HIERARCHIC UNDERSTANDING OF   STUDENT TEACHER INTER-RELATION

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between teacher and student has always been a central interest of the educational process. While the nature of this relationship can be understood from various theoretical frameworks, research that seeks to understand the "lived experience" of this relationship is less prevalent. This research explores the phenomenological nature of the teacher-student relationship in the context of teacher education. Stories of the lived experience of this relationship were hermeneutically interpreted against the philosophical writings of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Buber. This paper study how to understand the complex hierarchy of student and teacher

INTRODUCTION

When the teacher-student relationship matters, the teacher‟s and student‟s relational experience is engaged, connected and respectful of the other. This aspect of the phenomenon is revealed in stories that show teachers who "feel for" their students after a difficult lesson or in a moment where the students are personally distressed. In other stories, the mattering of relationship is shown in the face-to-face encounters with another person. Still other stories show that what matters in relationship can be minor actions of remembering details from a conversation to the singling out of a teacher. While variously experienced, the relationship matters.

Teachers and students are always in relationship. The world is made up of a multiplicity of relationships that link us to other people in their presence or absence. The interpersonal mattering is specific to the teacher and student (Dixon, 2007). How this relationship matters to the teacher and student inheres in the experiences of being-in relationship. "Teachers can enthusetheir students or bore them, be approachable or stand-offish" (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 1057). As such, all teaching is inextricably emotional and shows the nature of the mattering

RELATED LITERATURE

Humans relate and indeed, to be human is to relate. Moreover, humans are always in relationship. There is a relational connection between people that is essential to our shared

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humanity (Heidegger, 1996). In this way, "Dasein has its being as being-with others" (Collins & Selina, 2006, p. 63). Heidegger (1996) refers to the primordial existence of Dasein"s "being- with- others" as Mitda-sein (p. 107). Mitda-sein refers to an almost subliminal connection between people. The ontological nature of being-in the- world is as "being-together-in-the- world"; alternatively, "the world is always already the one I share with others" (Heidegger, 1996,

p. 118). For Nancy (2000), all of being is in touch with all of being. As such, existence is a co-existence; the essence of being is only as co essence (Nancy, 2000). "Being cannot be anything but being-with one- another, circulating with the „with" and as the „with" of this singularly plural coexistence" (Nancy, 2000, p. 3). Heidegger (1996) suggests that humans are always in an in- flux relational connectedness. While human beings have some influence as to the "nature" of the relating, we is integral to being human. Relating as beings-together-in-the-world, we show our care for others as an "existential" of our living (Young, 1998, p. 59). Such care is an essential structure of life and "embodies Dasein" (Inwood, 1997, p. 52). Similarly, care is being "already-in, plus being amidst, plus being ahead" and primordial to our everydayness (Young, 1998). Dasein"s being-in-the-world as "care" involves an orientation or relation to others.

One expression of care is solicitude which is the care for other people (Inwood, 1997). It should be noted however that solicitude is not necessarily directed towards the best interests of others and may be shown, for example, as neglect.

The teacher-student relationship is a particular relationship that is experienced ontologically between a teacher and student as Mitda-sein. In this paper, I propose that the ontological nature of teachers" and students" relationships is taken for granted. It would appear that predominant educational discourses perpetuate an individualism of the educational endeavour devoid of the ontological givenness of being-with. The primordial nature of our being-with-others is shown in the phenomenon of relating. Similarly, the relational nature of being-with others is experienced as mattering to those involved. Mattering is essential to how we are being-with-others relationally (Elliot, Kao & Grant, 2004; Rayle, 2006). Rosenberg (1985) describes the phenomenological experience of mattering to others as sensing that we are noticed by and are important to others. Humans sense the interest of others and the valuing of the relational experience (Corbiere & Amundson, 2007). In this way, mattering involves an emotional pull within and between those relating (Hargreaves, 2001). Levinas (1969) would associate the emotional pull of mattering with the inability of the authentic self to do enough for the other. The authentic self seeks to fulfill the responsibility that is felt for the other (Alford, 2007). In this way, the mattering of others is charged with an ethical demand (Joldersma, 2006; Levinas, 1985, 1996; Marcus, 2007). For Levinas (1969), the mattering of others awakens our primordial responsibility for the being-with-another. Relationships always matter. Yet, the nature of the mattering differs in every situation. The nature of the mattering is profoundly important to the relational experience (Elliot et al., 2004; Rayle, 2006).

UNDERSTANDING HIERARCHY OF RELATIONSHIP

The teacher-student relationship rests in the backdrop of teaching and learning. While the relationship can matter more noticeably and is an influence on teaching and learning, the relationship is typically taken for granted in an educational process whose primary focus is on the intentional process of teaching and learning. On occasions, teachers and students pause to savour the nature of their relating, remembering moments when "others" they have been with in particular moments spring to mind. Similarly, when teachers pause, or are provoked, to consider recent teaching experiences with a group of students, they can find themselves lamenting the way they worked with the students. Their concern can include the way they related to the students. In hindsight, teachers who have had an impact are remembered and appreciated.

(A) When the relationship is a matter of indifference

Perhaps what mattered was that this teacher was different to the student. In this way, what appeared to be indifference from the teacher might have manifested itself when the teacher was more focused on concerns outside the classroom. It is the sustained indifference of this teacher that is a matter of serious concern and a lack of care for this student. Contrary to feeling a sense of responsibility in the face of the student, the teacher seems to masquerade in the role of teacher (Levinas, 1985). Indeed the teacher"s unexplained absence from class heightens the student"s awareness of the lack within the relationship. In this story, the teacher"s way-of-being in the teacher-student relationship matters, and needs addressing before the student can fully presence themselves in relational experiences with this teacher.

The relationship appears to be a matter of indifference. Perhaps, something beyond the learning is of greater concern than the students and their learning. Experiences like this can engender a lack of safety in the relationship such that the individual wonders about their place with the otherperson. If the relationship matters to the students, there are occasions when students become distracted from the learning experiences and focus more fully on the way the teacher is relating and why this might be so. Student teachers appear to be less forgiving of lecturers who relate in this way. There is an expectation that those teaching in pre-service teacher education programmes are exemplars of best practice. As such, the thought that a student teacher"s preparation as a beginning teacher is anything other than a primary concern to the lecturer is not acceptable to student teachers. Recent ideological trends have led to lecturers teaching larger classes, focusing on research outputs, and feeling pressured to upgrade their qualifications. This raises the possibility that some lecturers lessen their priority of their relationship with
Students.

(B)   *When the relationship does not appear to matter*

There are occasions when the teacher-student relationship does not appear to matter. In these situations, there seems to be a lack of care and an attempt to subordinate the other. This teacher is with the student but not for the student; present in the teacher-student space but not towards the student (Buber, 1996). The teacher‟s way of relating was less of a being-to-being relating and more of an objectified I-it relating (Buber, 1996).

Buber (1996) describes I-it relationships as occurring when one person in the relationship is considered by the other as an object. This type of relationship can be seen in the way the teacher holds the student in the role of student and does not welcome any appearance of the student "as a person, as an individual". Morgaine (1992) suggests that teachers should "gradually … see … students as individuals as well as future teachers" (p. 187). In contrast, the student in this story is seen as an object, dependent upon the teacher‟s actions for success in the learning experiences. The teacher, furthermore, does not appear concerned about the relational space. Hultgren (1992) suggests that "the response-ability that we have as teacher educators is to create such a space … so that … students realize the power of their own insights and the beauty of their own voices" (p. 237). Student‟s voices are an essential part of the teacher-student relationship.

The student and teacher are always in relationship. While the student or teacher might appear to "break" this relationship, this is in fact not possible. The ontological nature of the teacher-student relationship means that the relationship is always-already an integral part of both the teacher‟s and the student‟s everyday worlds (Gadamer, 1994; Heidegger, 1996; Nancy, 2000). When the teacher-student relationship does not matter to the teacher, the character of this experience is of concern to the student.

CONCLUSION

This chapter address what we appear to have taken for granted; firstly that we are always in relationship, and secondly, that relationships matter. The primordial nature of being human is one of being-with-others in a relational co-existence that is essential to the world we share with others. Other people are always being-there-with us in their presence and absence.

Despite comportment being our public stand, we cannot see our own comportment. Yet what is essential about me, my particular stand, is accessible to others (Dreyfus, 1991). The nature of our comportment is sensed and open for others. In this way our comportment shows the how of Dasein. The accessibility of another‟s comporting occurs within the ontological experience of relating. The openness and accessibility of one‟s comportment is relationally and reciprocally engaged with other‟s comporting. Comportment, then, points to Dasein‟s particular stand in a pre-language and preaudible voice. Teachers‟ and students‟ comportment is sensed by others as

showing how they are. While this comportment has a temporality, the comportment also has the familiarity of a particular stand that shows what is most integral to the person. This familiarity is experienced relationally in how the teacher and student comport. The stories in the first section of this chapter illustrate how who we are as teacher or student is comported and accessible to another. In the second section, the stories show how teachers‟ comportment inspires theirstudents. For some student-teachers, a former teacher‟s comportment lies behind their aspiration to pursue teaching as a vocation. Stories about two such teachers are considered in the third section. The final section describes teachers whose comportment the students dread. The teacher‟s way-of-being seems to attune students to something other than the learning intentions.

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