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AUTHOR Christodoulou, Niki
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe a group of graduate students who attended a self-education class and interpret their reactions using autobiographical case study methods and the researcher's subjective lens. The graduate course in self-education was designed to study self-education as a phenomenon of interest and to enable participants to explore dimensions of themselves not yet explored. About half of the 17 graduate students were professional educators. Self-education is conceptualized in this study in terms of three traditions: intellectual traditionalism, social behaviorism, and experientialism. The study describes the course, the group, the professor, the sources, and the readings that each participant separately and all participants in combination put together. Artistic sources were used to talk about and further self-education and personal development. The paper discusses the implications of self-education courses for teacher inservice education and other professional development. (Contains 39 references.) (SLD)

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The Study of Self-Education as a Graduate Course and as an Illustration of what an In-Service Education should be: An Autobiographical Case Study and Other Possibilities

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Niki Christodoulou
University of Illinois at Chicago

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is, through autobiographical case study methods, to describe and interpret a group of graduate students who had attended a self-education class, using my own subjective lenses. I outline the implications of the course and recommend that such a class should be offered to educators as part of their teacher, pre- and in-service, education, and the benefit for their students' learning. In addition, I offer other possibilities and research approaches through which the self-education class of Spring 2002 could be studied. These approaches are arts-based, historical, philosophical, and ethnographic inquiry, as well as case study, survey, comparative experimental, and quasi-experimental methods. The paper is addressed to educators, teacher educators at colleges of education, policy-makers and all those who are interested in self-education, curriculum and instruction, and educational issues in general. Also the study is offered to indicate that it could be good for graduate students and professors to share case studies of courses so they could learn from experience of one another.

Self-Education—Framing the Study

Education can be distinguished into two main categories, that is, formal and informal. Formal education takes place through institutions, schools, especially designed and established for this purpose. At these places educators and students come together into an environment that aims to offer educative experiences. This is the part of education that occurs according to a certain plan, in a formal, organized, and systematic way. The materials to be used, the curriculum to be taught, the knowledge to be learned, why, and how, are things that have been thought of in advance, that have been planned, and derive from a certain rationale, and philosophy. Informal education is the education people get from experiences that do not fall into the category of formal education. It is the education we get from the "school of life". Our interaction within the society, narrowly and broadly defined, with all its institutions and agents, gives us experiences and knowledge, and it contributes to our transformation and growth; it contributes to our informal education. Therefore, any interaction, formal or informal, that contributes to the unfolding of one's character and personality including bodily, mental, emotional, social, ethical, religious, spiritual, and political aspects, and to the shaping of one's theory and practice, may be seen as educative, and may be called educational praxis (Danassis-Afentakis, 1992). According to this view, all human beings have certain predispositions and endowments, which, depending on what environment somebody engages, will be developed and become part of one's personality, or remain silent and buried deep under the foundations of one's self.

Curriculum is a term able to shed light on the term *education*. *Curriculum*, in its broad definition, is the course of our lives; it is the pathway we follow in our life with all

milestones in it that contribute to our growth and to subsequent milestones; it is the journey of our lives. In its more narrow definition (the one that takes into consideration the schooling aspect of education), it is the courses and lessons offered from an institution as part of the formal education it strives to achieve. I consider the three aspects of curriculum, namely outside-of-school, inside-of-school, and non-school curricula, as depicted by Schubert (1997), to capture education in its broad sense. The outside-of-school curricula include political, value, and economic contexts. The inside-of-school curricula, or within-school contexts, include overt, hidden, null curriculum, as well as extracurricular activities, frame factors, and physical plant that shape curriculum. Finally, non-school curricula include homes and families, peer relationships, mass media, formal organizations—such as church groups, street gangs, musical groups, sport leagues, and service clubs—vocations, and avocations. All of the above, and not just the inside-of-school curriculum, as Schubert (1997) would argue, have a lot of input in the curriculum of our lives, and thus in our education and growth.

From the above influences human beings select dimensions that interest them in order to facilitate, expand, and promote their personal education, their self-education. What I mean by this is that from the experiences offered to us through formal and informal education, and from all those features that formulate curriculum we pick and choose those aspects that are convenient for our own growth and that help expand our personality. We pick and choose, based on our interests, goals, personal history and background, those experiences that affect the way we think and act (theory and practice), and that give us further experiences, motivate us and inspire us to continue our journeys, and help expand our insights. This procedure is a self-educational one. Self-education is a more self-driven kind of education than formal education, which mostly imposes on us what to learn. But even in formal education, where learning is imposed and planned in advance, one still chooses what to learn and how—depending on one's pace of learning, skills, abilities, prior knowledge, interests, socioeconomic, and political background. Here, too, self-education is influential.

Dewey's definition of educative experiences, growth, and education sets the basis for me to discuss the concept of self-education. According to Dewey (1916), "the ideal of growth results in the conception that education is a constant reorganizing or reconstructing of experience" (p.76). Self-education then is directly connected to experience, to educative experience, as Dewey would have called it. In order for an experience to be educative it needs to bear the characteristics of interaction and continuity (Dewey, 1938). Interaction implies that in experience individuals and external conditions come together, and do so in such a manner that both are further modified. And as individuals move from situation to situation, their world expands. Continuity implies that people are to be conceived as 'living creatures' actively seeking to establish and maintain conditions of their subsequent life. Every experience reinforces or modifies the prior organization, establishing preferences or aversions that in turn may also open up or close down the external environment as subsequently experienced. This definition of educative experiences supports the notion of growth; it leads to growth. Growth, as Dewey defined it, is "the continuous shaping and re-shaping of biologically given life-needs into abiding ends, of given habits into durable means adjusted to securing such ends, and of a world that provides sustainable interaction" (Waks, 2001, p.420). Education "is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the

meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience” (Dewey, 1916, p.76). Self-education then is education; it has to do with finding resources to educate the self, and educative experiences are such resources. Growth is the outcome of self-education.

Autobiography and biography are sources for self-education, as well. As Schubert said in one of his classes, autobiography/biography is a wonderful source in trying to understand issues of education. According to this view, researching one’s autobiography, or any other biography, enables us to see the milestones that have contributed to the shaping of one’s education. As said by Dewey “we learn from reflecting on experience; such reflection gives meaning and direction to our lives” (Schubert, 1999b, p.141). Both autobiography and biography consist of reflection; we reflect on our own experiences or on somebody else’s experiences. Schubert (1999b) argues, “the lives of other teachers help them understand themselves better. They learn from other teachers’ guiding ideas, of ways they dealt with problems, of their hopes and aspirations, and of concrete teaching approaches that they can add to their own repertoires” (p.141). And then he adds “We learn that others have experienced similar problems, and as we probe them more deeply we see that our dilemmas are part of the great human dilemmas about life, death, love, freedom, justice, goodness, beauty, contribution, and so on” (p.141). As Ayers (1999) advocates “...autobiography—personal life as cultural window—is an act of self-definition, of self-creation, and is, then, potentially an act of transformation” (p.157).

Pinar’s (1994) contribution to our awareness of the notion autobiography is huge. As he argues, “like some modern painters, my students and I have come to feel that we rarely need to go to subject matter outside ourselves. We work from a different source. We work from within” (p.10). He enables us to understand our lives through the method of *currere*, which includes four stages: the first stage is the regressive, which is the returning to the past; the second is the progressive, the looking at what is not yet the case, the future; the third is the analytical, the describing of the biographic present based on the past and future, and finally the synthetical stage, the putting of all the pieces together again. Pinar (1994) enables us to see truths about ourselves through the stories of K. and Mrs. Brown. He uses metaphorically the story of Mrs. Brown to discuss the importance of self-awareness: “Mrs. Brown is ourselves, and to say we have lost track of her and spend our time looking elsewhere is to say we have lost track of ourselves. Many of us are lost in ‘thought’, in the conceptual” (p.15). “Because we have become lost from ourselves we peer out the window rather than at Mrs. Brown. To bring our gaze back into the carriage is to look...inside ourselves as well as outside, and begin to describe, as honestly and concretely as we can, what our internal experience is... We must...begin a lengthy, systematic search of our inner experience.” (p.16-17).

In a sense, self-education is based on autobiography and biography. In the search of our selves, we need to gaze inside and look for our interests, our strengths, and our personal histories. We need to search for the features that will facilitate our education, help our self come into being, and make possible the realization of our motives, dreams, aims, and aspirations. As Dewey (1916) argues, “the past is a great resource for the imagination; it adds a new dimension to life, but on condition that it be seen as the past of the present, and not as another and disconnected world” (p.76). And when Pinar (1994) says, “in a sense autobiographical work is never completed” (p.45), we need to take into

consideration that self-education is never completed as well. "What is really *learned* at any and every stage of experience constitutes the value of that experience... It is the chief business of life at every point to make living thus contribute to an enrichment of its own perceptible meaning..." (Dewey, 1916, p.76).

Self-Education and Three Traditions

Schubert (1997) uses three curriculum orientations (p.13), namely intellectual traditionalist, social behaviorist, and experientialist, to illustrate the problematic state of curriculum knowledge. In this section I study the responses of these three orientations to the idea of self-education. I try to see self-education from the scope of intellectual traditionalism, social behaviorism, and experientialism and explore how self-education can benefit and grow from these traditions. I show how each of these traditions may interpret the notion of self-education, giving emphasis mostly to the segments of their interpretation that are closer to Dewey's notion of education.

According to intellectual traditionalists the curriculum should consist of the liberal arts tradition, so that learners be exposed to the great books. The purpose for this is to develop the mind and to become acquainted with life's great ideas and questions. Acquaintance with the great books develops the mind and introduces the great mysteries and events of life. Ideally, one should always pursue one's education. Formal education, however, should take place in schools, and education should proceed throughout life. Self-education is a great notion because it enables the mind to expand. It should be done through the studying of great books and great people. We need to study how great people have facilitated their self-education and have them as examples to be followed. Great books can become food for thought; they offer features that may make one think and reflect on different events and experiences, and on one's life events; they include characteristics and works of art that may be moving and very influential to somebody; and may motivate one to pick and choose those characteristics that promote one's own sense of meaning and direction.

According to social behaviorists the curriculum should consist of operationally designed skills and knowledge. Science and technology must become the mainstay of the curriculum itself, because they are the tools that promote our society and help the world become a better place. Therefore, students should be acquainted with these tools. This can be achieved by applying the knowledge from scientific educational research to curriculum design and practice, and by giving bigger emphasis on theories of learning and instruction. Schools should offer the possibility of different learning environments to accommodate the needs of carefully evaluated students and to offer skills and technical abilities needed by the society. Self-education is a great idea. It may improve our society by enabling people to become acquainted with skills and knowledge, especially in scientific and technological tools needed by the society. The education of the self should be done through experimental methods and through the method of disciplined induction. This means that one should be able to test a specific skill, ability, and knowledge in order to see if it works for oneself, if it promotes one's interests and goals, and then continue from there. If a certain behavior is found to be beneficial for somebody then one adopts it; if not, one leaves it and moves to the next behavior to test. Experimental methods,

such as problem solving, hypothesis testing, and acceptance or rejection of hypothesis, as well as investigation, analysis, and assessment are means to be used in educating the self effectively.

According to experientialist dialogue and the interchange of experiences and ideas among people should be main components of the educative process. All people are agents of their own learning. Therefore, learning should grow from one's own experience and it should take the direction conceived by the learner, in order to be truly for that person. Learners' interests and experiences should be the guidebook of those designing curriculum and instruction. As Schubert (1997) states "experientialist curriculum must involve teachers, students, community members, and curriculum leaders in a shared community of growth. All of them must acknowledge that they can both teach and learn from the others in honest and worthwhile ways" (p.18). Learning, according to this view, can take place "anywhere that human beings can genuinely reflect on their experience and act on the fruits of that reflection to reconstruct their personal perspectives and political institutions" (p.18). Learning occurs continuously throughout life through reconstruction of experience, meaning making and interpretation of its possible meanings and significance. Self-education occurs when the world outside the self meets the inside and vice versa. This meeting stirs the inner world and causes change and growth. The individual then moves on as a changed, renewed person. The outside world, the environment, changes by this interaction as well. Individuals internalize aspects of moving and influential experiences, because they judge them as worthwhile and beneficial to their personal growth. When the outside world meets with the inside the foundations to educate the self are being created. Through reflection and dialogue we create the conditions for self-education. Speculating the milestones in our pathways, reconstructing our experiences in a more meaningful way, and trying to make sense out of each experience allows us to see things as they might be otherwise, to see new possibilities in our experiences and lives. The focus should be on our experiences. This process facilitates our growth, and thus our self-education.

In the above paragraphs I tried to explore issues of self-education that are being favored and supported by each of the three traditions, intellectual traditionalism, social behaviorism, and experientialism. Each tradition supports the notion of self-education. All of them see positive features in the idea of self-education, even though they respond in different ways. They identify values in self-education based on their own values and beliefs, and they value it using different measures. In the question "which values of self-education should we, as individuals, and especially as educators, value?" I would respond "all of them". We need to pick and choose those features of each tradition that would create the optimum conditions for self-education. My response to the above traditions is that we need to use features of all three traditions as resources for self-education. None of them alone is sufficient for the education of the person as a whole. We need great works to stir our imagination, we need to investigate and learn using experimental methods in order to help reconstruct our experiences, and we need educative experiences, the use of all of our senses, reflection and dialogue to have more educative experiences and to keep influencing through interaction both the self and the world around us. All of them together can ignite our imagination, and help us envisage new possibilities, and therefore cause change, renewal, and enable our growth aiming always in the direction each of us wants to take.

Looking at the Methodology: Autobiographical Case Study

The purpose of this paper is to explore the meaning, value and the sources of self-education as it took place at a class in a large midwestern urban University with a curriculum professor. I use autobiographical methods to sketch out the way the class unfolded and the way it ended up touching the heart, the soul and the being of the participants of the class. Autobiographical inquiry allows me to report what I have experienced in the class, using my own subjective lenses. An autobiographical case study allows me to write about the class and the group members as I have seen them. The class syllabus, readings, and my personal notes are tools I use to activate my memory and write the study.

At the same time, I use case study methods to explore a bounded system and to give information about the case. Case study inquiry allows me to illustrate “the problem, the context, the issues, and the ‘lessons learned’” (Creswell, 1998, p.36). I describe in detail the class; I outline the chronology of the events, and give details about the group as a whole and the individual members. As Stake (1997) explains “in the case study, there may or may not be an ultimate interest in the generalizable...The search is for an understanding of the particular case, in its idiosyncrasy, in its complexity, the case” (p.405).

Rexroth (1986), Phillips & Burbules (2000), and Smith’s (1999) works are being used to help me explain and justify the methodology of the study. Their works inform my work in the sense that they help me talk about the nuances and complexities involved in the methodology of this study. At the same time through their work I explain the term autobiographical case study that I use in this research. Rexroth’s work (1986) may be similar to what I am studying because his work is highly artistic. In talking about imaginative literature he tries to distinguish and, at the same time, unify the subjective from the objective world. My work creates a subjective reality: the reality that was created by the participation in the self-education class as it is described through the subjective eyes of the researcher and of the individual members. I also refer to literature and how this has influenced the participants’ lives. Furthermore, when Rexroth (1986) talks about Homer’s *Odyssey* he reminds me, in a sense, of my own work. This research studies the odysseys of the individuals in the group, and the milestones in their pathway. And this self-education course can be viewed as a milestone itself in the individuals’ lives, since the interaction within the group helped its members gain insight, reflect on their experiences, and reshape their philosophies. It is like Odysseus’ journey: what mattered at the end was not the fact that he finally arrived to Ithaca, but the fact that he gained life-time experiences through his ten-year journey trying to reach Ithaca. The self-education class should not be viewed as the Ithaca, as the goal itself, but rather as an experience in the members’ life-journey that enhanced their personal and professional development. It should be viewed as the means to one’s growth rather than the end, because what matters after all is not the outcome, to arrive to Ithaca, but the journey, the way to Ithaca.

Phillips & Burbules (2000) talk about creating meaning out of experiences and how adopting different perspectives may lead investigators to see phenomena in a

different way from other investigators. They also refer to issues of objectivity, relativity, subjectivity, and to biases. They claim that there may be relativity without subjectivity, and there may exist relativity and objectivity at the same time. The assumption that different views and perspectives about the same thing exist and may all be correct, is one held in my own work. I, together with the members of the group, sketch a subjective reality trying to give a precise image of the happenings within the group.

Smith (1999) talks about the dangers that may exist when a researcher goes into a community to conduct research on the “others”. This is a danger I avoid by conducting the research with the group-members rather than on them. Also, the difference is that I was in the class myself and I have created bonds and good relationships with the members of the group, so the issue of “the others” does not exist. In the contrast, I will conduct the study with the help of the other members of the group; we will build the study together. Also, respect and sharing—terms that Smith (1999) refers to—is what this study will be about. Finally, I agree with Smith’s (1999) assumption that “research...should set out to make a positive difference for the researched” (p. 191). With this study I try to go a little further suggesting that such self-education courses should be offered to all teachers as part of their pre- and in-service education.

Self-Education as a Graduate Course

In this section I describe the group and the happenings in that self-education course. I tell about things that happened in the class and I narrate how this was an experience that benefited me, personally, as well as all the members of the group. In other words, I discuss about the features that made the course be about self-education. The professor, the group, the sources we used, the meanings those sources had for us and the meanings we made out of our experiences were the features that made the course unfold the way it did, and in general be the way it was.

The Course

One of the goals of the course was to theorize about what self-education is; that is to study self-education as a phenomenon of interest. Another goal was to enable us to explore dimensions of our selves not yet being explored and to see new possibilities through the discovery of our inner self. This was achieved through discussions with our classmates, and reflection upon our own experiences, selected readings and personal writings. The goal was to learn from our selves and from each other, to learn from our own experiences (Schubert & Ayers, 1999), and from those of the others. In this class we had adopted the Win/Win paradigm of human interaction (Covey, 1989), which sees life as a cooperative arena, and says that individuals may be able to succeed when they act independently, but they can achieve much more when they cooperate with others.

I would like to quote the professor of the class who in the syllabus shared with us his thinking about his reasons for offering a course on self-education. Instead of providing a preordained syllabus the professor provided us with a syllabus full of thoughts, ideas, questions, and other things that he wanted to share with us. The syllabus was, in a sense, incomplete and open to be completed by us all as the course was progressing and as we were growing throughout this process. He wanted a hand from us

to complete the syllabus together; he wanted to learn from our reasons for taking a course on self-education. He stated about his course:

1. *I think a lot about my own self-education* [emphasis added]—who I've been, who I am, and who or what I am becoming and might be one day. My guess is that many of you think about these matters, as well. Such matters are the essence of education as I see it. Maybe we should explore this realm relative to ourselves, significant others, and each other, 2. We often hear school educators say that *the purpose of education is self-education* [emphasis added], yet there is very little treatment of self-education in the literature on schooling. Moreover, there is a great deal of autocratic imposition in much of schooling that is supposed to lead to self-direction, self-realization, and the like. Maybe we can study some of the treatment of self-education that exists in literature on schooling or critiques of the lack of emphasis on self-education in schools, 3. *I am in pathways that shape lives in and especially out of school* [emphasis added]—my life (lives), the lives of family and friends, your lives, biographies and autobiographies of the well-known (or the not so well-known), and the lives of fictional characters (some of whom I feel I know well) in novels, plays, films, operas, and other works of art. Maybe we can glean insights about self-education by discussing such works, 4. *I am intrigued, too, by shorter writings* (e.g., poetry, stories, myths, songs, essays) that *I consider glimpses into the education of artists who create them* [emphasis added]. Maybe we can explore the self-education implicit in selected expressions of this kind, 5. *I worry about the ideological structures that make us think about self-education in certain ways, neglecting other ways* [emphasis added], giving bias because of similarity or difference vis-à-vis culture, class, race, gender, able-ness, health, place, time, membership, belief (disbelief) or religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, reputation, age, appearance, status, nationality, power, and more. I wonder to what extent preoccupation with self-education prevents adequate focus on our interactive or political, ecological, or even cosmic lives—perhaps, a greater wholeness. Maybe we can investigate this more fully, 6. *In all of this, I seem to return to the question of what does it mean to live a good life* [emphasis added]. I would be grateful for your insights about this. (Schubert, 2002, p.2)

The Group

During the spring semester of 2002 a small group of graduate students, with me being among them, had attended a self-education course. The group consisted of seventeen people. Almost half of them were educators in the formal practice of education, that is, they were, at that or at some other point, teachers. Considering what Schubert (2002) thinks of education, that is, “I am in pathways that shape lives in and especially out of school” and what Danassis-Afentakis (1992) says about pedagogy, that education is about interaction between two people or more, I claim that all group-members were educators, in one way or another. One of them was priest, the other two were dealing with professional development, the other one was in dentistry planning to become a dental hygiene educator, and so on, which means that they were in positions to influence lives, thus, in some way, they were educating others. I consider the group to be an amazingly interesting one because of its participants. All of them were dedicated people, with the potential for valuable contributions to the society, with wide backgrounds and a lot of experiences and insights to share with the group. All of them had interesting stories to share, opinions to negotiate, and ideas to discuss, continuing, in this way, giving rise to their growth through their involvement in the group.

The Professor

Among the members of the group was the professor. He was part of the group in the sense that he was there to learn from his own experiences and to learn from us as

well. He was teacher and student at the same time: teacher of us and of himself, and student of his own self and of us. In the same manner all of us were teachers and students. As he mentioned in the class syllabus “I want to share... Too, I want to learn...” (Schubert, 2002, p.2). This open-mindedness I have been taught in that class, this willingness and eagerness to learn from oneself and from the others, from one’s experiences and from other people’s experiences is what I consider to be the essence of self-education. To be willing to reject stereotypes, to open one’s ears and eyes to the world, to listen to what the world has to say and respond back to it, the willingness to give and take and adopt new things, ideas, opinions, new lenses to see the world, to change and bring renewal to oneself, is what self-education is about. The professor applied in that course his philosophy of living and teaching. I believe that this philosophy is very obvious in his book *Teacher Lore* where he mentions:

I discovered the world of ideas and how much they could contribute to whatever is most fundamental to the guiding philosophy of a person... I had begun to perceive their interdependence as relevant to my own growth as a human being. As a person I contributed and could intentionally contribute to what I became in the world. What I became had to be tied carefully to what I wanted to contribute. I wanted to help others see the value of these connections for their own lives. In short, I wanted to teach... I discovered that I aspired to help others create their lives. I wanted a high calling in life and could think of none higher than that of helping new generations meet the world. (Schubert, 1999a, pp. 3-4)

I believe that this is the reason that this professor, with his philosophy, ideas, and way of teaching had such a great influence on us all, because he was helping us see the meanings and find the sources that facilitate the education of our selves. This was a moving experience itself because we realized how much depth each of us has, how valuable are the resources each one is hiding inside. I think that this is what he meant when he was advocating that “teaching was a way to help humanity remake itself” (Schubert, 1999a, p.4), that is to teach others how to find and use available sources to educate their selves. I find deep connection between the main ideas embedded in this course and those in the project *Teacher Lore* (Schubert & Ayers, 1999). People should be the ones to create and be responsible for the curriculum of their lives. They should create their life curricula by reflecting on questions such as “What is most worthwhile to know and experience? ... How can I decide what to think, do, and be?” (Schubert, 1999b, p.142), and imagine what to do next with their lives. As Ayers (1999) mentions “Being aware of oneself as the instrument of one’s teaching, aware of details and distinctions...allows for thoughtful change and growth” (p.151).

Sources of Self-Education

The arts.

One of the sources that we used in our self-education course were arts. Poetry, literature, music, painting, sculpture, photography, dance, yoga, quilting were some of the artistic sources we used in order to talk about and expand our self-education. These sources were derived directly from the interests and the backgrounds of the participants. This is what I would call “searching for the inside sources”. I believe that all of us, not just the people from that group, have interests that can be considered as artistic, interests that have to do with creation, imagination, performance, and so on.

The importance of the arts in our self-education is enormous and often not fully realized. First, they help us see in ways that we wouldn't be able to see without them. As Eisner (2000) says "while they share commonalities, different forms of art put me in the world in different ways. They speak to different aspects of my nature and help me discover the variety of experiences I am capable of having" (p.43). Arts give us opportunities to explore our selves in so many different ways and in ways that we couldn't otherwise explore, thus the arts enhance our education. We need all the range of possible ways that can help us express and explore our selves and that is because knowledge cannot be reduced to what can be said; the truth is that "we know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1967). Arts offer us another way for expression and exploration of the self and the world. "The arts can give expression to what is similar about our being in the world and opens possibilities for sharing that are not perceptible elsewhere" (Lopez-Schubert, 2000, p.157). Lopez-Schubert (2000) describes very well how we experienced arts in our self-education course: "We were going to become art. We were going to make dreams become clearer and go forward to envision even more wondrous realities" (p.158). "...To make use of the works of poets, authors, artists, cinematographers—because...it is in this work that the variety and possibility of human experience may be found in condensed and transcended form" (van Manen, 1990, p. 19).

Participant experiences and thoughts.

Another source that we used in our self-education course was our own experiences, our insights. We were in quest of our inside sources, of our interests, because self-education is about striving always to learn from our experiences, from our reflections, from those of other people, from the inside sources. As Pinar (1994) advocates, "Like some modern painters, my students and I have come to feel that we rarely need to go to subject matter outside ourselves. We work from a different source. We work from within" (p.10). In this course we learned from our own experiences, from the experiences that we shared with each other. I still remember and am moved by all the things that we shared in that group. I remember how even the seemingly smallest thing may be very important for our education because it derives from our psyche, from our inner self, from our interests, it is representative of the inner voice, the voice we have inside us, from our experiences. I remember how others' experiences and things they shared were educative for me. I remember how my experiences, by reflecting upon them, rethinking them, sharing them, discussing them with others, and listening to them turned into education for me. At the same time I remember how my own experiences were educative for others, as well.

Imagination.

Imagination is another source. Mary Warnock (1978) writes about the connection between imagination and education "there is always *more* to experience, and *more in* what we experience than we can predict... In my opinion, it is the main purpose of education to give people the opportunity of not ever being, in this sense, bored; of not ever succumbing to a feeling of futility, or to the belief that they have come to an end of what is worth having" (p.203). "The search involves a consciousness of what is not yet, of what might be; it is the 'more' we cannot predict" (Greene, 2000, p.110). "Becoming aware of the ways in which particular novels (or poems, or plays, or short stories)

defamiliarized my experience, I came to see that the taking of odd or unaccustomed perspectives can indeed make a person 'see' as never before" (Greene, 2000, p.110). It is the writer's task "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see... If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm...and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask (Conrad n.d., pp.ix-x)". I would like to emphasize the importance of the ability to imagine, to see how things can be otherwise, to envision possibilities and as Lopez-Schubert (2000) wonders "And isn't the ultimate goal of all who are interested in art, education, and curriculum the development of wondrous possibilities?" (p.160). This is an opportunity that this class and these sources offered us.

Readings.

Selected readings, such as *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Alchemist*, *Divine and Human*, and *Wisdom of the Ages*, both required and recommended, were another source that enabled our self-education. I believe that these readings were very appropriate and a great choice on behalf of the instructor. These readings are about personal journeys, other people's self-education, and about life. Reading these books helped us become aware of things that we do deal with in our everyday life, but we do not necessarily reflect upon as educative, so we do not really become consciously aware of them. Reflection and discussion upon these readings then, and upon our experiences was another source that enabled our self-education. I believe that education in general, and self-education in particular, better occurs when it occurs with others. Through collaboration, community, connectedness, sharing of ideas, emotions and concerns, communication, reflection, and conversation we can see things from new perspectives, clearer and better. And as a friend had told me once learning with others is always better and more fun than learning alone.

Individuals

(All names of the group members used in this study, and specifically in this section of the study, are pseudonyms. The only actual name used here is the name of the instructor of the class, Professor Schubert's name).

I remember *Sherry* talking to us about her visit to a museum that had reminded her of her origins, of her ancestors, of so many things. She writes, "As I entered the first exhibit, I experienced one of the most deeply spiritual moments in my life... When I entered this exhibit time stopped for me. My feet seemed to be bolted to the floor and icy chills traveled down my spine. My stomach became a ball of knotted rope... I couldn't stop the tears... My feet let go of the floor and I was able to continue through the exhibit—but not as the same...[Sherry] who went in". And as I read this I shiver. And as I go through my notes I remember of her unexpected death, and I shiver again, and I want to cry. She talked to us about her interest in dance. She told us that she was the award winner at a dance performance when she was a child and showed us the crown that she still kept in her drawer. She confided how important that was for her, and that this memory still follows her and guides her now that she herself teaches dance to young girls.

Andrea talked to the group about her interest in existentialism and discussed about questions that bothered her. She also brought in the class a little sculpture she made, one

that was deriving from her existential questions. She showed it to us and we discussed how important that creation was to her.

Mitchell shared with the group his interest in folk music and told us how this interest influences his life, how important it is for him, and where it takes him. He brought his guitar and sung to us a repertoire of songs that were of big value to him.

Kate was often talking about her experiences in small schools. She was narrating her experiences with her students who taught her so much about life, learning, and fighting for a better future. This experience gave her strength and motivation to help them, as well as others in the future, to deal with these issues. She had experienced first hand the politics of education and this made her sensitive in these issues and made her eager to help people, and especially her students. She shared with us Ubuntu's phrase (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2000), "I am because we are". She mentioned, "this class has proven to me that to be community oriented can be synonymous with successful- both personally and professionally...Asking for everyone's individual input and then synthesizing it into a larger weekly and semester-long educational experience, we seem to be a true collaborative" (Spring, 2002). She mentioned that she gets life lessons from various artworks, both literature and not. She has found that she has been moved by movies, musical pieces, plays, conversations, paintings, novels, and poems. She shared a list of the above with us.

Eddy talked to us about his interest in poetry, how this works as a guide for his teaching and how it helps him develop curriculum. He shared with us few poems he likes, told us about poets he admires, and he read us a few poems from those he had wrote.

Andrew talked about his initiative in forming and participating in a group of teachers that, through literature, encourages people to see their strengths and use them toward their learning. He shared with us a list of books and novels concerning self-education, some works of nonfiction applicable in real life, and movies that he was influenced by.

Kathy narrated her experience having the honor to work with a very important and provocative politician. She talked about how she uses the arts in her work. She told us how art is an important piece of herself, especially the art regarding her culture. She shared with us how arts and culture talk to her, how she takes strength from the arts. She uses photography and cultural features in her work. She talked to us about her bad experiences during her school years and how these followed her in the subsequent years.

Dora shared with the group her experiences living in a restrictive society, the education she received and all the insights she gained out of those experiences. Also, she shared with us possibilities, and things to think about. She shared with us the "Trip to Paradox", a list of contradictory terms such as "The self is a becoming self", "Teaching can be learning", and "Nothing can be everything", to mention few of them.

James reflected upon the insights he gains from dealing with religion, with the literature, and the insights he gains from the people he deals with. He presented to us literature that represents and informs his work.

Sarah talked to us about her interest in the arts, about being a winner of a big prize on teaching, and about trying to be a good friend among other things. She shared with us, "While I don't view our class as a therapy session, and I don't tend to get terribly personal with classmates, our readings have led me to view my experiences this year in a

new way. Particularly, after reading *The Alchemist*, I have reexamined some of what I have seen and felt this year in a new context. I have looked for what the world might be trying to teach me". She also mentioned, "I thoroughly believe that everything in our lives leads us to who we are and who will become... The difference as this year draws to a close is that I'm starting to feel like I know how to recognize what the world has to teach... If it is true that signs and omens are all around us, then I'm starting to listen".

Timothy talked about his father who coached him in sports and the values he passed on to him, and how he, himself, uses these experiences to coach others. He shared with us his concerns on issues of birth, troubles, and death, and books and films he was moved by.

Doreen talked about her anger and her effort to bring to the outside her emotions about a catastrophe, a violent historical event that her ancestors had experienced. She shared with us a list of books that help her gain understanding, make sense of what happened, deal with her emotions and comfort her anger. She writes on self-education, "my self-education is my attempt to get to what is important to me. I want to think critically about what moves me, what shakes me, and what propels me to go further, delving deep into my self in order to move forward and grow with my life".

Erin shared with us books, poetry, and movies that influenced her. She also reflected on the class experience: "The class was a very wonderful experience that has made me acutely aware of self-education and has introduced me to life-long journey of it. I would like to thank everyone in the class for sharing your experiences with me, for through all of you I have learned more about myself. I wish everyone the best of everything in life and hope that all of you will continue your journey in self-education". She ended with the saying, "Live life as though tomorrow is not guaranteed, yesterday never was, and today is all there is left".

I believe that each of us has a rich stock of experiences and that the more experiences we have and the more we deposit the more experiences and benefit we get. This is what Schubert & Ayers (1999) convey in their book *Teacher Lore*; that we can learn from our experiences.

My Experience and Meanings

The reason I joined this course was to learn more about self-education so that I could enable my own self-education. I wanted to become aware of the sources that guide my life so that I could search for more sources of meanings I can attribute to my experiences so that I could use these meanings to maximize my learning from them and to seek further meanings. I wanted to make sense, understand, and see things that I couldn't see otherwise. I wanted to come to know my self better, to reflect (or to find the way to reflect) more systematically on my experiences, and thereby know more fully who I am, how I became who I am. I wanted to realize all these things about myself and then help others realize these things as well, to help them look inside for the sources that guide self-education, to be able to turn their weaknesses into strengths and go on seeking a worthwhile life. The reason I attended the course was to consciously become aware, with the help of the course, the professor, the readings, the group, and the discussions, of that inner power that moves us, rather than just know or feel deep inside and unconsciously that we have such a power. At the same time I wanted to share my experiences with other people, to tell them what I think about my education. I wanted to tell my story, and

listen to others' stories as well, because I knew that this would make me better understand and learn my self.

What I would like to admit is that I feel very lucky for having the opportunity to attend this self-education course. It helped me make real friends, friends with whom I feel comfortable; it made me feel connected to my environment, it made me feel important; it made me feel beautiful knowing that I have a loving environment; that I can run to some people from that class and talk to them; it gave direction to my life. It made me realize that by creating community we can achieve a lot, that we can succeed; that together and interdependently we can enable our education, talk about our plans, studies, dilemmas, and further our self-education.

Looking in my folder with my class notes, handouts, and whatever else we shared with the group I shiver. I know just by looking at the materials how influential this experience was. I know that these are the things that will never be forgotten, these are the things that I will look at and continue making sense, whenever I look at them; I know that these experiences will continue to influence me, and will remain alive in my memory in a way that no other class has, or managed to do, especially those classes during my school-years. This makes me wonder even more on questions such as: What knowledge is of most worth? What do we need math, physics, geography, social studies, chemistry, literature, and so on, for? How can we use and teach all these courses in a way that will be meaningful to us and to our students? How can we make these materials talk to our students, promote further exploration, meaning-making, growth, and self-education?

The Readings

Steinbeck's (1999) *The Grapes of Wrath*, Wright's (1945) *Black Boy*, Coelho's (1998) *The Alchemist*, Tolstoy's (2000) *Divine and Human and Other Stories*, Dyer's (1998) *Wisdom of the Ages*, and Dore's (1970) *The Premier Book of Major Poets* are a few of the readings we were assigned to do, or that we ourselves selected to read. These books contain philosophical features; features that talk about life, death, personal experiences and journeys, about life's great mysteries and events. They are about things that concern the self, the other, the world. They talk about things that make you think, wonder, theorize, philosophize, ponder; things that help you generate questions of worth, like what is worth doing, being, experiencing, reading, becoming, seeing, listening, feeling, living, and why, how, when? These are things that occurred to me, to my classmates; things that we were discussing in private with ourselves or with our classmates; things that we were reflecting upon. These are the things that contributed to my growth.

Readings such as Steinbeck's (1999) *The Grapes of Wrath* had a huge impact on me and offered me another perspective to view things. It is a marvelous book that talks about the life journey of Tom Joad and his family trying to find the promised land of California. For me this is a tragedy and it has personal meaning. The novel, from the beginning to the end, brought to my mind the tragedy my country faced some twenty-nine years ago, when Turkey decided to expand its empire and attack Cyprus, a small island in the Mediterranean Sea, without having thought what sorrow, pain, and disaster their act would cause. The "Grapes of Wrath" talks directly to my heart and it awakens in my soul strong memories of my country, its people, and my family, and revived in my mind all the stories my grandmother used to tell me about this catastrophe, which ever

since turned the lives of a whole generation and the rest to follow into a continuous struggle for survival.

Tolstoy's (2000) *Divine and Human and Other Stories* is one of the books that make one think about life, death, and ponder questions of worth. It is a book full of emotions; it represents the range of human emotions and feelings being unfolded as a picture in front of one's eyes through the narrative of the author. An excerpt from his book may better enable understanding of this: "As happens in ...decisive moments in life, in an instant she experienced a mass of feelings and thoughts but at the same time did not yet understand, did not believe her own misfortune" (p. 30).

Dyer's (1998) *Wisdom of the Ages* tries to explain different sayings, wise words said by great people, through the subjective lenses of the author as they apply in our everyday life. Dyer tries to make applicable in our lives and find the practicality of some great sayings that he has found to be valuable. An example of what he says is "you cannot learn anything through the efforts of others. The world's greatest teachers can teach you absolutely nothing unless you are willing to apply what they have to offer based on your knowing" (p. 8).

Coelho's (1998) *The Alchemist* was one of the readings that even though recommended rather than required by the instructor all of us selected to read. It is a great book, very didactic and influential. It talks about the power the human soul has, which can move even a mountain in order to enable one to realize one's Personal Legend.

I would like to emphasize that these readings had a huge input in the success of the self-education class of Spring 2002. The selection of the readings then was critical; it was an important component to stimulate our imagination, to help us think, to make us open up ourselves in the class; it was an important component for our self-education. I would like to emphasize that the class's philosophy was that we can all learn from our selves, teach others and learn from each other, and grow out of this experience. As the instructor emphasized in the syllabus of the class: Self-education should be the purpose of education; it enables us to think about ourselves; it enables us to more effectively be into pathways that shape lives; it gives us the tools to explore the meaning of living a good life (Schubert, 2002). This is the essence and the importance of self-education. The contribution of each of the members in the class discussions, the reflection upon and the sharing of our experiences, the readings and the writings we were assigned had a powerful impact on us. The whole experience contributed to our growth, and our personal and professional development.

In-Service Education Implications

The ultimate purpose of this paper is to explain why self-education classes and activities, such as the ones I have experienced, should be offered to educators as part of their teacher pre- and in-service education, and how this can benefit them and their students.

Schubert & Ayers (1999) refer to the wide range of work that bring teachers' perspectives to the benefit of other teachers through research and teacher education. Action research and teacher-oriented research, known as the teacher-as-researcher movement, conceives teaching as intellectual experimental work and recognize teachers

as experts in conducting research regarding teaching. Reflective inquiry, educational criticism, thinking process of teachers, narrative or storytelling, biographies of teachers and autobiographical accounts are some of the kinds of educational research conducted. It seems to me that all of the above kinds of inquiry share the assumption that "Teaching is a deeply personal experience, but it is at its heart a social activity, even a political act" (Ayers, 1999, p. 155). And my contention is that through teaching we educate both others and ourselves. And seemingly, through the struggle for our self-education, we educate others who happen to be in our pathways at the same time.

Some of the implications of the self-education class I had attended are that, first, and most important, people became a close group. The sharing of our experiences made us all feel connectedness, caring about each other, and that we had the obligation to help, support, and offer solutions to problems that members were experiencing in both personal and professional level. In other words, it helped us become friends. Second, it gave us the opportunity to talk about our selves, to explore our inner world, discover who we are and where we come from, and think about our pathways and the milestones within them. In other words the focus was on our personal growth. Each one grew as an individual out of this experience, something that led to professional growth as well. The self-education course enabled our personal and professional development, it unfolded our sensitive and humane feelings, and helped to satisfy our need for connectedness; it helped us grow as educators; it helped us become better educators.

Based on what I have experienced, and on the above implications, I think that the establishment of such self-education courses in a broader basis can benefit teachers, their students, and humanity. I strongly believe that classes similar to that one should be offered to teachers, as part of their teacher education—pre- and in-service education. Such courses or activities would be a useful and worthwhile activity for teachers. First, it can be a very effective way to teach prospective educators, and help them see education in a more humane way. It can help them see what teaching is really about, that it is about caring, giving and taking, and about relationships. It can help them take lessons on how they should teach others in turn. Second, it can be an effective way for in-service education. Self-education classes can be offered for a team of faculty members within a school or in a broader basis, that is for educators outside the boundaries of a school. Such courses can help teachers see their profession with different lenses (Phillips & Burbules, 2000), it can reduce burn-out and isolation, it can make them feel connectedness and that they are among friends on whom they can lean and find support, it can enable them to connect their personal with professional lives, it can give them ideas about how they should teach their students in turn.

Self-education gives the message that teachers do not need others, outsiders, to tell them how to teach; rather, they can teach using their own knowledge and ideas and those of others, since they themselves have a very rich inner-world that they need to explore and bring to the surface, something that can be done through the self-education course. Teachers do know how to teach, they only need to find the way of doing so, and a very good way is to offer them the chance to explore themselves through self-education activities. Pinar (1994) emphasizes that coming to know our selves enables us to realize the inseparability of our personal and professional lives. Autobiography and other artistic methods of research, such as poetry, literature and personal writings, are forms of inquiry that enable us to better explore ourselves. Knowing ourselves is very important if we

want to be authentic, because this may help us to better realize “who we are and who we wish to become” (Pinar, 1994, p.244). When individuals interact with others, create meaningful relationships and share their knowledge and their experiences, then they facilitate their self-education. These are activities that help each individual adopt new perspectives of viewing the world, and create meaning out of experiences and out of what stories imply. It is only when we come to know ourselves that we can better and more effectively teach others, and this is very important especially for educators. Self-education classes shall motivate the participant educators to design the curriculum in such a way that they will value their students’ experiences, autobiographies and relationships, and take seriously in mind that the learning process can be based on students’ biographies and self-education.

As Ayers (1999) advocates in the prologue of *Teacher Lore* (Schubert & Ayers, 1999) “the secret of teaching is to be found in the local detail and the everyday life of teachers; teachers can be the richest and most useful source of knowledge about teaching; those who hope to understand teaching must turn at some point to teachers themselves” (p.v). My hope is that, sharing Schubert’s & Ayers’ (1999) insight for their *Teacher Lore*, self-education is not an end in itself, but a means to become better teachers and learners, and help others to do so as well. Self-education can also be a basis for teacher reflection. Too, it is my contention that “it is only reflective teachers...who are able to grow continuously. They are the ones who genuinely have twenty or thirty years of experience, instead of one year of experience twenty or thirty times. Such teachers are the hope for enabling children and youth to fashion their own growth and to contribute to the improvement of the world around them” (p.x).

Possibilities and Research Approaches

If Denis were to stand in a room, against the wall opposite the only door to the room, and if Nick were to stand in the doorway, it is true that they would see the room differently.
Phillips & Burbules (2000, p.46)

According to Phillips & Burbules (2000), different standpoints offer different realities. This is a truth that can be told about research, too. There are many ways of conducting research and many different kinds of inquiry. And pertinent to what research design the researcher will use, a different perspective will be given to the question of interest.

In this part of the study, I offer other possibilities and research approaches through which the self-education class of Spring 2002 can be studied. These approaches, as depicted by Jaeger (1997a), are arts-based, historical, philosophical, and ethnographic inquiry, as well as case study, survey, comparative experimental, and quasi-experimental methods. I try to see self-education through the lenses of different approaches in order to explore the possibilities self-education has to offer people on the one hand, and the windows each approach opens up for expanding the notion of self-education on the other hand. In this way, I try to explore the value of self-education as well.

The focus is on the group of people who were enrolled in the *Self-Education: Meanings and Sources* class at a large midwestern urban University during the spring semester of 2002. The group was meeting once a week, three hours each time, for four months. Through the different inquiries, one may understand the impact this course had

on those graduate students' personal journeys, and explore the extent to which the course enabled their self-education, and if it promoted their personal and professional development and in what ways. Conducting the researches suggested below one may better explore the notion of self-education as a graduate course and as an example for teacher education. This part of the study may be perceived by others as suggestion for future research they may want to carry out themselves to explore the notion of self-education as a graduate course and its implications for teacher education.

Arts-Based Inquiry

Arts-based research is defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry and its writing. Although these aesthetic elements are in evidence to some degree in all educational research activity, the more pronounced they are, the more the research will be characterized as arts-based (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p.73).

If I would use this method of inquiry I would collect documents such as personal journals and assignments that were written from each member as part of the course requirements, and other writings. The assignments would be used to illustrate the insights of the group members as well as the contribution of each individual to the other members of the class. Personal journals may be used to investigate the overall contribution of the course to each one's self-education and personal and professional development. This will allow me to make meaning out of each one's reflection on one's personal experiences and talk about their personal journeys, and the ways the course influenced their lives. In addition, I would study artifacts; I would mention objects that are significant in each one's life, as they referred to them and illustrated them during the group meetings, trying to make sense out of them together with the others. An example for that is the sculpture a group member presented, that she herself had created, and her insights and reflection on her artistic creation. Another example is a crown another member presented sharing with us its importance for her. Furthermore, I would discuss of pictures, movies, and other visual methods that were used during the class to create a *virtual reality* (Barone & Eisner, 1997). Music was also another artistic form of expression that was used during the meetings, with one of the members pointing out the significance of the songs he sung accompanied by his guitar—songs that reminded him of major points in his personal and national history. Finally, I would illustrate how poetry, existing poetry, or that written by members, or that used to make a point, contributed in the self-education of most of the group members. Aesthetic form, expressive language, and empathy were elements of all the aforementioned activities.

Historical Inquiry

History is a challenging and creative interaction, part science, part art (Kaestle, 1997, p.119).

If I would use this method to study the self-education class, I would write about and analyze the personal histories of the people who were enrolled in the course. Open-ended and semi-structured interviews would be appropriate tools to achieve this. Throughout their pathways I would like to investigate what were the milestones that affected their lives and how the self-education course helped them make meaning out of them and understand their lives better, through reflecting on them, talking about them, and sharing insights and emotions with the other members. I would also be interested in studying if their interest in the self-education class was partly derived from the kind of

experiences they had throughout their lives, which made them want to share their stories, or they felt that they could contribute to other people's self-education.

Particularly, I would be interested in interviewing the instructor of the class, whose insights, which derive from his personal pathway, and other contributions so valuable to the journey of our self-education. Specifically, in the course syllabus (Schubert, 2002) he mentions: "I think a lot about my own self-education – who I've been, who I am, and who or what I am becoming and might be one day...Such matters are the essence of education as I see it. Maybe we should explore this realm relative to our selves, significant others, and each other" (p. 2).

Philosophic Inquiry

The search is for understanding rather than explanation; the researchers are striving for adequacy of interpretation rather than prediction and control. (Greene, 1997, p.189)

If I would use this method of inquiry, I would document discussions that were developed within the group that illustrate their personal philosophies and their way of thinking. Documentation of discussions and insights can be done both in the whole group and in small groups. Furthermore open-ended interviews can be used to explore participants' philosophy of life. I would like to look at the personal philosophy of the group members and gain understanding as to whether their enrollment in the self-education class was because of their personal philosophies, or because they believe in the power of self-education, or because they saw it as an opportunity to enhance their personal and professional development and thus enhance their personal philosophy (i.e., their understanding of self and life). In other words, I would like to explore if their philosophical inquiries were the reason they took the class.

Furthermore, I would like to look at the books we had to read for the class, as well as those the group members had referred to and suggested as worthwhile to read, and the movies that were mentioned as self-educational. I would like to explore what are the philosophical assumptions highlighted by each of those books and movies, and point out how powerful these can be in helping one shape or reshape one's philosophy of life and of education, and promote one's self-education. One way to do this is to synthesize a "patchwork" of those philosophical assumptions, followed by comments and insights of each individual, and comments derived from discussions within small groups and within the group as a whole. Another way is to examine passages of books underlined or highlighted by participants, as well as notes they took in class.

I quote Schubert (2002) again, as he points out the significance of self-education in shaping philosophy of life and of education: "the purpose of education is self-education... I am in pathways that shape lives in and especially out of school... I am intrigued...by shorter writings (e.g. poetry, stories, myths, songs, essays) that I consider glimpses into the education of artists who created them... I worry about the ideological structures that make us think about self-education in certain ways, neglecting other ways... In all of this, I seem to return to the question of what does it mean to live a good life" (p.2).

Ethnographic Inquiry

The word 'ethnography' means a picture of the 'way of life' of some identifiable group of people...An anthropologist's purpose as ethnographer was to learn about, record, and ultimately to portray the culture of that other group in order to deepen our understanding

about the different ways human beings have resolved the problems created by being human in the first place (Wolcott, 1997, p.329).

If I would use this method of inquiry I would give a thick and rich description of the happenings, ongoing conversations, dialogues, interactions and every other detail that would help me describe and interpret the social group. As researcher I would examine the observable and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life of the group (Creswell, 1998). Using biographical narrative, participant observations, interviews, personal writings, and other documents, as data collection tools, I would study "the meanings of behavior, language, and interactions of the culture-sharing group" (Creswell, 1998, p. 58). I would describe in detail the members of the group, analyze the themes and the perspectives that derive from it, and make interpretations out of their discussions, actions, and feelings. This will enable me to examine whether the self-education course helped its members give new meaning to the teaching and learning process, make connections between theory and practice and personal and professional life, acquire new perspectives to interpret the world, and promote change and collaboration among them. I would use detailed description, tell the story as a storyteller, and describe the everyday life of the participants. Finally, I would conclude with a question, asking whether self-education courses are worthwhile to be offered in colleges of education and to teachers, as part of their in-service education, for personal and professional development.

Case Study Methods

In the case study, there may or may not be an ultimate interest in the generalizable... The search is for an understanding of the particular case, in its idiosyncrasy, in its complexity, the case (Stake, 1997, p.405).

If I would use case study methods to study the self-education class of the Spring 2002 I would use interviews, participant observation, writings, readings, and other documents and objects to describe in detail a bounded system. The difference here with the ethnographic inquiry is that here the focus of the study would be entirely on the group, the case would be the group itself.

Another feature I would have used here is the fact that the group had experienced a friend's death- she passed away almost two months after the course began. I would study and interpret the impact the sudden death of a classmate and a friend had on the rest of the group members. I would study what were their reactions and their feelings before and after her death. What were their thoughts and feelings when they found out about the event? In what ways did this event change them? I would interview the members of the group individually, record the in-class reactions and reflections upon this experience, and study personal journals or other writings that the members wrote in her memory.

Survey Methods

...A survey is a research study in which data are collected from the members of a sample, for the purpose of estimating one or more population parameters (Jaeger, 1997b, p.450).

If I would use this method I would do a survey of a sample drawn from a teacher population, using a questionnaire. After presenting the self-education class and introduce it to the sample (present it either by quoting the group-members' statements or by describing briefly the group and the course's purpose), I would ask them whether they would like to have opportunities to participate in such a class, if they think it will be a worthwhile experience, what they think they would gain out of it, and if this is a chance and an experience that every teacher should have as part of their teacher education, or

their in-service education. This would enable me to explore possibilities of offering such a course, or similarly, to the broader teacher community, and to colleges of education.

Comparative Experimental Methods

Of all empirical work, comparative experiments provide the strongest evidence about the effects of education interventions (Porter, 1997, p.523).

If I would use this method, I would study two different groups of teachers. The experimental group would consist of the members of the self-education class and the control group would consist of teachers randomly selected among a teacher population. The self-education class would be the intervention. I would be interested in finding out if there are significant differences in the two samples in regards to how they feel for their profession. My hypothesis would be that the teachers who would be more likely to feel isolated professionally and who have experienced the phenomenon of "burn-out" would be those of the control group. I would acknowledge and refer to all the limitations this study may have, being based on a non-representative and biased sample and on restricted range.

Quasi-Experimental Methods

If every relationship were causal, the world would be a simple place; but most relationships are not (Glass, 1997, p.589).

If I would use this method I would compare the classrooms of the teacher-members before and after taking the self-education course. I would select the data by doing classrooms observations and by giving questionnaires to students (asking, for instance, if they think that their teacher has changed or is a little bit different now than before), to parents and to the teachers themselves. This will enable me to interpret the way the self-education course affected teachers-participants in the course, as well as what kind of impact it had on their teaching methodology and philosophy, and on their students' learning.

Concluding Words

In this paper I have talked about how I theoretically frame and conceptualize self-education. I saw the notion of self-education in terms of the three traditions that are intellectual traditionalism, social behaviorism, and experientialism and how each of them responds to this notion. I talked about the term autobiographical case study using literature to better clarify the term. I talked about self-education as a graduate course, describing features such as the course, the group, the professor, the sources, the individuals, and finally the readings that each one separately and all together in combination had great input in the success of the class and in our self-education. The artistic sources I refer to are poetry, literature, music, painting, sculpture, photography, dance, yoga, and quilting. We used these sources to talk about and further our self-education, our experiences, our insights, and imagination. Selected readings, reflections and discussions either in private with our selves, or within groups assisted in and added to the whole experience we had. Furthermore, I talked about in-service education implications, and about possibilities and research approaches by using inquiries such as

arts-based, historical, philosophic, ethnographic, and case study, survey, comparative experimental, and quasi-experimental methods.

My long-term goal is to see self-education classes grow at Colleges of Education and become part of in-service education for teachers. Schubert & Ayers (1999) have shown, with their *Teacher Lore*, that teachers need to have opportunities to learn from their own experiences, to share their stories and reflect upon them. If teachers want to educate their students effectively and to provide them with the tools that will enable them to live in the society, then they need to educate their selves first, and take into account their lives as they live them. They probably need to keep in mind, too, Professor Schubert's (2002) words, that they need to think about their own self-education, the who they have been, who they are, and who or what they are becoming and might be one day; that the purpose of education is self education; that they are in pathways that shape lives in and especially out of school; that they may glean insights about self-education by discussing great works and other works of art; that they can study the education of the artists who created such works; and that they need to think about self-education in all possible ways. Professor Schubert (2002) prompts us all to always return to the question of what does it mean to live a good life.

I emphasize once again the importance of autobiography in educating the self. Autobiography is a method that can be used in the self-education process. As Pinar (1994) advocates:

Autobiography is an architecture of self, a self we create and embody as we read, write, speak and listen. The self becomes flesh, in the world. Even when authentic and learned, it is a self we cannot be confident we know, because it is always in motion and in time, defined in part by where it is not, when it is not, what it is not. The self who welcomes the dawn is a self constantly expanding to incorporate what it fears and resists as well as what it desires. The self who rows with golden oars is a self constantly contracting, losing its gravity so it may rise, expansive toward the sky. Full of tears and full of laughter may we teach and may we learn; may we become gods of own lives, servants to others. (p.220)

I will emphasize, at the same time, the importance of being open-minded and eager to learn at all times, at every stage of our lives, from every experience we have. I want to say how important it is to seek the good, the educational, and the worthwhile from every experience we have; how important it is to turn our weaknesses into strengths, and realize to education in all our experiences. We need to see our education as a process, as an ongoing event, an event that is never to be completed, it is continuous and goes on for as long as we live. And as Ayers (1999) say, "Once again I am reminded of an ancient admonition: She who thinks she knows does not know; she who knows she does not know, knows" (p.158).

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