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ABSTRACT

Six student teachers who were committed to the tenets of whole language were studied to determine how they manifested their whole language perspectives in light of the enabling and constraining factors they faced in their specific field sites. Results indicated that the six student teachers were forced to alter their teaching behaviors significantly due to constraining factors. The impact of context on teacher's behavior is examined in general, and the categories of constraining factors that cut across all of the six student teachers' experiences are outlined. Constraining factors are categorized in four levels: (1) interactive factors; (2) institutional factors; (3) cultural factors; and (4) personal factors. For each level, anecdotal examples of the six teachers' experiences illustrate the constraining factors involved: working with the curriculum, cooperating teachers, university supervisors, student behavior problems, lack of resources, and personal limitations. (Contains 33 references.) (JDD)

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So You Want to Be a Whole Language Teacher: Constraining Factors that Beginning Teachers Face

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## So You Want to Be a Whole Language Teacher: Constraining Factors that Beginning Teachers Face

Whole language is the focus of much attention in both academic writing and in public schools today. According to Pearson (1989), "whole language has spread so rapidly throughout North America that it is a fact of life in literacy curriculum and research" (p. 231). Furthermore, he adds, "Unlike the open-school movement of the early 1970's, it is not likely to die at an early age" (p.231).

Although there is a great deal of academic discourse concerning the philosophy and teaching practices associated with whole language, little research has been done investigating how specific teachers in specific contexts practice their whole language philosophies; nor has research looked into the constraining and enabling factors that promote or impede these teacher's whole language endeavors.

During the fall of 1989 a select group of six student teachers who were both knowledgeable and committed to the tenets of whole language were investigated. The study focused on just how these six beginning teachers choose to manifest their whole language perspectives in light of the enabling and constraining factors they faced in their specific field sites.

The following report will center on how these six informants were forced to significantly alter their teaching behaviors due to constraining factors found in their placement sites. After outlining the sampling procedures and research methods, a discussion will be presented on the

impact of context on teacher's behavior. The different categories of constraining factors that cut across all of the informants experience will then be outlined. Additionally, Pollard's (1982) three layers of social contextualization (interactive, institutional, and cultural) will be used as a framework to help delineate the levels of constraint that inhibited the informants. In addition to Pollard's three layers of social contextualization, a fourth area--personal constraining factors--will be added.

#### Sample Selection

Following the guidelines of purposeful sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Patton, 1980) a number of steps were taken to identify those student teachers that were used as informants for this study. First, an initial pool of sixteen candidates was gathered by going to the language arts methods course that preservice teachers take prior to their student teaching assignments and asking for volunteers who would be willing to participate in the study. From that initial pool, interviews were conducted to determine those students who had a high degree of commitment and a well-formed understanding of the philosophy of whole language.

The interviews delved into a variety of topics associated with whole language instruction: the kinds of whole language instruction, if any, they saw themselves using in their student teaching experience; when (right away, after they feel comfortable with the routines of

teaching, at the end?) they planned on using whole language strategies for teaching children; the ways that they think children learn to read and write; and in what kinds of situations (only if the cooperating teacher used whole language instruction, only if the cooperating teacher said it was okay, or no matter what?) they would attempt to use whole language instruction?

After interviews were conducted an initial sorting of the sample was conducted looking specifically at those candidates that expressed both commitment to and understanding of the principles of whole language. Next, the college instructors who taught these pre-service students whole language instruction were asked to rate them on their commitment and knowledge. Their ratings were combined with information gathered during interviews to help select the six top candidates for this study.

Methods associated with interpretive field studies were used to collect and analyze data (e.g. Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Erickson, 1986; Spradly, 1979; & Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Observation and interviews were the primary means for gathering data. In addition relevant documents such as lesson plans, student work, public school guidelines, and textbook materials were used.

Approximately 108 hours of time was spent in the field observing the informants. During most observations, interviews with the informants were also conducted. If interviews could not take place during the times

observations were made, phone interviews were conducted within five days. Observations were purposely staggered so as to watch each informant at different times of the day and different days of the week. In this way different stages of their student teaching and a wide selection of classroom life was witnessed. The purpose of this observations was to provide the researcher with "here-and-now experiences in depth" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273). Observations produced examples that depicted the kinds of instruction in which the student teacher engaged the class in. Follow up interviews were conducted to verify the intent of these practices and the beliefs that were behind them. Interviews were also conducted with the informant's cooperating teachers and university supervisors to assess the informant's work.

#### Analysis of Data

The "constant comparative" method of analysis was used as a guide for understanding the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goetz, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this method comparisons begin with an analysis of the initial data and continue throughout the entire period of data collection and analysis. Categories of meaning began to emerge from initial data and gave focus to later data collection. With more data collection and analysis, the properties that made up the categories become further delineated and better understood. Finally, the informants were given the

opportunity to respond to the findings prior to writing a final draft.

#### Context's Impact on Teacher's Behavior

Student teaching does not take place in a vacuum. Instead, it takes place in environments rich in complexity and fraught with constraints. Doyle (1977), for example, explains how the ecological factors (e.g., teacher-pupil ratio, student ability, resources and supplies) found in classrooms exert influence on how student teachers teach:

. . . environmental demands moderate performance and establish limits on the range of response options. From this perspective, learning to teach involves learning the "texture of the classroom" and a set of behaviors congruent with the demands of that setting. (p. 51)

Cole and Griffin (1987) point out that "context refers to the events preceding, occurring with, and following the cognitive task (mental work that occurs when a child is doing a particular curriculum task)" (pp.5- 6). Moreover, Cole and Griffin (1987) use the construct "embedded contexts" to illustrate that classroom, school, and community organization all contribute to the context that is woven around and significantly impacts classroom life.

It is important to understand that public schools are state-sponsored institutions that are responsive to economic, social, and political demands from local, state, and national governments (Greene, 1989). To understand teacher's actions (both novice and experienced teachers) it is imperative to understand their specific contexts and to

make linkages of what they do with the demands these contexts exert.

#### Four Levels Of Constraints

Pollard (1982) has proposed a conceptual model which describes three levels of social contextualization: interactive, institutional, and cultural. The interactive level describes the classroom context and those forces that originate at that level (e.g., teacher-pupil relations, relationships with cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and students). The institutional level stands for the properties of the school culture that exert constraints (textbooks, resources available), and the cultural level describes those forces that originate outside the school that exert constraints (e.g., state mandated tests). The fourth level added to Pollard's levels, personal constraining factors, consists of those biographical factors which orient individuals to respond in certain ways (e.g., personality traits, pedagogical skill, and motivation). By applying four different levels of analysis to this case study, a more complete picture of the constraining factors that impact student teachers can be drawn.

It must be noted, however, that the main focus of data collection for this research study was at the classroom level and personal level; therefore, the institutional and cultural levels of analysis are only partial. Clearly, more

research needs to be undertaken which focuses more on these two levels of analysis.

### Interactive Level

The interactive level, which takes place in the classroom, was where the student teachers faced the day-to-day situations that constituted their experience. It was at this level that all the levels--institutional, cultural, and personal--exerted their influence. However, in an attempt to illustrate how different constraints originated at different levels, only those constraints that originated in the interactive level will be described in this section.

A good way to understand how all the levels exerted their influence on the interactive level is to compare a classroom where students are taught to a greenhouse where tomatoes are grown. The actual growing of the tomatoes happens inside the greenhouse where the plants are rooted. A care giver is responsible for a certain number of plants to which s/he must water, fertilize, and regulate temperature. The personal characteristics of the care giver (e.g., how s/he handles the plants when tying them up, if s/he gives them the recommended amounts of water and fertilizer) affect the quality of the tomatoes. But decisions outside the care giver's jurisdiction influence how s/he cares for the tomato plants. The owner of the greenhouse makes decisions on varieties grown, amount of seedlings planted, quantity and quality of resources provided (e.g., type of soil, amount of water, type of

fertilizers and chemical sprays used). Even beyond the owner's jurisdiction, events happen that affect the tomatoes. For example, the kinds of chemical sprays on the market and their costs: the plentifulness of different natural resources needed, such as water; what the consumer wants when shopping for tomatoes; and the price they are willing to pay. As can be seen, decisions about the way tomatoes are grown are made at several different levels.

As these student teachers carried out their day-to-day responsibilities of student teaching, they faced a multitude of constraining factors that inhibited the way they went about manifesting their whole language perspectives. Certain constraining factors were more inhibiting than others. Furthermore, the degree of intensity of any one constraining factor differed, depending on the context and the student teacher's individual response to the constraint. The multitude of constraining factors that had an impact on the interactive level can be divided into the following three categories: 1) influence of those with formal sanctioning power, 2) influence from students, and 3) limitations of time.

*Significant Others Constraints:* The individual who exerted the most influence on the way the informants carried out their teaching duties was the cooperating teacher. Except for Jane's and Rita's (all names used are pseudonyms) cooperating teachers who had similar whole language perspectives and in most instances helped enable the

informants, the individual who exerted the most constraints on the informants was the cooperating teacher. The cooperating teacher's beliefs on what his/her role as a cooperating teacher was and his/her beliefs on how curriculum and instruction should be enacted significantly influenced the type of world these student teachers found in their placement sites.

Karen's cooperating teacher, who taught third grade in an inner city school, carried out her supervisory role by controlling the decisions on what was to be taught, and to a large extent, how it was to be taught.

After observing her cooperating teacher teach the first week, Karen slowly began taking over some teaching responsibilities. Karen was handed a curriculum to follow that was determined mostly by the textbooks that had been adopted by the school corporation. A typical lesson as taught by Karen's cooperating teacher consisted of the teacher directing students through their textbooks and/or the commercially produced materials that accompanied the textbooks (e.g., student workbooks, supplemental work sheets). Often times when teaching reading, Karen's cooperating teacher would read straight from the teacher's manual, asking questions and waiting for the correct pupil responses (correspondence with Karen 6/12/90).

Most of the lessons Karen taught resembled those of her cooperating teacher. For example, one of Karen's first lessons was in spelling. Prior to the lesson, Karen's

cooperating teacher had explained to her exactly how she would teach the lesson taught. The lesson began when Karen's cooperating teacher told students to quietly put away their books, to get out their spelling books, and to give their attention to Karen. Karen proceeded to go over the lesson as it was presented in the book. Students took turns reading the questions and then answering some of the questions. After each of the questions from the spelling book were read and Karen had made sure everyone understood what they were to do, students were instructed to correctly put the heading (name, date, and subject) on his/her paper and begin the assignment. Karen then went around and helped students individually who had trouble completing the assignment (observation of Karen 9/11/89).

Karen's cooperating teacher explained that the reason Karen had spent so much time taking students through this spelling lesson was to teach them how to correctly do their spelling, since all spelling lessons were similar to this one (interview with Karen's cooperating teacher 9/11/89).

Karen expressed dissatisfaction with the way spelling was taught:

Some of the things [activities in spelling] are so stupid, but I'll do them because my cooperating teacher wants me to, and it is her classroom. I'm only here ten weeks, and I'll be gone. I can't wait to get my own classroom. (interview with Karen 9/11/89)

Pressure from the cooperating teacher to maintain the existing forms of curriculum and instruction, such as Karen perceived, was felt by all of the informants. However, the

pressure to maintain the status quo varied from subtle forms of control to more direct forms of control.

Karen discussed the pressure to maintain existing forms of curriculum and instruction:

Researcher: What kind of pressure did your cooperating teacher put on you to keep her skills-oriented curriculum in place?

Karen: She told me, "Okay this is how I teach spelling. On Mondays we do this, on Tuesday we do this." She would mark skills in the reading book that she didn't cover. She never said, "You have to do it this particular way," but she said, "This is the way it is done here." (interview with Karen 10/21/89)

Although most of the cooperating teachers, like Karen's, applied subtle forms of control to maintain their curriculum and instruction, there were incidents where the cooperating teacher applied more direct forms of control.

Paula, who was teaching science in a sixth grade class, was told by her cooperating teacher to drop her idea of teaching students how to apply the concepts of longitude and latitude. Paula had originally designed her mapping unit to emphasize these concepts, but when Paula showed her cooperating teacher the test she designed which contained many problems pertaining to longitude and latitude, Paula's cooperating teacher told her the students would not be able to do them and that she had to skip that part. Calling her cooperating teacher's request "disgusting," Paula reluctantly complied and redesigned her test similar to the ones her cooperating teacher designed: filling in the blanks. This resulted in Paula significantly altering the kind of instruction that she had originally planned in order

to prepare students to do well on the new test (observation of Paula 11/17/89).

Two reasons surfaced as to why the informants made efforts to maintain existing teaching practices despite their disagreement with these practices. The first one, was the student teacher's assumption that when she took over teaching responsibilities her job was to substitute for the cooperating teacher. Substitutes do not alter the course of events; rather, they fill in and do what those in power do or tell them to do. Karen commented on how she saw her student teaching role:

I always felt it was her classroom. I was only there for a short time compared to an entire school year. I didn't have the right to disturb that or to make her [cooperating teacher] upset. As her student teacher, I was just teaching her class. (interview with Karen 12/14/89)

A similar belief was expressed by Rita, whose placement site was a sixth grade in the same school as the placement sites of Paula, Carol, and Jane. When asked why she taught spelling as she did, even though she considered much of it "stupid," she said, "Why does a student teacher do anything?" Replying to her her own question, Rita answered, "Because her cooperating teacher does it" (interview with Rita 12/13/89).

The second reason for maintaining the teaching practices of the cooperating teacher was the importance attached to getting a good evaluation. Each of the informants was evaluated by her cooperating teacher at the end of her student teaching experience. All student

teachers at the university were warned before doing their student teaching on the importance of pleasing their cooperating teacher:

This is a critical time for you. You must get a good evaluation if you want to get a job. There are two ways to be successful: 1) be motivated and 2) be flexible. Remember, you're going to have to adapt to them [cooperating teachers]. If they hand out work sheets, you're going to have to hand them out, too. You have to adjust to them. When you get your own classroom, then you can do what you want. (observation of acting director of student teaching addressing student teachers during the student teaching orientation meeting 8/22/89)

Not surprisingly, this warning was taken seriously by the informants. Carol voiced concern about her evaluation: "I think about it [final evaluation] all the time. It is a big deal" (interview with Carol 9/26/89). Voicing similar sentiments, Karen said: "Your biggest goal is to get a good evaluation. Your future employers are going to look at that" (interview with Karen 9/19/89).

While the cooperating teacher obviously exerted the most constraints on the informants, in some cases, the university supervisor also exerted pressure to conform.

One way the university supervisor constrained two of the informants (Karen and Linda) was by demanding certain requirements of them over and above those requirements demanded by their cooperating teacher. Linda, for example, was required to document how her lessons fit in with the state guidelines:

More than once did my university supervisor make me do busy work. The last week that she came, she gets there, and she wants all this stuff. What she asked for me to do was to write out objectives and goals to

make sure I was covering the bases with all these little dippy projects. So I make out lesson plans for every subject for the whole four weeks. That took me two weekends. When I brought them to my university supervisor she said, "Oh, this isn't what I wanted." I said, "You tell me what you want, and I'll give it to you." It turned out that what she wanted was to know how all those dippy things fit into the state curriculum and to make sure that I could support everything that I did if a parent called me on it. I went down to campus, pulled out the state guidelines, xeroxed the stuff for second grade, and cut and pasted the guidelines to every little handout we did. That was really stupid. (interview with Linda 12/1/89)

A second way the university supervisor constrained some informants was by what s/he failed to do. According to the director of student teaching, one of the main jobs of the university supervisor is to help the cooperating teacher and the student teacher work together (observation of university supervisor meeting 9/22/89). Very seldom, however, did any of the informants indicate that their university supervisor helped them work out disagreements or helped open lines of communication with their cooperating teachers. Karen voiced severe complaints towards her university supervisor's passive role:

Here it is; I've been teaching for fourteen weeks, and I haven't sat down and talked with her [university supervisor] yet about my teaching. Maybe she'll come tomorrow, but what good will that do? (interview with Karen 11/30/89)

Furthermore, Karen felt cheated by the quality of university supervision she received and believed that her university supervisor could have helped a great deal:

If I had last year's supervisor [supervisor Karen had her junior year], she would have come in at the beginning [of student teaching]. She would have talked to my teacher and talked to me about doing more of what I wanted to do. However, I didn't have that support.

I felt cheated out of it. (interview with Karen 11/21/89)

*Student Constraints:* Lortie (1975) points out that the psychic rewards of teaching come largely from pupils. Each of the informants were influenced to a considerable degree by how the students responded to their learning activities. The whole language perspectives of these student teachers were notably constrained when pupils misbehaved, exhibited deficiencies in academic and/or social skills, or seemed unmotivated while engaged in learning activities that were whole language in nature.

Rita had a lot of discipline problems with her class of twenty-nine sixth graders. She indicated that there were six students who received special help from the school's social worker because of their antisocial behavior (interview with Rita 1/16/90). During a lesson on writing topic sentences where students were working together in groups, several students went out of control, upsetting the lesson and their student teacher:

Researcher: Do students prevent you from trying some of these ideas?

Rita: Yes, I'd say that definitely. During the lesson on topic sentences today, I got so frustrated with them to the point I had to yell at them to tell them to shut up, and I hate to do that. I had to do that this time because it was getting out of control. . . . That is how they inhibit me, by depressing me. (interview with Rita 10/19/89)

Jane also found that the behavior of her students inhibited whole language teaching practices. She wanted her third graders to help their fellow classmates edit each other's stories. The editing phase was one of the stages in

the authoring cycle, a process approach to writing that Jane learned in her reading methods courses (interview with Jane 12/18/89). When students were ready for the editing phase of the writing project, Jane chose not to have students peer edit but, instead, had them self edit:

This is the first time I've experienced having kids make fun of each other. I'm not going to let them do peer editing because they would rip each other to shreds. I'll have them do self editing instead. (interview with Jane 11/8/89)

Linda was often times frustrated when working with a lower level reading group during her second grade placement. Although she voiced strong beliefs in the importance of having students write, she found this lower level group both unable and unwilling to write (interview with Linda 10/23/89). Moreover, Linda indicated that many of her second graders lacked the necessary skills to help each other edit a story. Linda was quick to note, however, that this lack of skill was due to the limited opportunities students had to work in groups:

Researcher: Would you say that the kids themselves inhibited you from cooperative learning?

Linda: It just isn't offered [opportunities for cooperative learning]. It would have been really neat to have students work together when they made their presentations to the entire school. Although we chose not to do it, the kids could have done it. It would have taken time out from something else, but so what. (interview with Linda 12/1/89)

In Karen's view, her inner-city third graders disliked many of her whole language teaching practices:

I'd like to say that I at least exposed them to reading for fun, reading for research, and those kinds of things. But from what the kids told me, it wasn't that fun for them to do that. A lot of them wanted to do it

the easier way: filling out dittos, getting their work done, and not having to think very much. (interview with Karen 11/21/89)

Furthermore, Karen felt limited to the kind of homework she assigned. Because of a district-wide policy, all teachers were required to assign homework four times a week. Karen usually would assign them spelling homework out of their textbooks because she thought, "There was something they could do on there own" (interview with Karen 11/30/89).

When she did assign "creative work," they would not do it:

Once I asked them to draw maps of their bedrooms at home. I got maybe five out of eighteen. Things like that [drawing the maps], they were more unlikely to do. Something that might take effort on their part isn't what they want. (interview with Karen 11/30/89)

*Time Constraints:* Without question time limitations put a severe constraint on the informants' abilities to manifest their whole language perspectives. The informants found their own time--time that they could have used to plan and develop curriculum--in short supply as well as the amount of time given to them to put their methods of instruction into practice.

Because of financial need, Carol, Karen, and Jane were forced to work part-time jobs. Carol, who worked twenty-nine hours per week, reflected on her limited amount of time: "I would like to try some more learning centers. If I didn't work, I could do more with them" (interview with Carol 10/6/89). Carol particularly felt that she needed learning centers (places where students could go and independently learn subject matter) when teaching her fifth

graders reading. Carol's system of reading, much different than the reading book/workbook style of her cooperating teacher, had students reading trade books, discussing them with their teacher, and then doing independent and/or group projects on these trade books. During the course of a period, some students would be reading their books, others would be discussing their books, and still others would be engaged on a project of some kind. Carol found it difficult to manage the rest of the class when she was engaged in a discussion of the story with a small group. Carol voiced concern at putting into practice her whole language perspective when teaching reading:

We would see a video of a whole language lesson being taught to six students. I would think, "What do you do with the rest of the kids?" Learning centers are what you do. (interview with Carol 9/26/89)

Karen found herself overwhelmed with the amount of work she had to do outside the classroom. Besides working part time, Karen had a lot of work to do outside the classroom because of a special program she had enrolled in at the university called the Urban Project. The Urban Project included the following requirements in addition to full-time student teaching: a five week stint in a social services agency prior to student teaching, a visit to two school board meetings and two urban issue meetings, eight interviews with citizens from the community where she did her student teaching, an adult literacy class to teach two evenings a week, and several written reports.

It was not uncommon for Karen to wake up at 5:00 a.m. to begin her day and not get back to her apartment until after 9:00 pm. During the course of her student teaching, Karen admitted that all the work she was doing was making her "physically tired" (interview with Karen 10/4/89). After her student teaching experience was completed, Karen reflected on the Urban Project:

I wish I could go down there [to the university] and tell those interested in the Urban Project not to do it. It isn't worth the time and energy. All the things you have to do take away from your teaching. The adult education was a great experience. I met the most interesting people, saw problems I never even knew existed for those immigrants who didn't know the language and don't know what it is like to live in this country. I'm glad I got exposed to it, but spending six hours a week doing that takes away from time I could have planned. (interview 11/30/89)

Besides the limited amount of time they had for planning and developing materials, the informants found a limited amount of time for accomplishing all that they wanted to do when teaching. Paula, who had developed a unit on communities with her second graders, found that there was less time than she needed:

The way it works in our classroom now, time is just a killer. Teachers have either science or social studies; they don't have science every day or social studies every day. That is why I'm combining my social studies and science unit every day, so I can do both every day. Time is horrible, always. There are so many interruptions, special classes, and this and that. (interview with Paula 8/30/89)

Rita also found classroom time constraints as one of the major limiting factors for her. Even though Rita volunteered to extend her student teaching to include an

extra week, she did not feel that she had accomplished all that she wanted to with her sixth graders:

Researcher: I gathered that although you were able to do a lot, there were limitations.

Rita: One thing that I didn't realize was the time that you're in there is so short, and it goes by so fast, that even if I had those kids a whole year I wouldn't be able to do everything I would want to do; it just goes by like a blink of the eye. When you have this list of things you want to get done, it [student teaching experience] isn't very long at all. (interview with Rita 1/16/90)

Compounding the problem of time constraints was the fact that many of the whole language activities that these student teachers attempted required pupils to be engaged in the activity for extended periods of time.

Jane found that her attempts at using the authoring cycle short circuited by time restrictions. Jane admitted that even though her cooperating teacher gave students many opportunities to write, there was no particular block of time set aside each day when students could write their own creative material; thus, she found herself unable to put the authoring cycle into full operation:

I maintained my cooperating teacher's system. It isn't so much that the authoring cycle is so radically different than what she does because it is not. But it [authoring cycle] is a drawn-out system. I learned the last time I did it [in her last field experience] that although it worked and the kids got something out of it, it takes a long time to really effectively use that system of writing. (interview with Jane 12/18/89)

There were many constraining factors within the confines of the informants' classrooms. The influence of those with formal sanctioning power, the pupils, and the lack of time were all factors that limited the actions of

the informants. Another level of constraint was the informants' personal skills at handling the difficulties they encountered.

#### Personal Level

Clearly, the contexts of the informants' placement sites had a significant impact on the teaching practices of these student teachers. As powerful as the contexts were in shaping the informants towards conservative teaching practices, however, context was not the sole determiner of what took place. The student teacher's own personal qualities helped either to enable or to constrain her whole language perspective.

Several of the informants lacked management skills and found difficulty disciplining students. Others lacked skills in planning activities and delivering classroom instruction. Still others had a hard time breaking free from their student status and tended to follow the lead of their cooperating teachers instead of following their own inner voices.

It must not be assumed that these student teachers were deficient in the personal qualities necessary to be successful teachers. They were novices whose inexperience was understandable. Skills such as managing a room of twenty-five students take time to develop. Each of the informants grew as professionals and demonstrated a greater competency to teach and manage students by the end of their student teaching experience.

By far the most difficult task for the informants was managing students, which many of them admitted was a weak area. As Jane concluded, "They saw me as a friend at first. I made the grave error of being too lenient. I didn't put my foot down at appropriate times. Now I am" (interview with Jane 10/4/89). There were several instances when students misbehaved during the time the informants were teaching them. At such times, the informants concentrated more time and energy into managing students than into planning and teaching.

One way management problems took time and energy away from the student teachers was by causing them emotional distress:

Rita: Today was kind of a bad day and, I'm attributing it to the snow. But the kids were really wild, almost out of hand. I was so disgusted when I got home. . . . I had two students who just got up and walked out of the room in the middle of a lesson. That is the kind of kids they are. They just don't understand organized classroom behavior, and I don't understand where they got that. (interview with Rita 10/19/89)

Jane: Before lunch there were several instances of poor behavior. Russ was writing bad language on the computer. Ray and Joe were doing nothing, and Nikki was out of her seat running around. I'm really frustrated about what to do. (interview with Jane 10/17/89)

Karen: Monday was the worst day of my life. It was the first time my cooperating teacher left the room. There were a few kids that acted up all day, no matter what I did. I sent them out in the hall. I yelled at them. They would not behave. . . . It makes me feel like I'm failing. (interview with Karen 10/11/89)

Another way behavior problems took time and energy away from the informants was the constant effort during the day of keeping students under control. Linda admitted that the

biggest problem she had when teaching her second graders was their inability to listen to her and each other (interview with Linda 10/20/89). In an effort to get kids to listen, Linda had students get really quiet and listen to the clicking of the minute hand on the classroom clock (observation of Linda 10/20/89). It took Karen fifteen minutes to quiet down her third grade class before she could begin her social studies lesson. Even then, there were five students who were misbehaving during the lesson, making it hard for the other students to follow the lesson (observation of Karen 10/17/89).

Behavior problems also caused some of the informants to alter their whole language perspectives in favor of more conservative instructional strategies. Rita, who believed in using cooperative groups, had difficulty controlling students when they were engaged in group work:

They just can't function when they do group work. They get really excited, and they can't stop, so that is basically what happens. Then you have to stop everything, and then the whole class can't do it because two or three can't do it. It's just too many kids for one person to handle. (interview with Rita 10/19/89)

Rita's difficulty with handling students during the time they were working in small groups was a common problem among the informants. Karen, Jane, and Linda also experienced similar difficulties.

Due to their inexperience, the informants struggled at times with planning and delivering instruction. Carol, for example, had difficulty teaching math in a way that was

reflective of her whole language perspective. The math lessons she taught to her fifth graders originated from the basal math book that her cooperating teacher used. After completing her student teaching experience, Carol voiced her dissatisfaction with the way she had taught math, wishing she had had more knowledge on how to teach it:

I wish he [university's math methods instructor] would have told us more how you would teach whole language math. He [math methods instructor] told us mostly about different computer programs and packages that you could use in the classroom and things like that--not really how to teach it. How to teach math in a whole language way would have been an interesting thing to learn. I don't think my math methods teacher was whole language. (interview with Carol 11/8/90)

Linda struggled with how to teach reading. Her second graders were organized by her cooperating teacher into leveled groups which met for about thirty minutes each day. Knowing the importance of teaching her students to read, Linda was concerned early on in her student teaching experience about how she would accomplish this goal (interview with Linda 8/22/89). Her concerns persisted as she searched for a method of instruction: "First grade reading--that worries me. If you screw that up, you just messed them up for a long time" (interview with Linda 12/1/89). Linda's apprehensions were compounded by the fact that many of the students in her room had a first grade teacher who had supposedly taught from a whole language perspective the year before, and her students failed to learn important reading skills: "I see so many of those little kids from first grade who are pitiful. They have no

strategies for sounding out words; it is awful" (interview with Linda 12/1/89). Although at the end of her student teaching experience Linda acknowledged that she considered herself a whole language teacher, she wondered if she had missed something in her methods courses that might have informed her about how to plan for and deliver reading instruction (interview with Linda 10/2/89). Linda pursued many different teaching strategies--reading aloud, group discussions, and creative writing--when she taught reading. But she never felt comfortable: "I'm looking for good ideas. . . .I want to see how other teachers teach whole language. People say it can work. I want to see it" (interview with Linda 12/1/89).

Lastly, many of the informants found it difficult to assert their perspectives on teaching. Instead they opted to maintain the existing teaching practices of their cooperating teachers. Karen, for example, was dissatisfied with the way vocabulary was being emphasized over story content: "I don't think they read for meaning; they read to find the answers that you are looking for" (interview with Karen 11/21/89). But she said, "I did do the vocabulary words before we read the next story because that was the way it was done" (interview with Karen 11/21/89). Moreover, Karen admitted: "She [cooperating teacher] never said I had to do it this particular way" (interview with Karen 11/21/89). Despite the fact that her cooperating teacher never overtly came out and told her to teach in certain

ways, Karen, for the most part, maintained the teaching practices of her cooperating teacher. Karen summed up her reasons for doing so:

I don't think I had the right to go in there and do my own thing. In that setting I never felt welcome. I don't think I would because it isn't my classroom, and I'm not the type of person who would overstep my limits even though my philosophy goes against her philosophy. (interview with Karen 12/14/89)

Personal difficulties with classroom management, planning lessons, delivering instruction, and asserting their teaching perspective over that of their cooperating teachers' perspective all added to the constraints the informants confronted in their placement sites. Besides those constraints that originated within their classrooms and within themselves, these student teachers faced a whole set of constraints that originated within the institution that housed their classrooms.

#### Institutional Level

There were five different types of institutional constraints that the informants' confronted: shortages of professional personnel, the physical characteristics of classrooms, limited supplies of teaching materials, the school-adopted textbooks, and the ethos of the school. Shortages of professional personnel caused all of the informants except Karen, who had 18 students, to have class sizes between twenty-five and thirty-one students. Linda had thirty-one second graders, which she admitted was too many (interview with Linda 1/15/90). Because of her large class size, Linda was unable to give as much individual

attention to students as she wanted. For example, Linda had a group of eight students, all boys, who had limited reading abilities. Because there were four reading groups, there was simply insufficient time to listen to these particular students.

This group of kids needed time to talk. They didn't have that. There wasn't a sharing time, and there was [sic] a lot of kids in there that had very serious problems who needed somebody to listen to them. (interview with Linda 12/1/89)

Linda's principal also felt that the second grade class size was too large.

In second grade this year, we have thirty-one students and a full-time aid. When Mrs. \_\_\_ [Linda's cooperating teacher] began teaching that was a normal size class, but back then we taught in a very traditional way, and you didn't really require the space; you didn't provide as much individualization. . . . Now thirty-one seems to make a very crowded classroom and makes it very difficult for teachers to provide for their students. As we see larger class sizes, we are going to see more and more frustrated teachers. (interview with Linda's principal 1/17/90)

Shortages of teachers was not the only employed personnel that the student teachers' placement sites lacked. There was a limited supply of personnel to supervise students during recess, lunch, or the boarding of the bus after school. All the informants were burdened with extra responsibilities of supervision outside the classroom.

In some of the informants' placement sites, the physical characteristics of the classroom made it difficult to carry out certain teaching practices. Linda, for example, had difficulty teaching reading at the table where reading groups convened because the table was too small to

handle the large number of students in the reading groups. Linda complained about how over-crowded the reading groups were, especially a group that had ten students in it.

Another problem with the reading groups are [sic] they are crowded. I know that each time I have that one group of ten, one of them is going to spend that time in my lap. (interview with Linda 10/23/89)

Linda's university supervisor also noticed problems with the physical arrangement of students for reading groups.

I watched her [Linda] teach a reading group of seven or so students. . . . Three were paying attention, and the rest were not. I said to myself, "Gosh here are three kids who are in the ozone." I think the seating needed to be arranged differently. (interview with Linda's university supervisor 1/16/90)

Linda was not the only one who experienced difficulties with the physical arrangement of her classroom. Carol had problems as well. Carol had developed a social studies unit in which her fifth graders were engaged in a lot of group work. Although Carol was generally pleased with the quality of work students accomplished in their groups, she felt it would have been better if there had been more space to spread out the groups.

The groups needed more room to spread out in and to work just in groups instead of bothering other groups. You have to have some way that the class is divided, so the groups can be alone and not worry about the other groups. In this classroom kids were almost touching each other. It was so easy for a lot of the kids in the class to get sidetracked. (interview with Carol 11/8/89)

Another limited resource the informants discovered in their institutional settings was a limited supply of children's literature books in multiple copies. All of the informants acknowledged the importance of getting students

to read children's literature. The only multiple copies that the school provided to the classroom teacher, however, were the basal reading books. Of the informants, only Carol Jane, and Rita had their students reading children's literature from a book other than their basal readers.

Carol searched outside the classroom for multiple copies of trade books. She was told by her cooperating teacher that the school only provided the basal textbooks, and did not allocate money for teachers to purchase trade books (interview with Carol 9/5/89). Although Carol was able to round up some multiple copies from the gifted and talented teacher, she was disappointed with the selections available for the lower level reading group.

The lower level group had fewer choices because there weren't enough copies of anything for their reading level. They read The Wish Giver, but I think they would have rather read something else. When they did get to reading something else, they did better. David, for example, didn't read The Wish Giver at all. But when he got to go to the library and pick his own story, he started reading and reading by himself. (interview with Carol 11/8/89)

The lack of multiple copies of children's literature comprised only a small fraction of the way textbooks constrained the informants. The most powerful textbook constraint was the commercially produced basal textbooks that were purchased by the school corporation for their teachers and students. The informants found the basal textbooks dominated the curriculum and instruction in their classroom. Furthermore, Karen, Linda, and Paula found that the basal textbook determined reading instruction to such an

extent that they had little or no influence on how reading was taught.

These commercially produced basal textbooks would not have been such a constraining factor if they were resonant with the whole language perspectives of these student teachers; however, they were not. All of the informants voiced criticisms of the textbooks. Karen did not like the basal reading book that was used to teach reading because of the skill activities that followed each story and because students found the stories uninteresting (interview with Karen 11/21/89). Paula did not like the fact that the workbook which accompanied the basal reading book was used merely as a means to keep students occupied while the teacher worked with reading groups (interview with Paula 9/21/89). Rita complained about the social studies book.

This social studies book tries to compact so much information in a paragraph its incredible. Today we talked about the fall of Assyria in one paragraph and then in the next paragraph we talked about how Babylon conquered so and so. All this covered in two paragraphs--about a thousand years worth of history! I said, "I have to apologize to you kids because this is how the book does it." That just flabbergasts me the way it's handled. I said something to my cooperating teacher and she said, "I know, but that's what we have to work with." (interview with Rita 10/19/89)

The degree to which the informants were forced to use the basal textbooks in the delivered curriculum was directly proportional to the beliefs and practices of their cooperating teacher. Karen, Linda, and Paula, who had little freedom to practice their whole language perspectives during reading instruction, worked with cooperating teachers

who both believed in the basal and used it religiously. Paula found early on in her student teaching that her cooperating teacher was a firm believer in the efficiency of the basal reading book. When Paula asked her if she could skip some of the workbook pages, her cooperating teacher told her no. Her cooperating teacher's reasoning focused on the fact that the commercially produced reading program came with a series of tests that students had to pass before advancing to the next level of instruction. If students did not do all of the workbook pages, they would not have exposure to the necessary skills to make these advancements (interview with Paula 9/21/89).

The final institutional constraint was the ethos of the institution itself. Sarason (1971) points out that the existing structure of a setting serves as a barrier to recognition and experimentation with alternative structures. But these structures are not only the result of factors that lie within the confines of the classroom (i.e., the cooperating teacher, students). The school itself has its own culture which can serve as a barrier for certain kinds of teaching practices. The informants were located in three different school buildings. Each of the settings had its own unique ethos, which in turn produced constraints that varied in both degree and kind.

Karen's third grade placement was at Lincoln Park, one of sixty-seven elementary schools located in the inner city of a large metropolitan area. The school was markedly

custodial in the way it controlled student behavior and student learning. Lincoln Park's principal took pride in the fact that students were well behaved at events such as school assemblies. He explained that at Lincoln Park, "We expect them to behave, and we work on getting them to behave" (interview with Karen's principal 6/8/89). Students were monitored during every activity they did. As a way to maintain neat conditions in the rest rooms, large charts were posted outside of them. Teachers took their students to the rest rooms as a class. Prior to the students entering the rest room, teachers made an inspection to make sure nothing was out of order (i.e., no paper towels on the floor, no writing on mirrors, etc.). Teachers would then mark the chart to indicate the condition of the rest room, who last used it, and at what time they had used it (observation of Karen 10/11/89). When students went to lunch, they quietly followed their teacher to the cafeteria in single file lines. Upon entering the cafeteria, students went to designated areas as a class and sat in alphabetically assigned seats. Once seated, students were called up by class in alphabetical order to receive their lunch. After lunch, if the the weather was nice, half the students went outside for recess while the other half had indoor recess (students alternated days in which they had outdoor recess because the outside playground was small). Finally, after their recess was over, students would line up

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by class and wait for their teachers to come and get them (observation of Karen 10/4/89).

Controlling the actions of students occurred inside the classroom as well as outside the classroom at Lincoln Park. Karen discovered from observing different classrooms that the teacher-directed lessons that typified the lessons of her cooperating teacher were standard practices throughout the school (interview with Karen 11/16/89). Even when students went to the library, their actions were controlled by structured activities. Once, for example, during library time, students were given a lesson on the importance of alphabetic order by the librarian. After arriving at the library, students sat in designated spots which had the materials they would use (i.e., crayons, ditto sheets and library books) already on the table. In their forty-five minutes in the library, students were directed through three activities: completing two dittos on alphabetizing and alphabetizing a set of six books (observation of Karen 10/11/89).

Karen found that her students rejected or abused any activity in which they were encouraged to show their own initiatives. This student resistance was due in part to the culture of the school. Students had few opportunities at school in which to act independently. When Karen gave them such opportunities, such as going outside to survey the school grounds, they were ill-prepared for the experience.

Linda's school, Gilbert Elementary, was located in a small rural school corporation. Linda's principal explained that two of her goals for the school year were to establish more parent involvement and to help insure a safe school environment (interview with Linda's principal 1/17/90). One means for generating more parent involvement was through class presentations. Each month a class would put together a formal presentation and invite members of the community to watch. Linda and her second grade class were very much involved in helping to establish better parent relations, as their turn to perform came during Linda's student teaching experience (observation of Linda 10/23/89). Consequently, a great deal of time normally spent on classroom instruction was set aside for practicing their presentations. One activity that Linda and her cooperating teacher spent time on was having students practice memorizing several poems and songs that were used as part of the presentation (observation of Linda 9/18/89)

The other goal, establishing a safer environment, also had an effect on Linda. Under the safe-school policy, teachers were required to spend more time supervising children during the times they went to the rest room, went outside for recess, ate their lunch, and went home on the bus (interview with Linda and her cooperating teacher 8/29/89). Linda's typical day of supervising responsibilities would include twenty minutes at lunch, twenty minutes at recess, fifteen minutes taking students to

the rest room, and ten minutes at the end of the day watching students board the bus (observation of Linda 10/12/89).

One of the biggest constraints on Linda's teaching perspective was limitation of time. The goals that her principal had built into the culture of the school consumed even more of this precious commodity. The time that Linda spent supervising and getting ready for the class presentations could have been used for planning and delivering some of her whole language learning activities.

College Park Elementary, located in a small Midwestern city of approximately 50,000 people, was the final spot where the informants did their student teaching. Carol, Jane, Paula, and Rita were all located there. An examination of the culture of College Park Elementary serves as a good contrast to the cultures of Lincoln Park and Gilbert Elementary.

College Park Elementary was not as custodial as Lincoln Park. Students had a great deal more freedom. During recess, for example, students in Jane's third grade were given the option of going outside or staying inside. After lunch, Carol let her students come back to the room to play on the classroom computer if they so chose instead of going outside. Rest room breaks for Carol's and Jane's classes were never a supervised event. Students simply went to the rest room when they needed to. Whereas students at Lincoln Park did not have a single field trip during the time their

student teacher was there, the students in Carol's and Jane's rooms went to places almost on a weekly basis--going to such places as the zoo, the historical museum, and the post office. In short, the students at College Park had many more school opportunities to participate in unstructured activities and were thus better prepared to handle learning activities such as group projects and independent learning centers. The student teachers from College Park Elementary found students mostly willing to do their whole language learning activities.

Carol: The kids were pretty susceptible [sic]. They were willing to change and try something new. The same thing was true with the groups. Although they did have a hard time with it in the beginning, most of them said they liked it, that it beat sitting there and doing work sheets. (interview with Carol 11/8/89)

Rita: The kids at College Park are used to people coming in and trying different things on them. They are good guinea pigs. They just mold and do what you want them to do because they are used to it. That helped make it easier trying to do different things. (interview with Rita 1/16/90)

Time limitations were also not as pronounced at College Park Elementary as they were at Gilbert Elementary. The amount of time that teachers were required to supervise students outside the classroom varied greatly. Students were not supervised as heavily during rest room breaks, and College Park hired special personnel to supervise students at lunch time. Furthermore, there were no school requirements to make any presentations to the parents. Although Jane and her cooperating teacher did present a play to parents, it was done by choice.

In summary, shortages of personnel, limitation in the physical characteristics of the classroom, limitations of teaching materials, school-adopted textbooks, and the ethos of the school were all constraints found outside the classroom. But institutional constraints were not the only constraints that originated outside the classroom. The informants' classrooms were also affected by state policies.

#### Cultural Level

As many educators have pointed out (e.g., Greene, 1978; Cornbleth, 1987; Giroux, 1980; Eisner, 1982; Postman, 1979) public schools in this country are being dominated by a "technocratic" approach to education that manifests itself in three different ways: 1) an increased emphasis on goals of achievement, especially in areas considered basic such as the 3 Rs; 2) the advent of commercially developed instructional packages that break up complex skills into small steps so that each step can be taken one at a time; and 3) the use of evaluation tools that use "objective" means for demonstrating the effectiveness of what is being taught. Finally, this technocratic approach to curriculum and instruction has a deskilling effect on teachers' work (Giroux, 1984; Wise, 1988; Apple and Teitelbaum 1986; Woodward, 1986; Densmore, 1987). In other words, teachers have less autonomy in what they teach and how they teach it.

Given this information, were the informants constrained by this technocratic ideology? The answer is definitely yes. The State Department of Education in the state where

the informants were located had adopted a state competency test which put pressure on individual schools to boost student test scores. All of the informants' cooperating teachers were subjected to the influence of the state mandated tests. Furthermore, each of the informant's schools had adopted commercially produced materials for all the different subject areas. With the exception of Jane's cooperating teacher and, in some instances, Rita's cooperating teacher, all of the cooperating teachers followed the commercially produced materials that were purchased for them.

In 1987, the state enacted a major educational reform package. One of goals of this reform package was to have individual schools increase scores on a state wide competency test. In order to measure performance, The State Board of Education, on September 7, 1989, came out with the following specific goal:

Increase the average median national percentile ranking of students taking the state competency test, specifically by at least 10 percentile points in grades 6,8,9 and 11 and by at least 5 percentile points in grades 1,2, and 3 by July 1, 1993. (Albert, 9/8/89)

In an attempt to apply additional pressure on individual schools to meet state goals, state officials enacted a performance-based accreditation system along with a system for rewarding schools monetarily. The performance-based accreditation system included two academic criteria that each elementary school must meet in order to gain accreditation: 1) meet state established minimum performance

on the math and language arts portions of the state mandated test, and 2) meet state established minimum performance on the total score of the state competency test (Albert, 10/5/89).

The state's system for rewarding schools features an annual allotment of ten million dollars. In order to receive awards, individual schools must demonstrate improvement in two of four areas: attendance, total performance on the state wide test, language arts scores, and mathematics scores (Albert, 1989 12/15/89).

The pressure on schools to pass accreditation and to win some of the ten million dollars in reward money is enormous, especially since each school's record is public information. Speaking of the impact of the public knowing how individual schools fare, one superintendent from a school corporation in the state said, "People are looking at this as an indictment of the instructional program. When people read this [schools that fail accreditation] in the local news, the misconception is, 'Here is a school with problems'" (Albert, 10/5/89).

The elementary school that had improved its attendance and state competency test scores more than any elementary school in the state from 1987-88 to 1988-89 earned a \$34.88 per-pupil award (\$12,279 in total). The principal of the school credited the school's improvement to a caring staff, attendance awards given every six weeks, the school's new

computer labs, and good preparation for the state competency test (Albert, 12/19/89).

The principals of the informants' schools felt the pressure of the state competency tests. Linda's principal, who was in charge of a small rural elementary school, spoke on how the test impacted her school:

I feel like particularly the state competency tests have set us back. Now instead of being able to have an open curriculum across the grades, we can't. Because we know that students are going to be tested on particular things for their proficiencies, it locks us in. We're not very happy about that. As the cooperation grows, it tends to become more centralized. We see more corporation curriculum guides being written. We can still get around some of that because we are a small outlying school and the majority of board members are not that interested in what we are doing as long as our test scores stay where they should. So we can do more than the larger elementary schools in our corporation and get away with it. But we are still feeling the crunch to conform to the traditional curriculum and methods. (interview with Linda's principal 1/17/90)

Pressure to have students do well on the state competency tests was not the only way that the state exerted its influence. The state, to a large degree, also controlled the instructional materials used in the classroom. Linda's principal spoke about the way her school's instructional materials were being controlled by the state:

The way that the textbook adoption operates now is that the state gives school corporations everything that they will adopt, and you have to adopt something from that list. Those tend to be basals. All materials tend to be traditional textbook materials, so when you adopt something you're locked into State Board of Accounts. The way they say you have to handle your textbook rental is first of all, it has to be something from your adoption list; then once you have adopted it, that goes on your rental list, and you charge parents

for that. If you charge them for it, you have to provide it. We have had a bit of flexibility there; however, it was tightened this year because we had a new reading adoption. What is probably going to happen to us soon is in the next year or two our textbook accounts will be handled centrally. All of the ordering will happen from central office. All of the payments will be fed into central office. While I'm handling it, I can provide some degree of flexibility. For example, if the workbooks are crummy, I can provide something of equal value in place of the workbook, and we can get away with that to some degree. I won't be able to get away with that any more. (interview with Linda's principal 1/17/89)

The state competency tests (a battery of different tests) that were given during the year were a powerful means of controlling the way curriculum was conceived and carried out in the informants' classrooms. It was only in Carol's fifth grade placement site that the influence of the state competency tests were negligible--a predictable outcome given that the state did not test fifth graders.

Similar to their reaction to the commercially-produced basal textbooks, the informants were critical of the state competency tests because they were incompatible with their whole language perspective. Paula discovered, much to her chagrin, that the process approach to writing she aspired to teach was not supported by the state competency tests:

The writing sample [test for written competency] was so stupid. They expected the students to write an expository essay, with correct punctuation, spelling, etc., and to do all this on the first [emphasis added] copy. (interview with Rita 12/13/89)

The student teachers were not the only ones to disagree with these tests; their cooperating teachers voiced criticisms as well:

Teaching to the test--that is what we are doing here. Even me, who really resents testing situations. Since we have to do it, there is no way around it. I can give grades on that grade card from all the projects we do; I don't have to test them for one minute. But the state competency tests are something that they are going to have to face, so they are going to have to be ready for it. (interview with Jane's cooperating teacher 12/20/89)

Despite student teachers' resentment of the state competency tests, tests were frequently responsible for changes in the informants' teaching process. A good example to illustrate this impact happened in Jane's third grade placement site during a math activity. One of the questions students were to answer called for students to write  $2 \times 6 = 12$  another way. One student, Derrick, wrote  $2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 = 12$ . Jane commented to her cooperating teacher that Derrick's answer was indeed correct. Jane's supervising teacher, however, knowing that the question was looking for  $6 \times 2 = 12$ , voiced her concern: "You better let him [Derrick] know that there is another answer for that because that is another one that is on the test [state competency test]" (observation of Jane 11/8/89).

Preparing the children for the state competency exams was a common occurrence in the informants' placement sites. Karen, for example, was urged by her cooperating teacher to spend a lot of time working with the third graders on building better vocabulary. The students from the year before had tested below grade level on the state competency exam (interview with Karen and her cooperating teacher 10/4/89). Thus, Karen's cooperating teacher had decided to make vocabulary building one of her top priorities for the

year (interview with Karen 9/25/89). A typical reading lesson had students going over the new vocabulary found in their story. Vocabulary was taught through work sheets that accompanied the basal reader. Teacher and students would orally go over the work sheet, and then students would be assigned to complete the work sheets on their own (observation of Karen 10/4/89).

#### Implications

First, research attempting to understand classroom life in specific context must go beyond those factors that lie within the confines of the classroom (e.g., teacher-pupil ratios, student ability, resources and supplies). There is a need to understand that classrooms are embedded in contexts created by the ethos of the school, the surrounding community, as well as regulations and policies issued from state and federal governments.

Secondly, teacher education institutions, particularly those attempting to help future teachers go beyond the conservative teaching practices that dominate American classrooms, must help provide the conceptual frameworks necessary for future teachers to understand how these various embedded contexts exert their influence. Maxine Greene (1989) argues:

The knowledge base [of teacher education] that is essential to such sense-making must be open to what has been and is being discovered with respect to the systems surrounding the schools and affecting what is done in schools. (p. 152).

In addition to helping students understand the forces that impact classrooms, strategies could be taught which assist these future teachers in acting as change agents. For example, teacher preparation programs could help beginning teachers understand the "politics of teaching" (Kohl, 1976). According to Kohl (1976), if beginning teachers who are intent on creating substantive changes in areas such as the curriculum are to be successful, these "prospective teachers have to know the social system they will be trying to change" (p. 124). By understanding more fully how the school's social system operates, future teachers can begin the task of implementing realistic changes within their schools. Goodman (1988, p. 39) notes several important political skills that he believes future teachers who are orientated towards reflective and active forms of pedagogy need to have: 1) how to relate to individuals in authority positions; 2) how to deal with institutional traditions and expected norms; 3) how to propose and initiate changes in ways that do not needlessly alienate other people; 4) how to sustain change once it begins; and 5) how to develop a base of support among pupils, other school personnel, and community members. In addition, teacher preparation programs can help prospective teachers examine the specific constraints that they meet in their particular placement sites. One way of doing that is through a study of the school culture when doing their student teaching. For example, student teachers could, with

the help of their university supervisor, conduct an ongoing study of the many constraints they face in their particular buildings. For instance, it might be determined that a shortage of time makes it impossible for the student teacher to plan original lessons in every subject. Therefore, a strategy in which the student teacher concentrates planning original lessons in only one or two areas instead of all the subject areas could be adopted.

Finally, it is important that teacher educators within teacher education programs understand that changes within, although important, are not all that is needed. As many educators have pointed out, the working conditions that exist in American schools must be improved (Goodman, 1988; Shulman, 1983; Howey & Zimpher, 1989). Outside influences such as limited funding for education and state mandated testing have a negative impact on the quality of classroom life. The curriculum within the informants' placement sites was influenced to a large extent by the state competency test. Teaching to the test is a real issue and can not be solved by teacher education programs alone.

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