncomfortable but ultimately productive way.

Conducting faculty development workshops with cases, as "Trudy Does Comics" might suggest, promotes immediate and lively discussion. Because new teachers may have had little experience in the classroom, the situation provided in the case begins to enact what would otherwise remain a fairly generalized problem. Asking a new teacher about how to use journals in the classroom may open up important considerations about the type of writing expected in the journal, how often it will be used or collected, how important it will be in students' grades, or what assignments might feed into it. But the problems raised in "Trudy"—how much to "constrain" students' writing, how to respond to it, how to define or understand its goals, how to recognize students' different

learning styles, or how to measure the quality of students' learning through varieties of discourse some of which may be academically unfamiliar—are brought to life by the specific context of Howard's class. The case provides a scene in which teachers can contextualize practical or theoretical questions.

Cases can also be used in programs involving mentorships or collaborations between experienced and novice teachers. Newer teachers can be paired with colleagues who have a lot of instructional experience, or groups of new teachers can meet with a WPA or other faculty leader, to discuss how they would address the issues, both theoretically and practically, in the actual context of their own institution. We have found that discussions of cases with experienced instructors and tenured faculty inevitably call up the participants' own experiences (sometimes from very distant memory). In turn, these experiences become the "living" scenarios that encourage pedagogical thoughtfulness and turn routine practice into the "scholarship of teaching." Exposed to such narratives of experienced teachers, newer teachers learn of methods and problem-solving strategies they can use in their own instruction.

A successful use of cases involves some attention to the type of participants and the goals of the workshop. In one model, participants are asked to read and perhaps write about a specific case (ideally between meetings). They then divide into small groups and discuss their responses. Once reconvened, the large group compares the issues that emerged from the focused discussions. If the small groups respond to different cases, then a spokesperson in each group can summarize the facts of that case for the larger group discussion. Even that exercise—deciding on the relevant facts of the case—may challenge the group, since the cases are filled with many details that may or may not be considered significant. If all the groups are responding to the same case, then the leader needs to allow enough time for sharing and comparing the group summaries, and for synthesizing the resulting large group discussion.

How the discussion is organized is perhaps less critical than having the chance to explore the situation described in the case. The discussion questions typically included at the end of a case are intentionally provocative and complex. It is unlikely that someone would feel comfortable, on a first try, with a single solution to the problems posed. In fact, participants from different institutions, or with different levels of classroom experience, might want to spend some time putting their responses into a specific context.

When one of us used this case with a group of teachers from a dozen different colleges and universities in one state, we found that the diversity of teachers and institutions made the discussion even livelier than usual. The small groups offered comments which, in turn, were excellent springboards discussions about the uses of informal writing, the nature of teachers' response, the role of students' and teachers' ideologies, and the boundaries of "academic discourse." Some participants focused on Trudy as the "problem," arguing that she had not yet become a member of the academic community and come to terms with the conventions of its writing. Others looked to the development of

Howard's own teaching philosophy, claiming that he was caught midway between his previous, rigid approach to students' learning and a newer, more insightful approach whose particulars he had not yet entirely worked out. Still others focused on the way Howard's training in philosophy had not prepared him to assess different kinds of intellectual work outside his own field. As suggested in these responses, answers to the individual cases will vary. It is in this variation that both the workshop leaders and the participants will find ways to enrich their teaching by finding support for their assertions, thinking about alternative approaches, and trying to reach partial consensus on the problems underlying the case.

Cases: Some Prospects

We see the use of cases as a starting point for programs that want sustained participation in faculty development. Cases offer a kind of model for reflective practice that formalizes experience without taking it out of the world of human action. In an integrated program of teacher development, it may be useful to move from existing cases (which must, at some level, always remain less than fully contextual—see Grossman) to the creation of cases from the actual daily experiences of teachers.

Cases *are* teachers' stories, but stories without immediate solutions. For teachers to turn their own experiences into cases, they must stand back from their experiences and ask what principles or theoretical issues make these experiences important to other teachers. Workshops in which participants begin writing their own cases from vicarious experience often focus on issues of design:

- Begin with a story. What has happened to you as a teacher that presented a problem to solve?
- Does your story present a problem that might lead to reflection, and can that reflection be generalized to other classroom situations?
- How can you deepen the issues in your story? How might you embellish the case?
- From whose point of view do you want to tell the story? Do you want a fictitious persona or do you want to place your readers into the situation ("You are teaching a freshman writing course at X College . . . .")?
- How much contextual information should you include? How much detail is useful, and why?
- Do you want to present a distinctive problem, or is "finding out the problem" part of the case?

Such questions help cases writers to select experiences that can be meaningful to other teachers. One of us, for example, has heard a story about a teacher at a prestigious liberal arts college who has an unusual way of evaluating his students' writing. On the day he returns an assignment, he first hands back the papers of the students who have done well, neatly placing each graded paper

in front of its author. Less successful students, however, are humiliatingly presented with zip-lock plastic baggies containing the shredded contents of their essays. Although it makes a shocking tale for professional conferences and coffee-room chit-chat, this story simply won't work as an effective case. It serves as a dramatic illustration of unprincipled instruction—of what *not* to do. After the initial gasps of horror, discussions of such stories last only a few minutes.

As they begin selecting and crafting their stories, participants welcome the opportunity to write creatively, seeing how their own lives can be transformed into meaningful, interesting tools for faculty development. The process of transforming specific experiences into generalizable cases also encourages teachers to stand back from the minutiae of their instruction and analyze the sources of its complexity. Over time, that experience may create more thoughtful and effective teaching. Such reflection (either as an original case or a response to someone else's case) can become excellent entries for a teacher portfolio (Anson "Portfolios").

Inspired by Brannon's vision of teacher inquiry, we also foresee some exciting potential for teacher-research and other studies arising from the case approach. For example, cases have much potential for longitudinal studies of teacher development (see Anson, described in Anderson). Small groups of 5-6 new teachers could consider and discuss one of two selected cases. Half the groups could discuss Case #1, and the other half could discuss Case #2. These focus-group discussions could be recorded and transcribed. Two or three years later, the same groups could consider and discuss the case to which they did not respond in the first year. Careful descriptive analyses of the transcriptions could then reveal whether there are qualitative differences in 1) the solutions the teachers present for the problem posed in the case; 2) the reasoning strategies used to arrive at a solution; 3) the ways in which prior teaching experiences are employed in the discussion; and 4) the nature of the teachers' talk about teaching in general. Refining the observations may help us to understand more fully not only what constitutes pedagogically rich reflection but also what seems to help young teachers to acquire the perspectives and knowledge that lend themselves to such reflection. We may then be able to revise our teacher-development programs in keeping with our new insights.

Variations on such longitudinal studies might also include comparisons of expert and novice teachers of writing. For example, a group of "expert" teachers (winners of teaching awards and grants, leaders of acclaimed teacher-development programs, etc.) could respond either individually or in focus groups to one or more cases. Comparisons of their responses might then be made with those of relatively inexperienced teachers. This research could discern patterns of thinking typical of expert or "model" teachers. Again, such patterns could be used as a rubric for examining less experienced teachers' pedagogical reasoning processes and problem-solving strategies. Differences might then lead to more principled faculty development programs.

In these and other studies, and in program-specific evaluations of teaching effectiveness, we may find that the use of cases provides a vital new

method for writing program administrators. As the case method becomes more widely used, we might also see its inclusion in professional journals as a way to encourage richer dialogues about teaching throughout the field, or into the work of writing-across-the-curriculum programs. Cases could also be used to raise issues of writing program administration and the implementation of professional standards for the teaching of writing. These and other uses of cases open up new opportunities for teachers, administrators, and students to tell their own stories and thereby reflect more thoughtfully on the scenes and actions that define their professional and personal lives.

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