

LIVING IN STORIES THROUGH IMAGES AND METAPHORS: RECOGNIZING UNITY IN DIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT. Who are we as teachers and what constitutes a desirable educational experience? Two teachers, one Chinese and the other a white Canadian, tell “a single story [of teaching], integrated by our sense of ourselves” (Crites, 1971, p. 303). Our storytelling is enabled by metaphors and images that serve as tools for reflecting on our actions in life and our teaching practice, and as a catalyst for understanding our teacher knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Hunt, 1987).

**VIVRE DANS DES HISTOIRES PAR LE BIAIS D'IMAGES ET DES MÉTAPHORES :
RECONNAÎTRE L'UNITÉ DANS LA DIVERSITÉ**

RÉSUMÉ. Qui sommes-nous en tant qu'enseignants et qu'est-ce qu'une expérience éducative désirable? Deux enseignantes, une chinoise et l'autre une canadienne blanche, racontent “une simple histoire d'enseignement, intégré dans notre perception de nous même” (Crites, 1971, p.303). Notre récit d'histoire est rendue possible avec des métaphores et des images qui nous servent d'outils dans nos actions dans la vie et dans nos enseignements pratiques, et sont un catalyseur pour comprendre nos connaissances d'enseignant. (Connelly et Clandinin 1988, Hunt, 1987).

The story begins

One a Chinese from Mainland China and the other a white Canadian from Ontario, we first met as two teachers in a graduate course focusing on curriculum and narrative methods. An early assignment required us to uncover and reconstruct our personal practical knowledge (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988) by creating a chronicle of our lived experiences, and then sharing the chronicle with the class through reflective storytelling. As we two listened to each other's stories, each of us resonated with the other's teacher-self. This happened, despite the fact we were strangers who had lived and taught on different continents, and whose past was rooted in different cultures. We found we were telling “a single story [of teaching], integrated by our sense of ourselves” (Crites, 1971, p. 303). Our mutual understanding was enhanced

by the metaphors and images that evolved from our lived experiences and helped us to reflect on, and articulate, our shared teacher knowledge.

Prior to this reflective experience of making meaning of our teacher-selves, we had not realized the significance of images and metaphors (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988; Hunt, 1987); nor did we know they reflect, and are an integral part of, our personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1986; Bullough & Gitlin, 1995). Awakening to the power of metaphors and images enabled us to share our concepts of teaching, to understand the values and philosophies we hold dear, and to identify with each other's teaching practice, despite our different cultural backgrounds. To explore our resonance, in the face of our apparent differences, we trace the evolution of our metaphors and images through our stories, constructed in experiences that Shi Jing lived in China and Dianne lived in Canada.

Shi Jing's student stories

We Chinese live in metaphors. Ferrymen, gardeners, and candles are common teacher metaphors, shared socially and culturally in China. Chinese teachers have traditionally taken a dual role: to transmit knowledge as "ferrymen," taking students from one shore of their life to another; and to transform students personally and socially as "gardeners of young minds" through their life-long dedication to education. Like "parents," teachers care about students. Like "candles," teachers burn up themselves to light up their students' lives. Shi Jing remembers her first English language teacher and his wife from middle school who were "ferrymen," "gardeners" and "parents" on her life journey. They were "candles" who lit up her path, shaping who she became as a teacher in China.

Teacher Wang,¹ my first English teacher, began his four-year university studies in Russian in the mid-1960s. However, at the end of his second year of studies, when schools and universities were closed during the Cultural Revolution, he was sent to the countryside. In the late 1960s, with the split between China and the former Soviet Union, English returned to China as the major foreign language across the country. Teacher Wang became an English teacher at a secondary school in my hometown. English was not yet so important in the late 1970s and early 1980's, and most students did not take the language seriously. However, I was attracted to the musical sound of the English language the first time I heard it. Because of my strong interest in English, in my last two years at high school, Teacher Wang tutored me and two other students in his spare time on weekends and summer holidays to prepare us for the Entrance Exams to major in English at university. Like a ferryman, my English teacher worked very hard to carry me in his small boat to the program of Teacher Education in English. Many years later, he told me that he had been in the same boat with me, studying English hard while tutoring me, watched by other doubtful teachers who knew of his background in Russian.

Teacher Wang and his wife's home was one room in a row of simple one-story flats that formed the teachers' residence on campus. He tutored me English under the willow shade by the small river beside the teacher residence during the hot, humid summer days, and burned mosquito-repellent incense to drive away the mosquitoes singing and dancing around us in the dusk. His wife, Teacher Ge, cooked supper on a coal stove beside us outside the door to keep their one room cool. I do not remember how many days, evenings and holidays my teacher spent on my English study, nor can I remember how many times his wife kept me at their home to eat with them. Since he was born, their only son considers me and other students as part of his family, and calls me "Big Sister" to this day.

On the day I left home for university, my mother said to me, "You must always remember your Teacher Wang and his wife. Without them, you wouldn't be able to go to university. You may forget anyone else in your life, but not your Teacher Wang and Teacher Ge."

In the past 20 years, I completed my undergraduate studies in Suzhou and graduate studies in Beijing and taught in a university in Beijing for ten years before I came to study in Canada. Whenever I went back to my hometown, my teacher and his wife always welcomed me like parents whose daughter had come home. His wife would send her husband, my teacher, to the market with a large basket and she would prepare special meals with my favorite food. When they finally moved into a two-bedroom apartment building in the 1990s, they would make a room for me to stay for one night or two during my visit, even though my parents' home was just a few blocks away.

Shi Jing's first English teacher and his wife had "gardened" in her hometown for over thirty years, nurturing "blossoms of peaches and plums" blooming all over the country and even on the other side of the world. A poem written by a poet from the Tang Dynasty hundreds of years ago has been quoted very often to depict the vivid image of Chinese teachers' life-long commitment to education.

*Silk worms wouldn't stop giving silk until they died;
candles wouldn't dry up until they completely burnt out.*

Teacher Wang and his wife, Teacher Ge, are typical of Chinese teachers, especially of their generation, who lived in such Chinese teacher metaphors as "ferryman," "gardener" and "candle." With very limited teaching resources and a very low salary that barely kept ends meeting before the 1990s, many Chinese teachers like Teacher Wang and Teacher Ge influenced and inspired generations of students by living out these teacher metaphors, explicitly stated and culturally acknowledged in China.

Dianne's student stories

My grade seven teacher was a very unpleasant man. He was young, but his approach to children seems archaic from my perspective today. "Class control"

meant publicly embarrassing and humiliating people. His lack of respect for students rankled me to the bottom of my grade seven soul.

I clearly remember Mr. Horton deciding the row next to the window would be the “bad row” for “bad” students who didn’t do their homework or who spoke out in class. Larry was in the bad row from the day of its inception. He was fifteen and still in grade seven. He didn’t ever do his homework, probably because of discouragement and inability. Delbert was also in the bad row. He was high-spirited, and loved sports and recess. The “bad row” aroused my anger and indignation, but what could I do? I couldn’t get rid of the bad row, and I couldn’t get my friends out of the bad row, so I planned to protest by getting put into the bad row! It only took a day; it was easy to annoy Mr. Horton.

I recall a second event. In the spring, gym class included a square dance unit. At the end of the unit, Mr. Horton announced that our report card mark in Physical Education would be based on writing out the instructions for one of the square dances. I always enjoyed gym class, was athletic from the day I was born, and usually got an “A” in Physical Education. When Mr. Horton made his announcement, I looked straight at him to see if he was serious. A physical education mark was to be based on one written test? It didn’t make sense! My only idea to point out this lack of logic was to refuse to study, do poorly on the test, receive a low mark and hope this would bring home to Mr. Horton the incongruity of the situation. I didn’t study and I did have to explain a “D” to my parents, but I’ll never know if this made any impact on Mr. Horton. I learned a teacher can evaluate learning inappropriately, and it can pass unnoticed by others.

In contrast, I remember Miss Wills as a sweetheart. She greeted us cheerfully as we entered her classroom. Miss Wills taught French with vigour and enthusiasm, rolling her “r”s and gesturing dramatically. She regaled us with stories about her days as a student in Paris, making the French culture come alive. She encouraged all the students in her class, offering extra help gently and personally. As students, we worked hard so as not to disappoint a teacher who so obviously cared.

I have warm memories of Miss Laul, a skilled physical education teacher, who epitomized care in curriculum. She “knew her stuff” in the traditional sports, and introduced us to the then-new activities of artistic and modern gymnastics, spending many hours coaching those of us who loved the sport. Both forms of gymnastics gave me great pleasure for years. In fact, I studied physical and health education at university, specializing in gymnastics and competing on the university team. Decades later, Miss Laul and I were both part of the same Modern Gymnastics team representing Canada at the International Gymnaststrada in Denmark. Without Miss Laul’s quiet enthusiasm and dedication to teaching, I would have missed many experiences that are important markers in my life.

From Mr. Horton, Dianne learned that disrespect for students can be expressed in overt behaviour such as verbal abuse, devaluing students by having low

expectations, and lack of care in curriculum. In contrast, Miss Wells taught Dianne that children learn better if they know a teacher cares, and students respond to enthusiastic teaching. Miss Laul pointed out new ideas are fun, and competent teaching and diversity in programming make for pleasure in learning. Robust themes that build learning community emerge from Dianne's stories of the formative years: the need for empathy and respect in student-teacher relationships; the importance of the teacher giving of self and giving of knowledge; the significance of competence in teaching and evaluation. These experiences formed Dianne's attitudes, inform her present teaching practice, and fuel her desire to grow professionally.

Shi Jing's stories of learning and teaching

Teachers tend to teach the way they were taught. Shi Jing thinks this is so if the teacher reflects on, and approves of the teaching being modeled, or if the teaching matches her/his educational beliefs. Otherwise, s/he tends not to teach that way.

When I was admitted into the program of Teacher Education in English at a university in south China in 1982, I pictured the days when I would be a "burning candle" lighting up my students' lives, and I looked forward to being a teacher as giving and caring as my first English teacher and his wife. When I started teaching English to undergraduates of science and engineering at a university in Beijing in 1988, I remembered the story told by two of my undergraduate classmates. Both of them were labeled as "bad students" in their studies, and felt invisible in class throughout the four-year undergraduate studies. One student felt especially hurt by the fact that a major course teacher had seldom asked her a question in class and never spoke a word to her after class. From my fellow student stories and my own learning experience, I have learned that students who appeared slow in their studies actually needed more attention and care from their teachers. When I started teaching, I noticed that "slow" students tended to avoid eye contact with me in class and tried to remain as invisible as they could. Many of these students came from rural areas where learning resources and living conditions were very limited. They experienced difficulties and challenges in their university life. I paid more attention to "invisible" students, talking to them individually during the class break and after class.

Confucius said, "I teach everyone without making distinctions." To Confucius, "By nature, people are pretty much alike, but learning and practice set them apart." "Teachers should teach according to the characteristics of each student in order to meet the individual needs of each student." Shi Jing believes a teacher's first task is to break the barriers between him/her and his/her students. Shi Jing's learning and teaching experiences tell her that combining knowledge with a loving heart and a ready hand makes one a good teacher. She believes the first role of a teacher in a new class, before s/he can really do any effective teaching, is to be a friend of his/her students,

understanding them and paying equal attention to them, no matter where they are from and no matter whether they are smart or slow in their studies. This makes the classroom inclusive for all.

Shi Jing took for granted working as a gardener and a candle in her early years of teaching. She was a happy candle and enthusiastic gardener. However, Shi Jing was not satisfied to be a “ferryman,” repeating the same journey throughout professional life; nor did she want to be a “parent” who spoon-fed students as an authoritative knowledge imparter. At this point, her personal metaphor began evolving from her teaching practice.

Since the 1990s, when English became a “door-keeper” or an “entry pass” for better opportunities in one’s education, work and life, those who do not know English well are deprived in many ways. Confronted with the dilemma of a need for test-oriented English teaching, as well as a request to teach students to communicate in English, I agreed at that time the failure to teach English communicatively in China was mostly due to our language teachers’ own incompetence in the use of the language. To improve our students’ communicative competence in English, I believed that a successful language teacher should be able to perform in the language like a good actor/actress. My colleague and I learned from our American colleagues to improve our own communicative competence in English; as well, we learned how to implement the Communicative Teaching approach to some extent in practice. By integrating more communicative components into my classes, I came to realize that a successful language teacher should be like a drama director. As a great actress, one could only be a competent language teacher in terms of her own content knowledge. To be a successful language teacher, one has to enable, or direct, students themselves to perform well in the use of English. Even so, our students were good test takers but not good language users. The situation became worse when many young teachers quit English teaching for better-paid jobs in foreign companies in the 1990s. This “teacher crisis” made it even harder to make any changes in teaching English. Some colleagues and I were no longer just working like “candles” We called ourselves “firefighters” due to teaching overload and extra, unexpected teaching tasks.

Dianne’s stories of learning and teaching

In her early years as a teacher, Dianne responded intuitively to her students, connecting classroom curriculum to their needs (Dewey, 1938; Whitehead, 1929). Unlike Shi Jing, Dianne had no culturally entrenched metaphors to guide her, although teachers from her student days did offer models of caring, connection and excellence in practice.

As I observed my students and listened to them talk, I became concerned by the large numbers of young females who believed that the word, “fitness, meant the extreme slenderness that comes from constantly denying the natural desire to eat. They understood structural fitness and being slim; they knew nothing of cardiovas-

cular or muscular fitness. I was witnessing the tip of the anorexia nervosa iceberg. My concern led me to create a "Fitness Unit" for female students that combined theory and practice. In class, we discussed the broad meaning of the word, "fitness." Students learned how to use testing instruments, and we embarked on a thorough testing program so that each young woman understood her own level of fitness in all three categories. The course ended with discussions about the desirability of attaining overall fitness and how this could be achieved.

I was fortunate to work with colleagues who constantly asked, "How can we best help our students?" The department was aware many students had tremendous, untapped leadership potential, and four of us collaborated to design a course encouraging students to develop this ability. The course combined leadership theory with classroom practice, and culminated with students seeking and experiencing their own leadership venue in the community. On the last day, students returned to class to share their real life experiences. They felt empowered, and their response empowered us to continue searching for ways to improve our courses and ourselves as teachers.

After teaching for a number of years, Dianne returned to graduate school. A professor led students in his class to visualize images for the qualities of respect, patience, optimism, sharing and humor, with the intent of facilitating understanding and articulation. Fascinated by her insights, Dianne began journaling about how these qualities would look in teaching practice, and also asked an artist-friend to paint the images she had sketched. The reflective process was fruitful; for the first time in her career, Dianne was able to clearly articulate the deeply held beliefs that had implicitly directed her teaching practice.

- *Children deserve the opportunity to reach their potential.*
- *Education in which subject matter connects with the interests of the child (Miller, 1996; Dewey, 1938) empowers optimal development.*
- *Such learning will be a natural, pleasurable and rewarding activity (Whitehead, 1929).*
- *Knowledgeable people who enjoy learning will continue to grow and make worthwhile contributions to society. This matters because, "The importance of knowledge lies in its use, in our active mastery of it – that is to say, it lies in wisdom" (Whitehead, 1929, p. 49).*
- *Teachers who are learners themselves are best able to assist children to optimize their development (Sagor, 1997; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988).*

In the visualization process, a metaphor of Dianne's teacher-self slipped into her mind unbidden.

I am a small, beetle-like bug with two very active antennae. The bug is emerald green, my favorite color, as it is symbolic of growth and rebirth. The bug is small

and so am I. The little bug's antennae are in constant motion, busily sensing the surrounding environment. As a teacher in a classroom, I am this image of heightened sensitivity, aware of the body language and general responsiveness of my students. I strive to create an inclusive classroom, in which each student feels safe, comfortable and open to learning.

An inclusive classroom must be psychologically safe. "Safe" means all students feel free to speak and to be who they are, without fear of negative comment or ridicule. This sense of security comes from mutual respect between teacher and students, as well as between student and student.

Inclusive classrooms have inclusive curriculum. Using Howard Gardner's (1983) concept of multiple intelligences as a framework for designing curriculum in a high school makes space for all students to learn in a single subject classroom. Employing all levels of Bloom's "Taxonomy of Thinking Skills" (1956) provides every student with opportunities to learn at his or her comfort level of cognition, with opportunity for extension. Connecting classroom work to students' real life experience, possibly by considering the personal, cultural and global stories (Drake, 1996), engages and includes students. I use theory extensively to create the most inclusive classroom I am capable of imagining.

Clarity in articulation led to intentionality in teaching. Dianne's "knowing in action" (Schon, 1983) now embodies a theory-practice connection within an action research framework, enriching her teaching and often creating an electrifying improvement in her classroom. Making space for children intellectually frees the whole child; physical, emotional, social, aesthetic and spiritual elements find space for expression. Dianne consciously sought a metaphor to describe her increasingly complex teaching practice; the following image emerged.

I am the Maestro of a large, talented orchestra. I facilitate the synchronization of the players and instruments, blending all, bringing out the best. My image makes space for the passion of the conductor and players, freedom and liberation in the making of music, and the dynamic, energizing sound of the music itself. With the skilled players, I co-create one glorious orchestration, thus creating a learning community. This image dovetails with my values: I am a thoughtful, proactive practitioner; I value the uniqueness of my students and attempt to bring out the best each has to offer; I use my passion for teaching and my knowledge of educational theory to create learning situations that liberate and energize both my students and myself so that we can all experience pleasure in learning. Hopefully, this image and I will share a long and fruitful future!

Shi Jing's bridges on cross-cultural landscapes in transition

The challenges at work aroused questions in Shi Jing's mind about the teacher metaphors in which, consciously and unconsciously she had lived happily for years in her teaching. She felt a strong urge to upgrade her knowledge. In 1998, Shi Jing came to study in Canada.

I first came to Canada, looking for “the golden key” to unlock the English language for Chinese learners. Now I realize that the ultimate goal of language education should be to “help create a society of multicultural, bilingual and insightful citizens who see the world as a place for all” (Young & Kimball, 1995). In other words, “the person who can speak two languages has the special ability to communicate in two ways” (Cook, 1996, p. 150). I believe that the goal of College English teaching in China should be to enable non-English major students to use English for more than just “information communication” (CES, 1997). English language teachers should enable students to use English for interactive participation in international communication, in which English has many purposes: a tool for advanced science and technology; a bridge over the gap between China and the western countries in terms of social, economic and academic development; and a channel through which Chinese people get to know the world and China is made known to the world as well. That is, Chinese students should be able to develop “intercultural communicative competence” (Byram, 1990) in order to understand and appreciate the values of both western culture and Chinese culture so as to be competent in both “academic communicative proficiency” and “social communicative proficiency” (Kagan, 1994) for international communication and cooperation. Accordingly, a successful language teacher should be a bridge maker for students to get access to a new world, as well as for his or her own professional growth. Hence, in terms of Dewey’s (1897) belief of educative values, the education process is to illuminate the learner as well as the teacher in a stimulating, correlating social community.

The image of “a bridge” emerged and evolved along my cross-cultural journey. In the initial image of the bridge, my interest was focused on what could be learned from the “advanced” world, and how the cross-cultural experience of mine and other Chinese visiting scholars would contribute to curriculum and teacher development of language education in China. The experiential narrative approach has made me understand that looking for solutions by focusing on content and methodology is not curriculum inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1992). Thus, my narrative inquiry into the role of language and the role of language teachers in education is leading me on a journey towards cross-cultural and interdisciplinary teacher development within a broader curricular understanding of language learning. Hence, with English as an international language (Widdowson, 1997; Modiano, 2001), my image became a multidimensional bridge which will allow people from all directions to come and go. It is a bridge made of and supported by people, native or non-native speakers of English, who understand and appreciate the values of both Western and Eastern cultures. It is a bridge for people with different cultural histories moving among landscapes and meeting one another in teaching and learning settings (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Based on my hope for democracy in education and peace among us human beings, this image of bridge has been constructed and reconstructed in my cross-cultural dreams of bridging gaps from heart to heart, from culture to culture and from country to country.

Dianne's web of connection and relationship

When I read Carol Gilligan's (1982) book, *In a Different Voice*, I received a gift of the deeply imbued image that guides my teaching practice and, indeed, my life. Gilligan speaks of the "web of relationship," a holistic sense of connection that serves as an ethical, moral guide for many people, I being one of them. Gilligan described a concept that, in image form, guides my every thought and action; it is a concept I "know" from experience, but had never before heard articulated. In the larger society, the web corresponds to Huxley's "perennial philosophy," which holds that "all life is connected in an interdependent universe" (in Miller, 1996, p. 12). In a school setting, the web of connection looks like "students as members of a large, heterogeneous family, all of whom need care" (Noddings, 1992, p. 45).

In the web image, caring for children who are students is not simply a parental responsibility; the interconnectedness of people, means care-giving is shared because, "what the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children" (Dewey, 1902/1990; Noddings, 1992, p. 180). This "ethic of care" (Noddings, 1992, p. 17) states definitively, "the first job of the school is to care for our children" (p. xiv). For the first time in my career, a metaphor important to my teaching practice is culturally recognized and embedded in literature, although not universally accepted.

The image has implications for action that I embrace. If one is connected in relationship, care and responsibility are ethical mandates. My models, Miss Wills and Miss Laul, had an "overriding concern with relationship and responsibility" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 17) that urged them to "attend to voices other than their own" (p. 16) because they were sensitive to the needs of others. My response to their modeling is to embrace their way of being. Reflection opened my eyes to the understanding that I believe children should be cared for because it felt so good when teachers cared for me. My models have pointed the way: respecting students as unique individuals; creating an inclusive classroom; teaching with knowledge, skill and integrity. In Senge's vision, individuals in a successful learning organization see themselves as connected to the world (in Miller, 1996, p. 5). From this perspective, work "is viewed as something sacred" (p. 5). My stories reveal my sense of connectedness and inclusion, as well as how I am drawn to the sacredness of my teaching tasks. I live by the maxim, "Care is the ultimate reality of life" (Heidegger, 1962). The web of relationship is my worldview, and the all-encompassing, guiding image for my practice as a teacher.

Reflections on our metaphors and images

Metaphors and images have served as a tool for reflection on our stories, enabling us to understand who we are as teachers, and what constitutes a desirable educational experience. Interestingly, the reflection also reveals how we each experience metaphor and image differently.

Initially, we embarked on our current journey of exploration because we resonated with each other's stories of teaching, recounted in a graduate course (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Our subsequent sharing of further stories and our reflections pointed to our shared philosophies, values and beliefs of teaching. Our conversations around these stories led to examining metaphors that came from, and supported, our narratives. As our conversations evolved, we came to understand we were also connected as teachers in our resonance with the other's metaphors, embedded in our stories.

As we explore the resonance while recounting our diverse experiences, we are aware that we use the words, "metaphor" and "image," interchangeably. Our metaphors are images we live by in our teaching practice (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). They are rooted in our past life experience or in reflections on that experience (Clandinin, 1986), and emerged as our personal and professional experiences coalesce (p. 131). For Dianne, image has been a mediator between her unconscious and conscious levels of being, and bringing metaphor to the conscious level has been the source of significant insight (p. 17).

As our stories illustrate, we two came to metaphor and images differently. Shi Jing's metaphors of teachers as candles, ferrymen and gardeners are present in her first stories of her student days. These metaphors of what it means to be a teacher are embedded in the Chinese culture. Thus, Chinese teachers, students and parents hold a common image of what it means to be a teacher, and an understanding of the meaning of the metaphors permeates Chinese life. Reflecting on the pictorial and metaphoric nature of the Chinese language helps to explain this phenomenon. Metaphor as language is part of Chinese culture. In fact, the Chinese speak about life metaphorically and acknowledge imagery as a way of conveying ideas that adds to depth of meaning.

Dianne's experience is in contrast to Shi Jing's. Dianne's metaphors of what it means to be a teacher and to teach do not appear in this narrative until her later stories of teaching. Western culture does not provide a "cultural image," and Dianne did not create her own, until guided to do so in a graduate class. This void existed, although she has always been highly sensitive to symbolism. Dianne had lived out the image of the web of relationship for many years, but she was not conscious of it as a guiding metaphor until she was well along in her doctoral studies. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain the cultural difference Shi Jing and Dianne experienced by suggesting most *North Americans do not understand nor accept the idea that the conceptual system of humans is metaphoric in nature (italics are ours)*. Westerners do not consciously live in metaphors, as do the Chinese. Generally speaking, in the West, imagery and metaphor are attributes of poetry that the average high school student struggles to interpret, decontextualized from real life. Metaphors

are not recognized as ways of understanding, common to all. The cultural differences Shi Jing and Dianne experienced in our awareness of metaphor have everything to do with the placing of metaphor in our stories.

Hunt (1987), Clandinin (1986), and Bullough and Gitlin (1995) all address teacher articulation, and connect the lack thereof to metaphor or images. Once again from a Western perspective, Hunt (1987) suggests that teacher-practitioners lack their own distinct, professional vocabulary and the experience of articulating their practice (p. 75). Clandinin (1986) comments, “teachers have fairly well worked out, although not articulated, ideas regarding their purposes and intentions in the classroom” (p. 5) Clandinin (1986) sees image as providing “an exciting entry point into rethinking how past experience could guide the teacher” (p. 7), and “a concept for understanding the possible bases for [a teacher’s] intuitive decisions” (p. 7). Hunt (1987) moved in the direction of enabling teachers to develop images through visualization experiences. The emerging images enhance teachers’ vocabulary and develop their voice, thus enabling teachers to articulate their teaching practice for themselves and to others (Hunt, 1987). This was Dianne’s experience.

For Dianne, the impact of guided imagery was transformational. Although an articulate person in “real life,” she was previously unable to verbalize her practice for the very reasons Hunt (1987) identifies; she lacked professional vocabulary and the experience of articulating. The visualization activity evoked sensory and cognitive experiences that allowed her to articulate her philosophy, values, beliefs and metaphors of teaching. The process was powerful. Without that experience, Dianne’s implicit theories and knowledge would likely have remained unarticulated. On the other hand, Shi Jing reacted very differently to the visualization activities. She came with images and metaphors firmly in place, and with the ability to articulate what it means to be a teacher, from the perspective of Chinese culture. She had no need to visualize in order to bring images from her subconscious to the conscious level. However, as Shi Jing’s stories reveal, her understanding of what it means to be a teacher has changed as she moved from the East to the West. By deliberately reflecting on the metaphors she lived by in China (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Clandinin & Connelly, 1991), Shi Jing was able to uncover and reconstruct her teacher knowledge. Her metaphors evolved through her teaching practice and eventually grew into the more encompassing image of a “multidimensional bridge.” This expands her concept of what it means to be a teacher.

Shi Jing’s first metaphors are culturally embedded, while Dianne’s first, emergent metaphors are personal. Interestingly, Shi Jing’s later, emergent bridge image is personal, while Dianne’s web image of connection is socially (but mostly invisibly) embedded. Our different past cultural experiences resulted

in metaphors emerging at different stages of our lives. Nevertheless, whether or not metaphor is recognized and expressed, it pervades our conceptual system; it directs or mirrors what we perceive, and therefore, the way we think, speak and act (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). We lived by our metaphors, whether consciously or unconsciously. When our experiences fit [with] a metaphor, we experience a resonance and a sense of connection to past experiences of our own as well as of the other's that can "serve as a possible guide for future ones" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 140). Understanding our teacher-selves through metaphor and image enriches the communication and collaboration between two teachers from different continents and cultures.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TELLING OUR STORIES

Making meaning of our teacher self

Teachers generate knowledge as a result of their experience as teachers (Fenstermacher, 1994) and the reconstruction of experience is the foundation of education (Dewey, 1938). Our stories have become meaningful to ourselves and to each other when we "consciously restoried, retold, and relived through processes of reflection" our teaching practice and our life; Furthermore, metaphors and images have evolved and have consciously and unconsciously guided our thinking and action (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, p.259). Deliberately reflecting on our stories of teaching and learning enables us to identify, "reform" and recover "knowledge which is already there" (Oakeshott, 1962, p. 12) in our storied experiences as teachers. Different as we are, we resonate with each other's teacher self manifested in the evolving processes of our teacher metaphors in our stories. The restorying of our teacher metaphors help us to uncover and reconstruct the teacher qualities that we resonate in building an inclusive learning community for our students by being a good observer and a good listener of those we teach. Respect, care, empathy, equity, encouragement and support are key to our teaching practices and reveal our shared teacher beliefs and philosophies of education throughout our lived experience as learners and teachers. Although we are retelling different stories set in different teaching contexts, we nevertheless make meaning of our teacher self by constructing a shared story of teaching that reveals our teacher knowledge across personal, social, temporal and disciplinary boundaries.

Making meaning of curriculum

Different as our curriculum situations are, our stories reveal that teachers always need to deal with concrete particulars of time, place, person, and circumstance arising in concrete situations; theories of curriculum and of teaching and learning cannot alone tell us what and how to teach (Schwab, 1978). What we share in common in our concrete situations is that we can

both come to terms with our situations by thoughtfully considering the commonplaces of learner, teacher, milieu and subject matter (Schwab, 1973) as a set of factors or determinates that occur in statements about the aims, content, and methods of the curriculum (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). The reconstruction of our stories is 'a rebuilding to meet the demands of particular curriculum situations' and the "reconstruction of curriculum meaning from a study of personal experience is a process of rebuilding a narrative that "remakes" the taken-for-granted, habitual ways of responding to our curriculum situations" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 81). From Shi Jing's multidimensional bridge to Dianne's web of relationship, the reconstruction of our stories reveals that East or West, we are on a continuum of organic connection between education and experience. This requires us to think our differences differently, avoiding the east and west dichotomies. Rather than seeing ourselves in different terms, we should recognize more in "narrative unity" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1999) what we have in common in both our educational values and our educational issues. Rather than making distinctions between diverse values, we should identify what we hold in common and how we can inform each other by learning from the diverse values in curriculum and teacher development to create inclusive education in our "interdependent universe" (Miller, 1996).

Making meaning of the restorying process

Connelly and Clandinin (1991, 1999) point out that deliberately storying and restorying our life is a fundamental method of personal and social growth, wherein education is a process of rethinking the past with new external knowledge, theory and experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 1991). We have experienced such personal professional growth particularly enhanced through our deliberate reflection on the evolving process of our metaphors and images of teaching and of living. Through deliberate reflection and reconstruction of our stories, we no longer make meaning of our experience as positive or negative; we see that all experience has shaped who we are as teachers and what we do in our teaching practice. We make sense of our teaching and learning in relation to our own experiences, both past and present, our beliefs about education, our present needs within our particular situations, and our hopes for the future (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). In our resonance to each other's stories, we are telling "a single story, integrated by our sense of ourselves" as teachers (Crites, 1971).

In the meantime, in the very process of the restorying and reconstruction of our stories, we have become more aware of the differences in our individual experiences and in our new directions of personal professional growth. Restorying our narratives with the other (Olson & Craig, 2001; Craig, 2000) through the evolving process of our teacher metaphors engages us in intensive and extensive discussions and conversations in which we listen, question,

share, and discuss with mutual trust, respect and support. This prevents us from telling our stories in a way that is stuck or frozen (Conle, 1999). Moreover, just as the evolving process of our metaphors generates our new perception of teaching and learning, the restorying process of our narratives enables us to extend and expand our narrative inquiry spaces in which we are situated respectively “at an intensively complicated intersection of ideas, positions, and relationships” (Craig, 2000, p.346) in educational research. Hence, the reconstruction of our storied experience is “to prepare” us “for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality” (Dewey, 1938, p.47). In the words of Connelly and Clandinin (1999) elaborated also in Craig’s work (2000), narrative inquiry enables the participation of educators representing different positions and ideologies in these vital narrative inquiry spaces. It provides an important opportunity for people to bridge previously acknowledged differences, to resolve problems of mutual concern and to view one another not as individuals stationed in a hierarchy but as people in relationship with one another and as potential agents of change.

From Shi Jing’s multidimensional bridge to Dianne’s web of relations, we recognize unity in diversity despite our different cultural backgrounds. Living in stories through images and metaphors, these powerful reflective tools stimulate our understanding of a common perspective on who we are as teachers and what constitutes a desirable educational experience.

NOTE

1. In China teachers are called “Teacher” plus the family name, such as “Teacher Wang” in Chinese instead of “Mr. Wang.” I use the “Chinese English” here to show that “Teacher” has been a respectful and almost sacred term in China to call one’s teacher or people one considers more knowledgeable than oneself.

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