

EXPLORING THE TEACHING MIND:
EXTENDING PARTICIPATION IN LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH ENGAGEMENT
WITH A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

A Synthesis Project Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE TEACHING MIND: EXTENDING PARTICIPATION IN LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH ENGAGEMENT WITH A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

May 2009

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This paper extends the notion of lifelong learning beyond gaining knowledge over a lifetime to preparing oneself to teach what has been learned to others. The "Teaching Mind," as I define the idea, involves thinking about what has been learned and what one knows by reconsidering that knowledge through the eyes of self as a teacher. The Teaching Mind assumes a broad notion of teaching that relates to informal and community learning across all areas of life and culture, beyond professional teaching in formal schools. The pursuit of the Teaching Mind is highly accessible to all those who wish to expand their personal and organizational participation in lifelong learning, and four qualities constitute this possibility: it is inclusive of all people across varied personal and professional situations who are not necessarily professional teachers but have diverse motivations to learn to teach; it is communal such that it is explored in the company of others; it is expansive to allow meanings of teaching and learning that are outside of conventional understanding; it is familiar by using natural, flexible ways of behaving and communicating to support learning about teaching while welcoming experimentation, enjoyment, ambiguity, and humor into the process.

In the active process of engaging with others to explore the Teaching Mind, face-to-face

group forums are essential, as one's progress in relation to the Teaching Mind necessarily involves sharing reflections, ideas, and questions with others in a focused way within a conducive environment. I present a collection of fundamental principles for orienting a group of lifelong learners to engage in the pursuit of the Teaching Mind together. Further, I offer a model that outlines how a group might initiate a Teaching Mind exploration in a specific, practical way; this model can be adapted by groups of private individuals or sponsoring organizations to their own interests. The core of the model is a cycle of reflecting upon past experiences, engaging with others to interpret reflections and expose new insights, and imagining how this new understanding informs future teaching possibilities.

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PROLOGUE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF A LIFELONG LEARNER

Personalizing Research and Practice

When I first started this research, a number of questions of “doubt” came to mind – perhaps a natural first reaction to challenge how I might make something truly useful out of ideas that I imagined would shape my life’s work. “Is this effort particularly valuable, since it really seems to be more about my viewpoint of how lifelong learning works, rather than a proposal for action that might actually be heard by others in a serious way? After years of research in education and learning, how much closer are we to knowing how to relate innovations in the field of education to the complex challenges of the modern world?” While I was continually thinking about what it would mean for me to see the bigger picture, I have found much hope in the reflection of the past several years in my participation with the Critical and Creative Thinking Graduate program. As I developed my voice and was able to express myself and my ideas, I was able to find the language that seemed to be shared among the students and faculty. Even so, I was not able to ignore several comments from others, including alumni of the program, when they suggested, “Sure, it’s great when you are working within the program, but when you get out, you return to the ‘real world’ where others may not be so open-minded and stay within, or fall back into, convenient ways of thinking, and it can be an uphill battle once again.”

Through this process of researching and preparing my Synthesis, a remarkable shift has occurred in my motivation and confidence in my work. Previously, I would have stated that my ideas are global, that they represent the kind of change that seems important for society as a whole, that they are part of a foundation of the way the people create the lives that they want. Recently, though, my framework has changed from that lofty perspective to one that is much simpler. Through my work, I would like to develop an opportunity in lifelong learning that I believe needs to be strengthened further, and I have become comfortable with the idea that this may happen with relatively small groups of people, in small situations, and in small places. “Small” does not mean “insignificant” but rather refers to the way that I allow myself to let this work influence the individual people, moments, and actions of life. I can think in terms of broad ideas and act in terms of making small positive changes in everyday work life. Through this shift, I have found a way to accept the reward of those brief bursts of high-quality change that might not be obvious to many people or clearly span across a culture or environment.

A key result of the shift is that I have been able to think of my future work outside of my actual employment, meaning that I no longer attempt to mold my ideas into a form that seems to match a job description. Instead, my attitudes and ideals will remain an underlying force in the way that I make decisions about my work and what it means to me. Certainly, I don’t insist that “holding onto my ideals” is equivalent to “never compromising in the face of the need to support myself financially”, but I now feel more prepared to express these ideals as a way of exposing how I think rather than insisting upon them as a way of working with others, even in a situation where I primarily need to attend to the practical aspects of a day-to-day workplace. In the following chapters, I will describe the ways in which this renewed attitude and understanding of lifelong learning might translate into real action and potential for change in me and others.

In a very real sense, my work and directions now in the current Synthesis project represent my own reaction to my own past formal schooling as I seek a new way to participate more directly in lifelong learning and seek allies who respect these views. Although I don't deny the widespread acceptance of schooling as a major source of critical learning and catalyst of historical and cultural change, this work is my own exploration of an alternative way of embracing lifelong learning and a challenge to myself to engage in a serious and long-term activity of "methodological believing" (Elbow, 1986) that a very different approach to finding my most meaningful learning is possible might be tried within the informal learning world. Throughout this process, I even hope to find that not only is a new attention to informal learning extremely valuable, but also that it can create meaningful learning that *far exceeds* the capabilities of formal schooling. Additionally, I choose to both give myself permission to explore this idea with respect to my own lifelong learning and encourage and inspire others to consider it for themselves.

Motivating Factors and Consequences

What do I mean when I refer to the "reaction to my past formal schooling"? Of course, I cannot change the way that my early learning happened, but I can recognize some striking points about it. As I consider each, I sense, if not know for sure, that they represent profound life consequences:

- Regardless of how "well" I was educated (according to whatever standard we wish to consider), I have only lived one life, and I can only retain an understanding of learning relative to my personal experience in school. I cannot have an understanding of all possible types of learning experiences, and therefore, there are potentially many types of learning experiences of which I am ignorant but might be quite meaningful to me now.

- Although I have over thirty years of life experience in observing teachers and numerous school-based situations, I hardly feel able to call myself an “expert” teacher, or at least, even now, I rarely feel certain that I have an absolute “best answer” to just about any open-ended question about learning. I’m frequently reminded of the need to change my mind about accepted “truths”.
- Even in my own experience as an adult educator in the workplace, my teaching techniques and practices are most influenced by the modeling of those who taught me in the first place, sometimes in spite of other intentions. Doing things the way that I have seen or experienced them to be done is often the most direct way to believe that I have accomplished my goals as a teacher, even though I am often aware that I cannot *know* that it is truly the best way. My doubt drives my curiosity to uncover other approaches to teaching.
- In my youth, I was probably much less receptive to thinking about my learning in the same way that I do now, perhaps due to a number of factors such as a lower maturity and the way that it was difficult or impossible to separate the processing of being educated from the other processes of growing up and getting through my adolescence with respect to family and other personal relationships.

With these points in mind, I feel able to take new control over my own learning and view it as a process of life rather than a transitional act of “getting to the other side”. Rather than thinking that school is something that one must endure in order to get to “what really matters” as a full member of the working world, I think of it as the place where one should receive the preparation needed to experience the joy of learning and therefore become acclimated to what rewarding learning should feel like, once formal school is no longer mandatory. One would hope that school could above all else guide us to become so used to finding the natural exhilaration of learning, that we maintain the momentum to do so throughout the rest of our

lives. Furthermore, learning is a process of change but with much emphasis that our own minds and bodies *as well as those of others* are always the key ingredients of the learning experience that gets changed. It used to be that people worked for a living, and now we also learn for a living.

Progress Toward My Own Relearning

At some point around the beginning of high school in the early 1990's, I found that I was greatly interested in the idea of human learning and the art and science what I might have called the "mini-processes" of learning, such as memory, perception, and problem-solving. I was hardly aware of the field of cognitive science as a well-defined area of knowledge back then (my eventual undergraduate major), so my interest developed relative to the more observable elements of learning, which to me were the student, the school, the classroom, the teacher, and the class. I was excited at the prospects of understanding learning at the practical level, although I could not quite understand that it was actually a field of real interest to others; I was offered choices in high school to take classes in science, literature, languages, civics, history, speech communication, economics, physical education, and many others, but there simply was no choice to take a class in "Education" or "Teaching" or "Human Learning".

The message to me was clear: "the classes offered here represent the range of useful topics that relate directly to career fields, so if you want a good job, start to think of yourself in one of these tracks". Further, I was encouraged to understand learning in terms of content, but I can hardly remember an instance where a teacher explained how the lessons related to the process of thinking, other than an occasional comment that learning the day's topic would "make me well-rounded" or that it would eventually make sense if I became a practitioner in the field of mathematics or art or history or writing, etc. At the same time, I can recall numerous examples of teachers who showed caring, trust, and guidance toward my development as a student and progress in school, often at the expense of their personal time. Even so, the trouble was that I

only understood education as a way to learn how to be good at school, not how to be good at something else that was meaningful to my life.

Since that time, and through my university and later work experience, I have been developing the idea that I would like to be more directly involved in reforming education, at least at a personal level if not an institutional one. At this point, I now realize that educational reform at the personal level is actually of primary importance to me above the implications of institutional, formal education. *As a consequence*, I find that I am most interested in the concept of how learning takes place specifically in ways that do *not* initiate from formal settings, since I identify closely with the notion that adults are “self-directed” in their lifelong learning (Cross, 1981, 63; Knowles et al., 2005, 65), and individually know best about what is meaningful to them, so any pursuit of learning must start with a motivation from a personal level rather than imposed from an institutional one.

Throughout this discussion, I touch upon the idea that the work of lifelong learning is a journey of connecting the past and future with the “now”. As we remind ourselves of our past learning, we remember earlier experiences and reflect upon ways in which learning was presented. Often, as children, we have not developed the sense of our own power and form a habit of looking to others to determine our learning paths, even if we are not assured that it is the best one. Looking back on those experiences as adults can lead to a moment of true insight as we realize that learning could have happened in other ways, and indeed, it still can – it is only up to us to accept our responsibility to make the appropriate choices. Meanwhile, we look toward the future in a new way as the one that we wish to create rather than the one that we will encounter. This interplay of reflecting upon the past and generating the future intersects with this moment, where we can only really look to ourselves to grant the permission needed to learn.

The privilege of being in the company of other lifelong learners is a keystone of the process of lifelong learning. We grow and progress as learners as we dare others to invite us along their journeys while inviting them along on our journeys as well. The result is a shared experience that unveils new meaning in our learning, where the process of seeking is at least as

interesting and important as the process of finding. In any such journey, we carry along tools for orienting our direction, providing our sustenance, and making interpretations of discoveries made along the way. In the following chapters, we will reflect upon the various elements that converge to make this a reality.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION OF FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

A Brief Story Summarizing (Almost) Everything You Need to Know About This Synthesis If You Do Not Have Time to Read the Next Two Hundred or So Pages

I once had the good fortune to hear a speech given by Benjamin Zander, the famed conductor of the Boston Philharmonic at the time. Since he was also known as a favorite teacher among his music students, he was explaining his practice of “giving an A”. Rather than evaluating student work to assign grades in the conventional way, he would tell students that they automatically started the semester with an A grade for the entire course, and this would be honored at the end of the semester when final grades were turned in. The only condition was that they would have to write a short essay now, at the beginning of the semester, but in the voice of their future self, explaining what they had done to earn the A grade. Of course, no student had ever heard of this approach before this time, but each student wrote the essay, predicting the most rewarding and creative work to be accomplished. Inevitably, almost every student then proceeded through the course by finding ways to live up to the promises that they had made.

I particularly appreciate this story because I think Zander’s perspective about possibility boils down my interest in lifelong learning in a most elegant way. This story reminds us that no matter what you have come to think about how learning works, no matter how educated you are, and no matter what your capabilities are as a lifelong learner, it is possible to think about those

things in new or unfamiliar ways – ways that have not yet crossed your mind but deserve some attention and redefine the reality that was presented to you previously. Every person has some perspective on learning and teaching from previous experience, and as a result, there are endless perspectives that we have not been privileged to experience yet. This awareness and our willingness to follow a journey of discovery of those other experiences are fundamentally a part of meaningful lifelong learning.

A Road Map to the Teaching Mind

In the following chapters, we will be considering a number of elements and experiences that inform a new way of thinking about lifelong learning as it connects to the way that we are able to perceive ourselves as teachers. In the remainder of this chapter, we will explore the meaning of education and learning by comparing some broad definitions of common terms and raising issues about the complications of doing so, since these concepts show a great deal of overlap and ambiguity across varying orders of magnitude. Then, we will use this discussion to formulate a proposed way of thinking about lifelong learning as a *process* involving communities, and Lifelong Learners as individuals that make up communities. Finally, we will introduce the idea of the Teaching Mind – a way of thinking in which we allow ourselves to recognize our potential as teachers as we reflect on our experiences, areas of knowledge, and ambitions for involvement with immediate, local, and global issues.

In Chapter 2, we will consider some background information on philosophies and approaches that have already been considered and put into practice when people are developing their ability and readiness to teach. We will consider how this happens in settings where people are becoming teachers under the conventional meaning of the term as well as how this happens

in many other areas where it is less strongly identified with the proper term, “teacher”. Also, we will expand upon what it means to engage in this process with others rather than as an isolated individual, and refer to some of the perspectives that can make such a process more accessible to a much wider community.

In Chapter 3, I will present some highlights of an ongoing personal experience that has begun to supply me with some direct insights into the communal process of developing capability as an educator. In part, this serves to remind us that this process is extremely rich with many areas of reward and challenge, and one where final answers and single right ways of doing things are rarely possible.

Chapter 4 is the foundation of what we might call the “ethic” of exploring the Teaching Mind mentioned above, where I suggest that this idea carries with it a certain degree of responsibility, openness, and caring, particularly at the level of specific interactions that we might have with fellow lifelong learners. A set of principles are defined that remind us that our journey to understand our potential to teach necessarily places us within a long-term system with others and our environment; it is not just a modularized component of professional and personal development.

The model of the group learning experience in Chapter 5 serves as a basis for bringing the idea of teaching potential to individuals in a very specific way, and also it provides some structure for explaining this idea to institutions, which will be an integral part of the practical aspects of a making such an experience accessible to individuals in the first place. I urge individuals and organizations not only to establish practical access to the Teaching Mind but also to create opportunities for teaching and support a culture of teaching as well as a culture of learning.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I will summarize some of the key learnings and consequences from our discussion and consider unanswered questions and ideas for further exploration. Some additional materials will be included in the appendices to round out some of the explanations and models mentioned throughout this work.

A high-level view of this Synthesis is presented in figure 1. This diagram represents a map of the general flow of the material and suggests the basic relationships between the major areas of personal and community considerations and theoretical and practical ideas. Segments of this diagram are replicated in larger readable form at the appropriate points throughout this work. Figure 2 highlights the segment of the map relating to the personal experiences and motivations discussed in the Prologue.

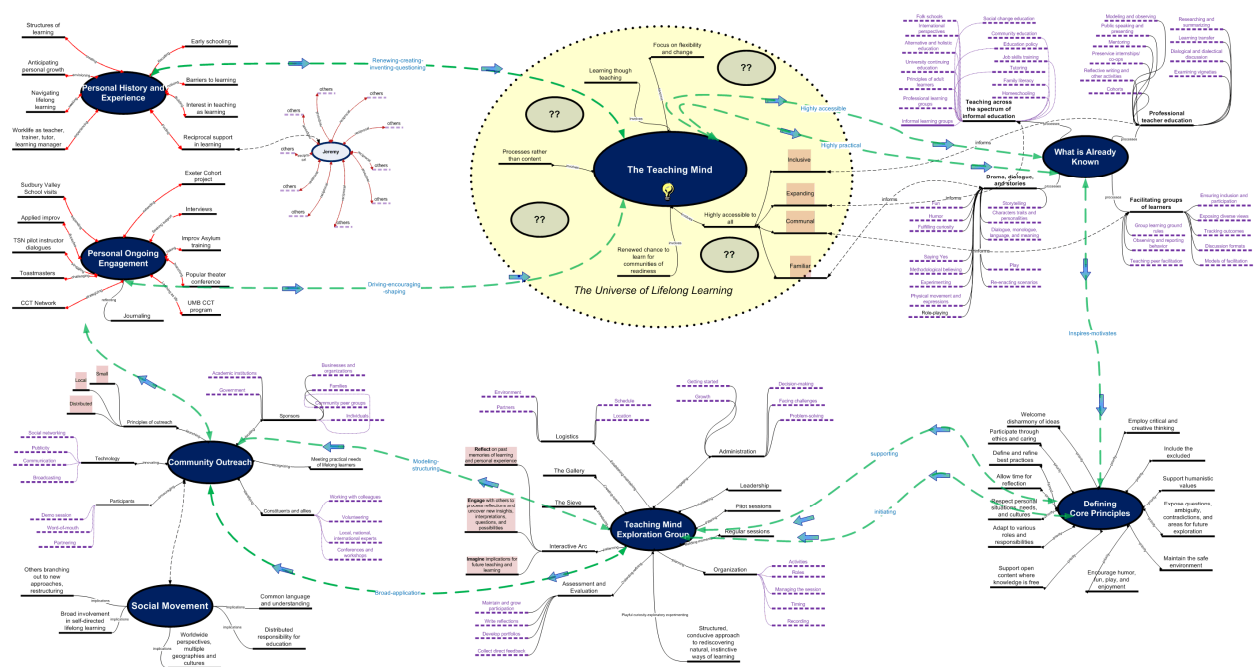


Figure 1: Overview Map of Synthesis Concepts and Connections

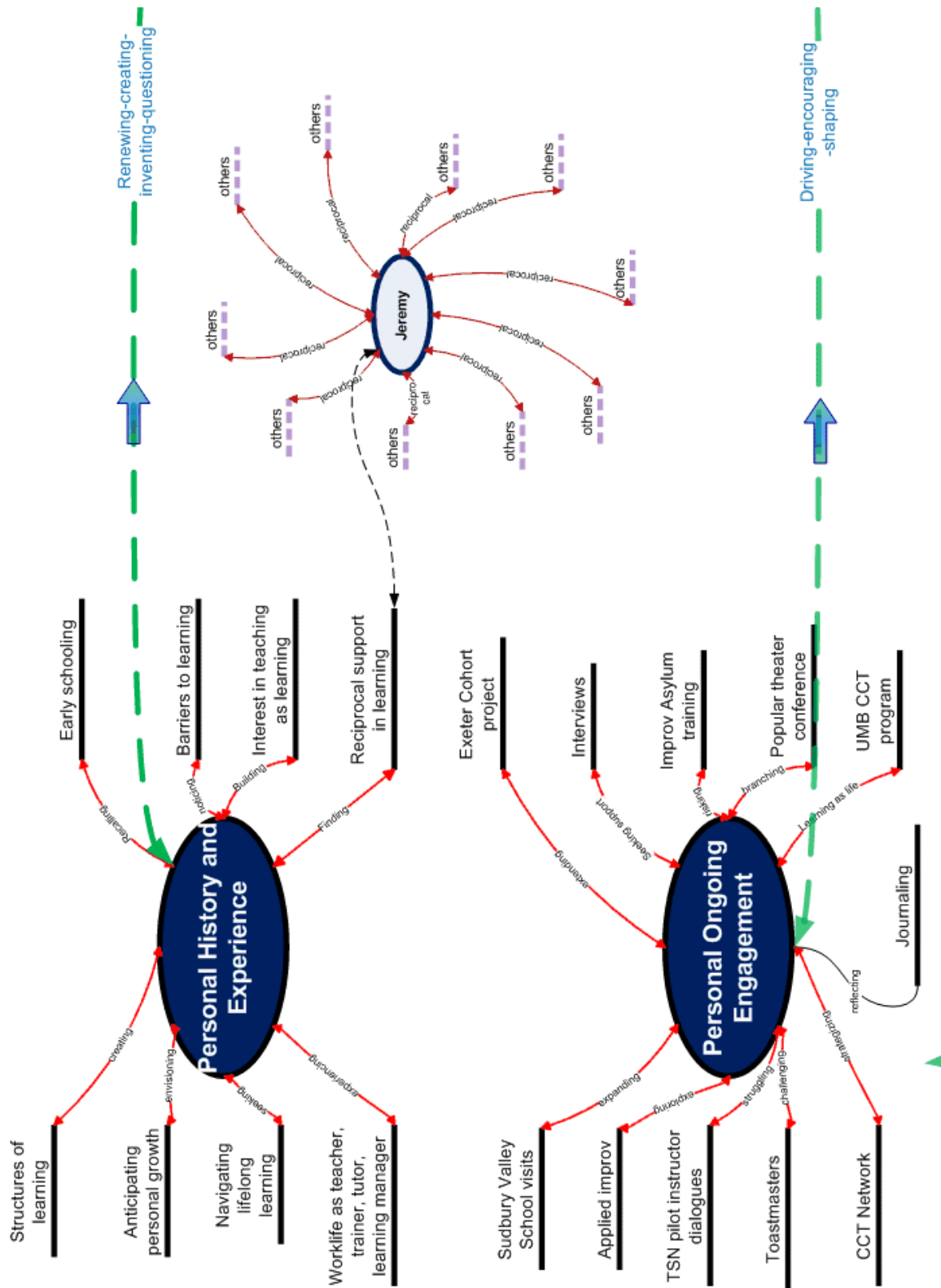


Figure 2: Map Segment of Synthesis Concepts and Connections Relating to Personal Experiences and Motivations Driving This Work

Thinking About Learning: A Warm-Up Thought Exercise

As a way of thinking about your own experiences in education and find your point of view about lifelong learning, try the following exercise. For a few moments, consider some of your childhood learning experiences, related to school or other settings. Simply choose two or three particular experiences that you can remember well and are the first to appear in your thoughts, and write a single sentence on paper to summarize them for yourself. Then answer the following questions:

1. Why do think you remember these particular experiences so well?
2. What are the common themes or patterns among the experiences? What similarities occur among them in terms of time frame when they occurred, other people involved, the emotions that you experienced, or the nature of what you were learning?
3. What are your feelings about these experiences now?
4. What was the learning that was intended to happen? What learning actually happened?
5. What parts of those experiences surprisingly rewarding or disappointing?
6. With the power of your hindsight, if you could go back in time and speak directly to your past self, what advice or suggestions would you make to help the past you understand and manage those experiences better?

Now that you have answered these questions, imagine that you are having a group discussion with friends about education. Someone asks the very ambiguous question, “How do you think education can be improved?” Certainly, there are countless ways to interpret and respond to this question, but *given your answers to the previous questions*, what is one statement that you would make to summarize your position?

Arriving at this point is part of the experience of personal learning. Reflecting upon past learning, engaging with others to gain insight, and considering how those insights can lead to future change forms a cyclic process of addressing learning from a personal point of view and education from a broad perspective. A next step of this exercise would be to consider what you actually learned or should have learned during those early experiences, and think about how you might influence others to have this experience. Answer the following questions:

1. How would you replicate or alter the way that learning occurred for you if you were a teacher to someone else?
2. As well as conveying knowledge about a topic, what else do you need to accomplish as a teacher?
3. What makes the difference between learning superficially and learning at a deeper level?
4. Since those early learning experiences, what has happened to change your opinion about those topics or make you understand them differently?

By going through this exercise, you are not only remembering what happened in the past, or predicting what might happen in the future, you are also learning *while you are thinking*, as you consider past learning and allow it to take renewed meaning through responsibility of teaching it to others. The learning that happened back then is not a fixed point in space and time but an ever-moving flow of understanding that changes relative to present state of mind, attitude, and web of other knowledge. It is stated as a concept of quantum physics that light energy lives as both a particle and a wave at the same time, and it merely depends upon which perspective you take to measure it. Similarly, knowledge takes multiple forms depending upon what is convenient for our immediate need. It can seem fixed if we are attempting to use it in practical ways to form conclusions, solve problems, and make decisions; it is more unstable and nebulous if we are attempting to process it and regard how consistent it is with other knowledge and

thinking. Learning is the process through which we figure out how to manage the various forms of knowledge.

Try to sustain that activity of recalling your own experiences as you explore the following ideas. Consider that you are a lifelong learner, and that you have the opportunity to reflect on what you most need out of your learning from now on. Perhaps in early school years, you did not have the chance to question what you were told or taught. Now, as a reader of this paper, you have reclaimed that ability. When you consider the various claims, suggestions, and predictions offered here, *make use of that power*. As a passive reader, you might have simply absorbed the meaning of my words, but I propose that you take a more active approach. Notice when my words correspond with your own understandings and opinions and when you can relate your own memories to the ideas. Notice when my words stir feelings of doubt or disagreement as well. A willingness to reach new levels of involvement *is* the spirit of the lifelong learner.

Understanding Lifelong Learning Once, But Perhaps Not For All

The idea of “lifelong learning” seems to be one that could be endlessly defined, debated, questioned, and interpreted. At the same time, some attempt has been made to clarify what is meant by lifelong learning and identify assumptions behind this. One such attempt declares that

...an operational definition of the concept of lifelong learning should be based on the locus of control for making decisions regarding the goals and means of learning...If control is a key characteristic of adulthood, then one way of conceptualizing lifelong learning is to use the idea of control as the basis of classifying the various types of lifelong learning. (Mocker and Spear, 1982, 1)

As a result, they state that lifelong learning would then take one of four generic forms: *formal learning* (learning decisions about the “what and how” are not made by the learner); *non-formal learning* (learner decides the “what” but not the “how”, as in choosing to attend a community workshop on a topic of personal interest); *informal learning* (learner decides the “how” but not

the “what”, as in being directed to become competent in a specialty area of knowledge by a workplace supervisor); and *self-directed learning* (learner decides both the “what” and “how” – learner has ultimate control over the learning process) (Mocker and Spear, 2). A glossary of terms appears in Appendix G which provides a reference to use of these and other terms within this discussion.

A Bridge Between Learning and Education

Other interpretations are made when we discuss “education” specifically, rather than “learning”. Without a single, accepted definition, using the term “education” at times might connote meaning within a *system* that can be recognized and addressed directly. “Learning”, after all, begs the question of which scale we are using – are we talking about the activities of tiny neurons or the wider collective experience shared by a large community that influences decision-making that are consequential to the whole group?

Coombs and Ahmed define informal education as the “lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment” while non-formal education is “any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children” (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974, 8).

La Belle adds that formal education, which refers to established institutions of learning in the form of schools and universities, is the center of a “concentric circle model” with “non-formal and informal education in the subsequent rings” (La Belle, 1984, 81). Coombs adds that non-formal education is not “a separate ‘system’ of education in the same sense that formal

education is a system” but instead a “convenient label covering a bewildering assortment of organized educational activities...” (Coombs, 1976, 282).

In Alan Rogers’ article “Looking Again at Non-Formal and Informal Education – Towards a New Paradigm” (2004), he mentions that originally, Coombs’ definition “arose in the context of the widespread feeling that education was failing (e.g., see Illich, 1971), not just in developing countries but also in so-called Western (or Northern societies as well)” (Rogers, 1). He suggests that the definition of non-formal education described above is still “too imprecise” as it was interpreted individually by countries and cultures to match their own will, and what was called “informal education” should have been called “informal learning” (1). He suggests that there remains a great deal of uncertainty in the meanings of these terms, since non-formal education is now viewed within the paradigm of lifelong learning and adult education. One possible new framework is that of a four-stage continuum, ranging from 1) formal education, to 2) “non-formal education” which *only* includes “flexible schooling” (school structure but great flexibility to address the group of students involved) to 3) “participatory education” (as defined by Mocker et al 1982, which involves groups of learners in “highly contextualized” situations) to 4) “informal learning”, which includes all the rest of the ways of incidental learning (5).

Learning as Experienced Through Relationships with Self and Others

Broadly speaking, an individual might relate to other people in terms of what is common between them, or what is not. Perceiving commonality by recognizing similarities between themselves and other people provides a foundation upon which the individuals can communicate, share, and participate together in some way. Perceiving differences means that individuals may recognize their own uniqueness, which might help to establish identity and provide a clue to purpose and life meaning while providing ways to place a label on one’s value

and perhaps therefore to communicate it to others. The process of lifelong learning, as it proceeds beyond the mere gathering of knowledge, involves the negotiating the tension between these two ideas: while commonalities between me and another person form a connectedness that is foundational, strong, consistent, and enduring, my uniqueness (and that of the other person) can stimulate a type of connectedness driven by dynamic exchange. During the process of lifelong learning, a person experiences a shift in understanding of commonality and uniqueness. Even in the case of learning rote skills, the moment of learning allows an individual to say to oneself,

Other people have this knowledge as well, and therefore I have further established myself in a wider community. My connection to others in this community has become stronger. At the same time, this new understanding has changed me, and so I get to experience an alternative version of myself that can be explored as I interact with others. My uniqueness is reinforced because no one else possesses the combination of knowledge within me, and so I gain the chance to contribute to the world in a novel way.

Of course, at a day-to-day level, these insights may happen incrementally such that we do not notice them so clearly.

A Functional Definition of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Learners

Even if we can accept that lifelong learning at least includes the types of pursuits outlined by Mocker and discussed previously, we still have not quite defined what lifelong learning *is*. For our purposes here, let us define that **lifelong learning** is simply the accumulation of *changes in thinking, knowing, or understanding to which we relate on a personal level and that may occur in any situation where we interact with our environment, including the people within it, throughout our entire lives*. The additional requirement that *meaningful* lifelong learning occurs when one has further reflected upon any such interaction after it occurs and carries forward this

awareness into future interactions with others, and I would like to concentrate on this form hereafter. A core implication of this line of reasoning is that *lifelong learning, personal change, and connectedness to others are necessarily interdependent*, and therefore, although learning might take place within an individual, it cannot be a strictly individualistic process.

What does it mean, then, to actually participate in lifelong learning, and to identify oneself as a lifelong learner? In my own school experience, I certainly developed some sort of idea of what “learning” was, or at least I invented a system to determine when I was learning and when I was not. Of course, much of this understanding grew out of the structures of formal education – grades, verbal and written comments from teachers, transcripts, school recognition, test scores, and numerous other indications of my achievement and sources of assurance that I was making progress. From an early age, I felt instinctively though that I was not really engaged in the “real” learning that I so greatly craved, but I was patient enough to behave as a “good student”, believing that the reward would come later in terms of opportunities and support that I would need to do the things in life that I actually intended to do. Strangely, I did not really believe that my experiences in school were actually preparing me for my life’s work, but I did understand that they could help me to *look like* someone who should be doing that work, whatever that eventually might turn out to be. If I could get to that point, then I might even get an opportunity to *act like* I was doing the work long enough so that I could *actually* do it. Such is the mind of a young student who receives no explanations about why he is learning...

I was indeed quite aware that learning, as it was presented to me, was not the one and only definitive way to understand it, although I was also aware that I did not know what the alternatives were. These areas of awareness were enough to keep me interested, though, and encouraged me to figure out what it would mean to test that assumption. This is a fundamental

assumption of all lifelong learning. Building upon the description of lifelong learning as an accumulation of life changes, then, let us therefore define **lifelong learners** as those individuals who exhibit some degree of consciousness that those changes are taking place and who accept the possibility that those changes are not merely arbitrary but subject to actions, thoughts, and behaviors that they are directly controlling and challenged to understand through the process of learning.

Lifelong Learning Within Formal and Informal Settings

For my purposes, I will acknowledge the definitions defined by others as described above, but I will continue to use the terms **formal education** to include the two first parts of Rogers' continuum (learning that happens in formal primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools and related institutions) and **informal education** to include the contextualized, participatory learning situations that involve people and particularly adults in various settings beyond post-secondary education as well as the situations that might be considered to be examples of informal and incidental learning throughout daily living. I make the distinction this way because my work intentionally addresses those situations that depend upon the primary control and ownership to be held by individuals, which typically occurs more often in adult learning situations and stands outside of the regulatory framework that governs much of formal education.

For these purposes, university education is considered part of formal education system because of the similarities of structure, in terms of a procession through coursework in distinct subject areas which leads to a formal credential. Certainly, an argument can be made in a given case that much of a university education breaks free of that structure, and similarly there exist adult continuing education scenarios that mirror the more conventional style of secondary

schooling in formal education through classes and lecture-style teaching. For the sake of simplicity, formal education and formal education institutions are presented as mostly synonymous, but I concede that informal education happens in formal institutions just as formal education happens outside of those institutions. This convenience is allowed because my focus throughout this work is on individuals and collections of individuals without respect to the literal or figurative walls that enclose or segregate them. I use the term “informal education” going forward mainly to insist upon a realm of lifelong learning that regards learning situations outside of formal schools as highly significant, even if unstructured when compared to school learning.

Inclusion in Lifelong Learning

The ideas presented here and my current work bring me to a point of action and to the stage of making a choice about how to further develop and support lifelong learning. Because of the reasons explained previously, I find that I am encouraged to enter into a process of addressing the meaning of education from a critical and creative thinking point of view. Summarizing and extending slightly my ideas so far, I take a stance that celebrates the following dynamics of meaningful lifelong learning:

- Lifelong learning as a process that originates from the will of the individual rather than from the perceived need of the institution
- Lifelong learning that happens in the spirit of community engagement and self-knowledge rather than the pursuit of financial reward or credential
- Lifelong learning that involves one in a process of social change rather than learning to keep new knowledge and understanding to oneself targeted only toward a personal agenda

- Lifelong learning that is highly inclusive, meaning that it involves people who are not always perceived to be likely participants in academic communities, such as senior citizens, disabled people, immigrants, tradespeople, the homeless, and those in poverty
- Lifelong learning is, in some sense, the full realization of “natural learning” – the innate ability and tendency to explore the universe of knowledge that is instinctive to all people, which perhaps through civilized life becomes superimposed by human-made systems that present external sources of motivation for learning.

Education as a Service to Teachers as Well as to Learners

In many common settings of “adult education” within the United States, lifelong learning may take the form of continuing education through universities, adult/community education centers, museum programs, and many others. My own experience and explorations related to this topic shows that such settings are usually centered on learner needs, as they should be. In discussions with a few directors of adult education centers in the Boston area, I have discovered that a typical way for new public classes to be formulated is through the collecting of ideas from past students about classes that they would like to have offered but are not available currently. In an informal interview with a member of the Board of Trustees and former student of the Sudbury Valley School in Framingham, Massachusetts (a “democratic/free” school as described more in Chapter 2), I learned that students take part in community meetings and have voting privileges equal to those of staff; for all intents and purposes, the students are equal participants in deciding how the school operates, and primary decision-makers regarding the nature of their involvement in learning activities during a school day. Reflecting upon my own former work as a teacher of Adult Basic Education, there was similar freedom to disrupt the chosen curriculum

in moderate ways in order to accommodate the spontaneous needs of students who expressed specific areas of interest throughout a class session.

At the same time, I have found that the focus on the students dominates the operation of these settings sometimes to the point where the support and development opportunities for teachers themselves are limited. For example, in surveying a number of adult education centers, very little opportunities were found for any sort of sustained support for teachers that involved their interaction with each other, outside of perhaps an initial orientation to complement their initial interviews with the center hiring staff. One programming director explained that he found very little need for such an interaction – the instructors at the centers were subject-matter experts who had ultimate confidence in their ability and would not have considered any peer teacher interaction to be worthwhile – what else could they possibly gain? Even in the name of professional development, peer interaction among teachers was not perceived to be desired.

Even if ongoing teacher development was potentially helpful, instructors may not likely be receptive to the idea that they may benefit from it. While this suggests one objection to the idea, it only considers those individuals who are already involved in teaching, well-established and well-practiced in their field, and perhaps not pressured to change anything about their teaching process as long as student evaluations and professional reviews yield satisfactory results. In many adult education centers of the type mentioned above, feedback about the demand for a particular course may materialize only as a count of enrollees, which represents a financial break-even point. Instructors are hired as independent contractors by the centers if there are enough enrollees paying the course fee to justify the cost of paying the instructor. This operational reality may mask the potential opportunity for supporting teacher growth further.

A Key Assumption About the Lifelong Learner

Although the examples described in the previous sections refer to systems for involving people in informal education (since they are based in learner-directed, non-credential experiences), these opportunities still happen through the operation of larger institutions such that student involvement primarily consists of attending classes and are the clients of a service, and instructors deliver the classes as paid consultants of that service. In order to really fulfill the promises of the lifelong learning dynamics mentioned already, there is a particular approach to lifelong learning that represents a radical change in the way that it can happen, and this change involves a much more active way for lifelong learners to become engaged in an ongoing, direct, and personal way. Such engagement stands outside of the “industry” of education.

A key assumption is that in order to immerse oneself in lifelong learning, one must become involved in the *process of teaching*. Through the ongoing process of thinking of oneself as a potential teacher, and engaging with others in the support and development of teaching skills and dispositions, a person actually becomes directly involved with lifelong learning because he or she is creating it, rather than simply being the recipient of a learning opportunity that is really created by others on the learner’s behalf. The ability to teach is a powerfully generic and broadly-applicable skill, available to all persons and suitable for a huge number of settings that are not related to formal educational institutions but instead based in the informal education of the community and the knowledge of the individual. Further, thinking about what has been learned from the point of view of self as teacher causes us to process that knowledge again at a deeper level, perhaps even to the point that we decide that what we *actually* have learned (or not learned) is not the same as what we originally thought. Lifelong learning includes returning to what we have learned in the past and recognizing that it is transient – that

knowledge “expires” through the passage of time and circumstance and must at least be *examined* once again, every once in a while, even if just to confirm to ourselves that no new interpretations or conclusions are to be made at this time.

Who Gets to be Called a Teacher?

At this point, you may wonder how the notion of teaching as a generic and fundamental skill could make sense, given that professional teachers preparing for school environments may go through rigorous training to gain certifications or spend years in the practice of teaching and refine their knowledge of curriculum development, instructional design, educational administration, classroom best practices, and other topics related to pedagogy. If we allow that lifelong learning must include the community, family, and daily experiences that are part of informal education, we recognize the much more broadly-defined notion of teaching as being tied to the idea of connectedness described previously in which people explore commonalities and uniqueness and experience learning through the lens of the connectedness. Furthermore, because adults engaged as lifelong learners within informal education may be less prepared, willing, or able to avail themselves to involvement in formal teacher training or teacher education programs, they might rarely do so, but as subject-matter experts in their own domains, they still have a great deal to offer others and recognize that they may be called upon in their family or local or global communities to direct others toward the skills, knowledge, and understanding that they possess.

Perhaps a difficulty with this idea involves the use of the term “teacher”, which might be seen to have a reserved meaning and be devalued or diluted if just about anyone is able to use the label to describe the role that they play. Consequently, I will concede the difficulty and instead focus on the idea that any lifelong learner can *potentially* serve as an educator, at least in

informal education settings as I have defined previously (and therefore in most areas of life that involve growth), so I place primary importance on the *way that preparation to teach can happen*, not on the way that a person *is identified*.

This distinction has been an area of struggle in my work. I was challenged to find a phrase to identify those lifelong learners who are in the process of realizing their potential to teach, wanting to call them “Community Learning Partners”, “Community Teachers”, “Novice Teachers”, “Learning Guides”, “Learning Mentors”, “Educational Facilitators”, “Teacher-Learners”, and a number of other terms that only complicated and even obscured my intended meaning. As it turns out, I feel that the labeling of a person with such a stamp of identity is counterproductive to my focus on a highly inclusive process rather than a path toward a category, certification, or credential.

As a compromise, hereafter I will use the phrase “Lifelong Learner” in the proper form to identify a person who is engaged in learning in ways that include (but are not entirely defined by) the particular descriptions that I use in the following sections, which do not attempt to exhaustively identify all qualities of a Lifelong Learner . This term is certainly debatable, although I find that it is necessary to use as a convenience to identify those people involved in the *process* of lifelong learning in particular ways.

Since people involved in informal education may guide the learning of others through mentoring, apprenticeship, family interactions, or any number of ways that extend beyond traditional classroom settings, a Lifelong Learner can certainly include those who might literally be labeled as a “teacher” or “instructor” in some structured environment, but also it includes those who may never actually be perceived as a teacher or clearly recognize their own

participation as such, although leading others toward new knowledge, skills, or understanding is part of their lives and may even be a natural talent.

A New Approach to Lifelong Learning: The Teaching Mind

One cannot go from one well-defined state of being of a “non-teacher” to that of a “teacher” within the framework that I have described; there is no fixed threshold to be crossed when moving from one to the other. The fundamental process of engaging oneself as a Lifelong Learner is *continuous, unending, and inseparable from one’s entire life process*, no matter how proficient one becomes in some subject matter or way of thinking.

What we seek is not so much a well-groomed procedure for learning how to teach but rather a state of mind. This state of mind is the keystone of the thinking and behaving that allows a Lifelong Learner to no longer act only as a recipient of knowledge but actually participate in the active process of contributing to the learning of self and others. This is done by reviewing existing knowledge through the lens of a teacher, which implies imagining and practicing how one might communicate knowledge to others.

I will use the term **Teaching Mind** to encapsulate this state of mind: the cumulative self-awareness of one’s potential to teach others, which is sought through the process of developing personal *dispositions, knowledge, and skills* that contribute to one’s readiness for guiding the learning of others as well and therefore the learning of self. I deliberately use the word “potential” because I consider the Teaching Mind to be a generic capability; a person does not have to already have a well-defined forum for practicing teaching but rather simply the *expectation and desire* to be able to use the Teaching Mind at some point in their personal, work, or community life in order to guide the learning of others. I also anticipate that the eventual “use” of the Teaching Mind can take a form that extends well beyond any typical understanding

of teaching. This framework may include the idea of learning how to “think like a teacher”, but it also may include understanding of a way of thinking and involvement as a Lifelong Learner for which the word “teacher” is no longer appropriate. In fact, in some cases, the Teaching Mind might even be recognized as a capability that is connected with *leadership, communication, activism*, or other terms, even before an association is made with education or learning. It can be a way of thinking about one’s skill to educate others directly or one’s inclination to inspire the learning of others and self in less obvious ways.

Lifelong Learners therefore make some conscious effort to be aware of their own Teaching Mind and develop it over time, even if they face no imminent need to express it practically. Consequently, the “Teaching Mind” might not take the same form in different individuals, nor must it do so. The notion of the Teaching Mind is experienced relatively by people, who have personal prerogative to judge how it might be improved relative to personal needs and ambitions; there is no objective standard to determine who has the right grasp of the Teaching Mind and who does not. The ideas put forth throughout this Synthesis are then applicable to anyone to whom these phrases could be attributed.

The Teaching Mind is not simply a frame of reference that is achieved once and then held for all time. Rather, it must be continually sought over and over again with respect to the changes that occur throughout life, both in terms of daily activities and long-term behavior. The Teaching Mind is sought rather than found, although it may be possible to come to a point of rest in seeking it so that a person can apply current understanding to life’s situations. If the Teaching Mind is an endpoint sought by a Lifelong Learner, then the milestones reached on the journey toward the Teaching Mind can themselves be practical and functional expressions of teaching in real-world situations. Further, as suggested previously, the Teaching Mind is a necessary, but

perhaps insufficient, condition of meaningful lifelong learning; I do not attempt to enumerate all conditions that might be included in lifelong learning.

Next, the pursuit of the Teaching Mind has the potential to create puzzles and paradoxes in one's lifelong learning. The nature of the Teaching Mind causes a person to revisit what is perceived as solid knowledge, reprocess that knowledge through the point of view of a teacher, and then revise the knowledge. This means that seeking the Teaching Mind may cause a person to take "knowledge" and turn it into "not knowledge". Where conventional ideas of lifelong learning assume the gaining of knowledge, the Teaching Mind process informs us that some piece of our existing knowledge has not been understood after all, and we are forced to look at the murkiness of this piece and become inspired to make it clear once again. A sign of progress in seeking the Teaching Mind can be observed when one finds new complexity in teaching and perhaps then finds more questions rather than more answers.

Inspiring Others to Gain Awareness and Appreciation for the Teaching Mind

Why do I choose to focus on the Teaching Mind? If the Teaching Mind is truly one key component of lifelong learning, what about inspiring myself and others to explore other components, such as self-directed learning, community education, family literacy, or emerging workforce development skills? One reason for this focus is that I believe that the Teaching Mind is an idea whose time has come; lifelong learners are ready for a next phase of approaching learning with a degree of additional personal *responsibility* over learning and a level of control that is both *initiated* and *designed* by the individual. At the same time, this statement does not imply a purely individualistic, lonely process. I expect that the broad support for the Teaching Mind might often need to take form through organizations, businesses, government, academic institutions, and private individuals who sponsor the idea of the Teaching Mind as a way to

advance the lifelong learning for themselves and their immediate communities. Through this work, I hope to demonstrate that the Teaching Mind might be readily transformed from an abstract notion to a practical and operable system for addressing the modern challenges of lifelong learning.

As I will describe, a number of elements of the Teaching Mind make it accessible to a wide range of people and respect a wide range of cultures. The nature of the Teaching Mind allows for a great deal of flexibility and has the possibility of being shaped by the individuals or groups who are addressing it. Additionally, the Teaching Mind provides a way for people to recognize their own knowledge and understanding as an expression of personal value that might not have been recognized as such before – that knowledge and understanding that does not fit well within the traditional categories usually associated with academic, industrial, employment, and cultural subject areas. The Teaching Mind encourages a new potential of leadership in everyone.

Why the Teaching Mind is Important for Me and Others

Before moving further, I come to a deceptively simple question: why *do I care* about the opportunity for people to engage in Lifelong Learning through the process of developing their Teaching Mind? I do not expect this process to create a wider pool of people who consider themselves to be skilled teachers and therefore have a better chance of professional advancement. Upon reflection, I find that my own pursuit of the Teaching Mind will help to remind me of my own ability to create change in my own life and community. When I surround myself with others who are habitually engaged in the exchange of teaching and learning, I gain a

specific kind of energy that directly relates to the way that I take action toward change, which I value highly.

Embracing the Teaching Mind creates the possibility for a *new social movement* in lifelong learning, in which a shift of consciousness occurs in people to be driven to see just a little more how they are personally responsible for learning that takes place with self *and others*. This shift not only addresses what it means to get an education, to learn new things, to be more knowledgeable, but also insists that learning is about encouraging people to get involved with each other – a fundamental need of a thriving culture.

Through exploring and developing the Teaching Mind, those around me form this community that I seek, and I envision a time when it is the common practice for people to take this journey of acknowledgment that they are *worthy* and *capable* of contributing to the learning of others while they are addressing their own learning as well. The Teaching Mind allows people to *give themselves permission* to become part of a community of Lifelong Learners and helps them to identify and revisit those qualities in themselves that are most positive and powerful.

Additionally, participation in one's exploration of the Teaching Mind implies being open to restoring one's *natural and personal joy of learning*. This means that instead of fitting one's learning approach into the narrow behavior that was defined in early school years, seekers of the Teaching Mind suspect that they still can rediscover ways that they learned most naturally as young children. After a lifetime of being taught "how to learn", the conditioned, imposed strategies of learning may at some point begin to confuse the natural, inborn ones, and perhaps it simply becomes easier to use the imposed ones because they seem to fulfill the need to connect with others through the learning process. Seeking the Teaching Mind means being curious about

the processes and experiences that allowed the imposed ways of learning to overtake the natural ways. Further, this also involves noticing how, and in what situations, it would be in one's best interest for those natural ways to resurface.

When a person crosses the threshold from being a child to being “no longer a child”, some changes take place. To a child, one's whole general behavior and way of interacting with the world is simply “life”. When people stop identifying themselves as children, they seem to re-label children's behavior as “play” instead and their own behavior as something else entirely. Additionally, specific types of behavior become labeled in specific ways as “work”, “play”, and “rest”; there is importance placed on seeing oneself in the “proper” behavioral zone and making sure that others understand which zone is being occupied by us. Perhaps too much effort is made to make sure that this new “mature” behavior prevents work and play from being mistaken for each other as one strives to be taken seriously, and this happens long enough to eventually cause the idea of play to become strange and perhaps therefore uncomfortable as well. Returning to a natural, instinctive way of learning might require not simply a shift in understanding of “how to learn” but possibly a devoted effort to dismantle one's own discomfort with play. Exploring the Teaching Mind might mean *sharing the struggle* of this experience with others, which has been a supreme source of bonding between people over all time.

Four Unique Aspects of the Teaching Mind That Make it Accessible to All

Rephrasing several of the points already previously, I find that the intersection of four key aspects of the Teaching Mind make it unique as a framework for viewing lifelong learning. Each aspect contradicts a conventional view of what it means to learn to be a teacher, and through examining these contradictions, the Teaching Mind can be a real and feasible part of

lifelong learning rather than a utopian philosophy of how lifelong learning could be, only under the most ideal conditions. The four aspects are the following:

- 1) The Teaching Mind is *inclusive* of all people who want to become more conscious of and in control of their own lifelong learning path: it seeks to actively include those who are *not* typically associated with academic endeavors, rather than limit participation to those with qualified skills
- 2) The Teaching Mind is *communal* and depends upon Lifelong Learners helping each other along and engaging with each other through discussion and other activities; it is not a totality of pedantic knowledge about teaching that one can learn in isolation or through strictly self-study
- 3) The Teaching Mind is *expansive* such that it allows the meaning of “teaching” to reach beyond professional teaching in schools, and it refers to a level of teaching that might happen broadly in community, family, and other informal settings, even where a person had not even realized that teaching was happening; it cannot be measured against the standards of professional teaching that happens in formal schools
- 4) The Teaching Mind is *familiar* such that it can be sought through activities and basic ways of communicating that are already understood by people through natural experience; it does not require the kind of specialized understanding that professional teachers might be acquiring.

In Chapter 2, research is presented that supports the understanding of how these four aspects can be made operational in practice.

The Undeniable Connections Between Lifelong Learners

How can we tie these ideas together a little more? I proposed that in order to become fully engaged as a Lifelong Learner as I have framed it, one would also be actively involved in the process of recognizing, developing, and improving one's Teaching Mind. Rather than simply imagining privately how to interpret that, I add the additional requirement that developing one's Teaching Mind necessarily includes "learning together", that is, being engaged with other people who are doing the same. This condition supports the "connectedness" to which I referred earlier – not only does it involve the continuous growth of the individual and preparedness to guide the learning of others, but also this happens through the interactions with fellow Lifelong Learners. Integrating the previous points, I come to an intermediate proposition to connect lifelong learning to the Teaching Mind:

Individuals, outside of the bounds of formal educational institutions, have the potential to create lifelong learning in the image of how it "ought to be". Each Lifelong Learner does this by *reinventing* the meaning of learning through the *process* of preparing to guide the learning of self and others, in the fellowship of others, with the anticipation that the Teaching Mind will manifest itself when called upon, but with the comfortable assurance that it will do so in unpredictable ways.

As mentioned earlier, the environments in which community-based teachers are already practicing may, or may not, provide opportunities of varying degrees for these teachers to actually interact as peers and allow space and time for reflection, mutual support, and sharing of experiences and knowledge. In the case of the adult education centers to which I have inquired, as mentioned the individual instructors may rarely, if ever, even meet more than a very few of the other instructors. In other situations, the

interactions and ongoing learning and development of teachers might be localized to the particular subject matter or culture and therefore unavailable to others.

A Proposal for a New Opportunity for Lifelong Learners

I propose a way of interacting and learning together about the Teaching Mind that especially addresses Lifelong Learners who are not part of formal education and therefore may not have any institutional body to support and maintain this development. In other words, because Lifelong Learners may potentially need to use the Teaching Mind but by definition are not beholden to any particular institution to develop it, they may in fact have no forum at all for doing this together in an organized way. My work therefore addresses the ways and means in which Lifelong Learners may engage in learning together to develop the Teaching Mind, and in such a way that the outcomes are applicable across the many different domains of knowledge that are held by these Lifelong Learners. The goal then is not that each Lifelong Learner develops the *same* knowledge of what it means to teach and educate others, but that each Lifelong Learner develops some idea of what it means to teach relative to their own needs and aspirations.

It is not crucial that Lifelong Learners have similar perspectives about what they believe they know about teaching and learning at any particular point in time; in fact, it is even desired that contradictory ideas be held among Lifelong Learners as a catalyst for ongoing exploration. Another proposition is stated to reflect this:

Conclusions made by Lifelong Learners about how to define or understand elements of teaching, learning, or education are developed on personal levels. Despite the engagement of Lifelong Learners with each other to explore the Teaching Mind, it is completely unnecessary that this engagement results in the finding of any shared meaning regarding these topics.

Readiness for the Teaching Mind

If I insist that the “Teaching Mind” is a generic one which might be developed by just about anyone, do I insist that *everyone* actually should be involved in actually developing it for themselves, and that there even should be a flurry of activity of people across all situations to do so? Realistically, people might be at varying stages of readiness to explore the Teaching Mind and give attention to developing it further. Still, I feel that a well-organized forum for doing so would be highly rewarding for such individuals, and through this thinking I hope to orient my own work toward supporting those who are developing their abilities as a teacher.

As a starting point for this work, I consider that the following types of people might be most ready to become directly engaged in the development of their own Teaching Mind:

- Those who are subject-matter experts in some area but do not consider themselves to be teachers, although they have found that they greatly enjoy sharing their knowledge with others
- Those who are subject-matter experts who might actually like to try to become teachers in formal education or in informal settings within community education, but who are not actually experienced as teachers and would benefit from practicing first
- Those who are novice teachers in community or professional settings and simply want to continue developing their understanding of various aspects of teaching
- Those who are parents and would like to be more involved in the education of their children (either as a complement to formal schooling or as a homeschooler)

- Those who have life experience in some unique way outside of typical academic subject areas and would like to find ways to share that experience with others (such as through developing workshops or talks to be delivered to community groups, businesses, or schools)
- Those who are simply interested in becoming more involved in the educational process and would like a practical and direct way to be part of it
- Those who are looking to organize and lead a peer learning group or a community club whose purpose is to provide a place and time for discussion and practice of some skill or idea (even if the organizers do not consider themselves to be “experts” and simply are seeking mutual support).

Although I expect that the development of the Teaching Mind is open to all of these groups, my particular workplace experiences have left me with a bias to be most concerned with the true “novices” – those people who have not thought of themselves as teachers but have reached a point of curiosity about what teaching involves, and find excitement in the possibility of starting to become engaged.

Others might not be as likely to be participants in a group of Lifelong Learners who are developing their Teaching Mind, or else they might represent a different kind of participation. It is important to note that the following list is not inconsistent with the one of the four aspects of the Teaching Mind that insists upon inclusivity. I only distinguish these groups to point out which people are already involved in teaching or tied to the academic world. Because my intention is to include more people, the previous list describes those who are less likely to already be in the process of viewing self as

teacher, and so I look to them as a source of greatest potential in the development of the Teaching Mind through my own future work. The following list then describes those for whom the Teaching Mind does not hold the novelty experienced by the first group.

Consequently, if these individuals are not primary participants in seeking the Teaching Mind, they might be contributors in other ways to the process:

- Those who are highly experienced teachers, instructors, and professors in current or past work
- Those of any experience level who are currently engaged in formal education in teaching roles and are recognized as such
- Those who already participate in informal education but in well-defined situations in which they are identified as teacher practitioners (e.g., a corporate trainer)
- Those who have life situations involving priorities that prevent them from affording the time or attention required to address their Teaching Mind
- Those who are convinced that they already possess the Teaching Mind and that it is perfectly sufficient for any situation that they might encounter where they need to guide the learning of others
- Those who simply have no interest in developing ways of thinking related to teaching and sharing experience and knowledge with others, or feel that it is not part of their own notion of creating the life that they want.

Many people fall into this second group, and although I expect that these people may less frequently entertain the possibility of their own readiness or need to actually participate in seeking the Teaching Mind, my tendency is to invite them to participate anyway. If not convinced that such an idea would actually help them to re-examine their

own teaching or life situations, then I still assert that these individuals would likely greatly contribute to the learning of others at the least and have a chance to reconsider their own teaching knowledge in addition. Many of the individuals who are in the first group might be novices in teaching and perhaps have absolutely no experience at all. At the same time, those in this second group may still have much to offer as resources in the process of other Lifelong Learners exploring the Teaching Mind. For example, an experienced, retired high school teacher might not believe that he or she would be derive any benefit from interacting with other novices teachers, but it may turn out that being part of this process provides a great deal of insight to them and even challenges this teacher to re-examine his or her own professional experience and understand how to transfer it to informal settings. Certainly, becoming reconnected to a community of Lifelong Learners can provide other social benefits as well. It is not assumed that those members of the second group actually *have* the Teaching Mind already; in fact, there may exist experienced professional teachers who have not truly explored their own practice in this way in a very long time. Still, the focus of this idea is on the true novices as a reflection of potential participation rather than a reflection of need.

Along with more concrete reasons for wanting to develop the Teaching Mind, another key assumption is that every person has *some* perspective from their own schooling, including some ideas about learning experiences that did not work well, were disappointing, were stressful, were dehumanizing, or otherwise left the learner unsatisfied or confused as well as those experiences that were decidedly successful. Although the process of learning the Teaching Mind might meet a functional need for each person, it can also serve as a process of reawakening oneself to the possibilities of

education and actually be a process of critical and creative thinking as Lifelong Learners come to understand how their own particular formal education was shaped and how it affected their lives and how they have a new chance to recreate the learning experience for themselves by directly confronting the ways in which they might create learning experiences for others.

Not only is the development of the Teaching Mind a chance to work through one's own idea of how to restore a more natural joy of learning that might have been obscured during the process of formal schooling, but also it might help Lifelong Learners to be more directly involved in a process of social change. If these individuals start to give more direct attention to the learning process and can internalize and personalize the ways of thinking about teaching, more people might take an active role in influencing the direction of the formal schooling system, feel more comfortable to question and challenge the way that formal education is organized, and examine the source of the school system's motivations. Consequently, a much broader support system might eventually develop for creating genuine change in schools and the concepts, methods, practices, and purposes of learning. Figure 3 shows the segment of the overview map that presents the idea of the Teaching Mind.

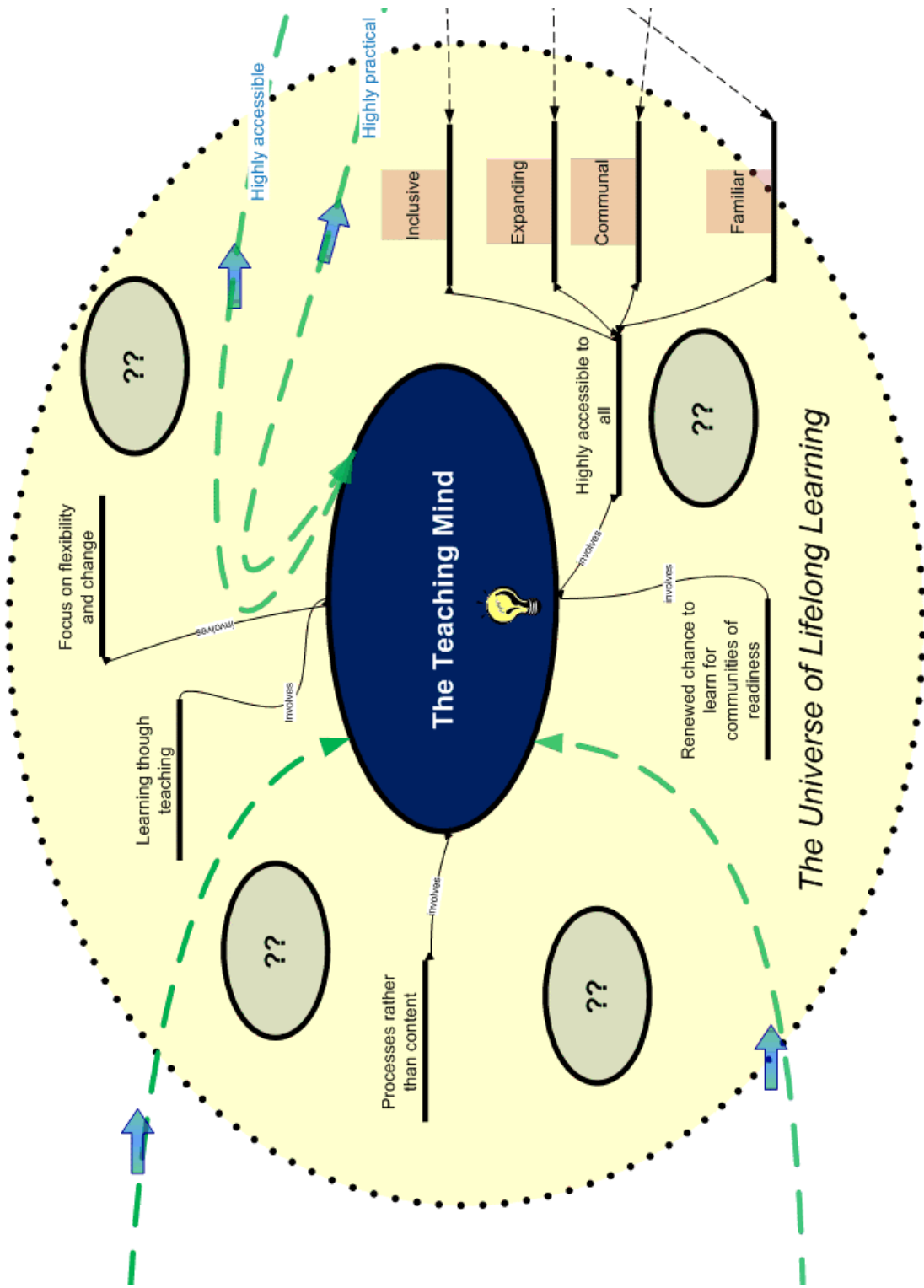


Figure 3: Map Segment Relating to the Teaching Mind

Taking Personal Responsibility for the Systems of Education

In my experience of observing learning, participating as a learner, speaking with colleagues, and serving as a teacher and educational administrator in various capacities, I have concluded that a great deal of pressure is placed on the front-line practitioners who take responsibility for the daily activities of education (i.e., early childhood educators, K-12 schoolteachers, college and university faculty, and the administrators and staff who operate the associated institutions). One might be led to think that the entire economic prosperity, physical and mental health, advancement of culture, and personal happiness and comfort within United States society depends upon the formal educational system to “get it right”. I can think of very few other industries (perhaps Technology, Health Care, and Law Enforcement) that are seated so centrally in the public eye and reflect a degree of urgency around its responsibility for “righting the wrongs” of the rest of society and putting people and civilizations on the path to success and security. Ultimately, I consider this sort of pressure on formal education to be quite unfair, unrealistic, and misguided, so my wish for the growth of personal involvement in teaching through informal education is not simply a call for people to find fulfillment in their own lifelong learning but additionally a declaration that the responsibility of education needs to be distributed widely and greater empowerment endowed upon each private individual in conjunction with a collaborative system of support and relationships between them.

In subsequent chapters, I will propose a system and model for organizing a peer-driven support system for Lifelong Learners that focuses on in-person collaborative experiences and describes how existing models of learner interaction in other areas contribute wisdom into the process. Also, I will describe some pilot experiences of my own that inform the model and help it to evolve as I continue this work.

A Teaching Mind Thought Experiment

At the end of each chapter, a short narrative series is presented called “Imagining the Past”. As a supplement to the chapter, this narrative presents a thought experiment to encourage you to imagine an alternative to the way that you have come to perceive education. Think about the tension between the forces that appear in your culture and how they have shaped what it means to learn. If you had the chance to take an active, direct role in determining how this concept of lifelong learning changes into the next generations, what possibilities emerge?

Imagining the Past: Part 1

As a Lifelong Learner, I have always been interested in the history of education – what it meant to learn, how people perceived the role of education in their lives, and how we arrived at the current culture of learning.

“Go and spend some time looking at how things were one hundred years ago”, I was advised by a colleague, who added, “notice how things worked when the ‘modern age’ of education began, especially in this country. If you want to know about learning and teaching and education, you have to know more about where things used to be to see how we ended up where we are today. Some things are very different, but some things are still the same. Is it better? Is it worse? Does it matter? I suppose you’ll have to figure that out for yourself.”

Actually, I am a little curious. I know that the older generations seemed to grow up during a time when education was changing constantly, and the idea of ‘school’ was in a state of constant evolution. It is quite a mystery to me now. What used to be working well that has been lost? What were the challenges back then that we have overcome now? How was the relationship between people and their learning different? What areas of education showed the greatest agreement and good will between people? What areas were the most controversial?

If I was an alien just arriving on this planet, with no previous understanding of the human culture, what would I learn about it by studying the systems and processes of education and learning? I suppose that I would need to find the evidence of how things were in those days as well as the current time. There are countless records of the symbols, artifacts, and events that represented the world of education then. Relics that could provide clues to that world. As a modern person of the year 2109, I believe that I already understand what I need to get by in life, but I do have some questions, now that I think about it. My task now is to examine how things were back in the year 2009 and understand the changes that have occurred and what potential conditions back then led to today’s reality in the year 2109.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW OF SUPPORTIVE PRACTICES FOR AN ACCESSIBLE ADAPTATION OF THE TEACHING MIND

Introduction

The previous chapter described a philosophy of lifelong learning in terms of the way that an individual might participate directly in the preparation of becoming a teacher, based on collaborative activity and that somehow increases or develops one's readiness to do so. I named this the "Teaching Mind", perhaps still a nebulous idea that may invoke mystical allusions of some Zen-like fanciful ability to transform others through a complex and mysterious process only known to the master teacher. Quite the contrary, developing one's readiness to teach others, particularly within informal education, can be viewed as a flexible process, based on using tools, resources, and ways of communicating that are accessible to all people and natural ways of communicating and interacting.

The presence (or lack thereof) of the Teaching Mind is perpetually re-examined, evaluated, and changed by an individual based on new or revised insights about what it means to be a teacher. Therefore, a Lifelong Learner would never reach a point of insistence that their Teaching Mind is complete, final, and "good enough" for all future learning interactions. This assumption is derived from the idea that as time goes on, new cultural, political, technological, and many other types of events have the potential to influence the priorities of individual and

community learning and growth, and so such events might easily raise the possibility that prior uses of the Teaching Mind might now need to be adjusted to address those priorities. The Teaching Mind would then have a built-in expectation that allows the Lifelong Learner to make the adjustments. As referenced in the first chapter, it is not “attained” (perhaps ever), it is “sought”.

The nature of teaching within informal education means that many settings are possible and represent a broad range of styles, physical spaces, relationship structures, and subject areas. Due to this breadth of possibility, the meaning of the Teaching Mind for an individual is one that the individual must be able to determine personally. This determination happens relative to a combination of personal past experience and anticipated need with respect to one’s current situation, and also it accepts the understanding that there must be some openness to view teacher education as defined by formal institutions as a source of inspiration for, but hardly a complete window to, the possibilities of what it means to teach. At the same time, it seems unproductive to simply encourage a Lifelong Learner to accept one’s current casual view of teaching as being “good enough” and not needing further scrutiny. The model of collaborative, ongoing peer learning that I will present seeks a way to make the interactions between Lifelong Learners useful such that each person can take away insights that are valuable to his or her own scenario and environment. At the same time, these experiences will involve ways of speaking, acting, and behaving that mirror the natural ways that people interact, and use them in a way that is enjoyable.

A Return to the Four Unique Aspects of the Teaching Mind

Recall that in Chapter 1, I introduced the four aspects that support ways in which the Teaching Mind is a unique perspective of lifelong learning:

- The Teaching Mind is *inclusive*
- The Teaching Mind is *communal*
- The Teaching Mind is *expansive*
- The Teaching Mind is *familiar*.

Together, these aspects support the idea that the Teaching Mind is highly accessible to all people. The ongoing discussion throughout the rest of this chapter presents concepts and practices documented in literature that demonstrate how these conditions may be withheld to achieve Teaching Mind accessibility. Primarily, I focus on those factors that address access to the Teaching Mind through communal experiences. Obviously, many activities that support how to teach and learn might be pursued through individual work, self-study, and self-directed learning, but here I largely attend to those activities that reflect some level of engagement among groups of individuals, since I view this focus to be of primary importance to the process of the Teaching Mind. Many of the factors that can feed into the development of the Teaching Mind are already happening in practical ways in workplace, home, and community life, and of course, they are present in formal schools with professional teachers as well. Other elements of the Teaching Mind may be uncovered over time. Before exploring those areas further, I wish to introduce some additional concepts that will be used to scaffold the development of the Teaching Mind.

Scaffolding Concept #1: The Teaching Mind Exploration Group

What happens when Lifelong Learners actually get together for the purpose of seeking the Teaching Mind? As stated, a fundamental assumption that is being made about Lifelong Learners is that they know *something* about teaching, least of all because they have observed it in their experiences as a student and therefore have a starting point for their own ongoing development. This experience is true even in the extreme worst case that they believe that *none of their past experience is worth redeeming* toward their renewed development as teachers of others.

Through the process of engaging with others, this past experience is revealed and placed into a public forum, and one person's reflection of experience may be another's revelation of new insight. In order to make sure that Lifelong Learner in-person interactions are highly participatory and generally useful for all involved, one possible way to organize them is to use three basic activities that draw out understanding in the course of learning the Teaching Mind:

- 1) participants all have a chance to voice their understanding about *what they know already* about some element of teaching and learning, using language and expression that is reflective of their own personal style and within the framework of some agreed-upon activity
- 2) participants have the *opportunity to observe* and the *time to reflect* on the meaning of what is being expressed about the experience of self and others; they may also create experiences on the spot that force meaningful observations to the surface; this can be done through in-person activities, discussion, or other types of exchanges that even focus on ideas about teaching that were not expressed explicitly during the sharing of experiences
- 3) participants have the opportunity to interpret the observations, feelings, and thoughts generated during these activities and exchanges with each other; they can collaboratively

look to make sense out of what has come from their interactions, consider the implications to their own future teaching work as a Lifelong Learner, and plan to incorporate this revised understanding into their own work.

The Teaching Mind Exploration Group is simply a group of Lifelong Learners who meet face-to-face with the intention of seeking the Teaching Mind with each other's help. The following chapters refer to this group and describe which processes, activities, and characteristics help to make an individual's experience in such a group as rewarding and effective as possible.

Scaffolding Concept #2: Using the Sieve

I introduce another concept that honors the intuition of each individual to notice the meaning that emerges out of the interactions. Because no concept, discussion, or activity will necessarily be most meaningful to an individual in the same way, it cannot be said that there are absolute truths that can be declared from the process of seeking the Teaching Mind. At the same time, if an individual takes a purely relativistic attitude, it may be difficult to make use of new insights if it is assumed that they only apply conditionally in some theoretical future situation. Therefore, a core behavior of each individual within a Teaching Mind Exploration Group is to actively regulate how new insight becomes part of one's understanding of the Teaching Mind. I refer to this behavior under a framework called the **Sieve**.

In cooking, a sieve is a tool that allows a chef to separate ingredients that are different sizes. In Teaching Mind exploration, the Sieve means that each person allows the mind to be open to all ideas and hears them as sincerely as possible, and those ideas which seem imminently important, interesting, or useful are retained in the reflective mind of the participant, and those

ideas which seem minor at that point in time are allowed to pass through. I use this metaphor because it seems that in any interactive learning, it may be impossible to capture for oneself all possible meaning out of the exchanges that occur. At the same time, the Sieve represents an active process of acknowledging all ideas that have been presented, while intentionally attending to some and not attending to others. This also means that a person reserves the chance to review the unattended ideas at a later time.

One underlying principle of the Sieve is that in group interaction, ideas might be expressed forcefully or with some pressure to accept without question the validity of a claim; the Sieve is the control retained by each individual participant in deciding to what extent these ideas will be considered at that point in time. It is not a way to deny or refuse to accept the premise offered by another, but instead it is a way for a participant to say “I need to consider for myself how important, relevant, or true that idea really is and come to my own conclusion about how to make it my own.” More than just a way of practicing in interactive settings and managing complex meaning, the Sieve is at the center of the agreement that is formed between Lifelong Learners when they are engaged together. In a sense, the Sieve is a person’s decision to use, or not use, “methodological belief” and “methodological doubt” throughout group engagement (Elbow, 1986).

Scaffolding Concept #3: The Gallery

I introduce a complementary image which I will call the **Gallery**. The Gallery represents the idea that comments made by Lifelong Learners during their interactions are directed into the “center” of the group, rather than from one individual to one or more others. The Gallery is a

sort of repository for suggestions, claims, questions, or proposals that “displays” them for all to observe.

This Gallery is similar to a more tangible, conventional version that displays artwork or artifacts. It is an abstract space where individual “artists” place their creative output for the public viewing by others, who are welcomed to observe and examine. The expressions on display are merely condensed representations of the whole of meaning intended by the creator; they cannot possibly explain everything that the creator knows or thinks. At the same time, the observer of the expression must make a personal interpretation and make judgments about value, interest level, or other qualities (via the Sieve).

Further, the Gallery is owned by the group rather than by any individual, although it may actually have some physical presence in the form of a whiteboard, flip chart, web site, or any other usual mechanism making ideas or materials public. The purpose of the Gallery is to help maintain an open atmosphere where ideas are accessible to all present rather than stated within the context of what is actually private conversation between individuals. Certainly, individuals may address each other and respond, but the Gallery is meant to suggest that all comments, once spoken, become available for public attention within the group, even if they seem to be meant as applicable to an individual situation.

Perhaps the ideas of the Sieve and the Gallery seem commonplace or even superfluous, as individual Lifelong Learners developing the Teaching Mind might naturally fall into these ways of behaving. Even so, I categorically refer to them in order to offer the imagery that might help individuals to contend with the multidimensional and sometimes perplexing nature of the discussions that are likely to occur around the Teaching Mind. Also, at some point the mere ideas behind these metaphors might become an actual stated rule of a Teaching Mind

Exploration Group, agreed upon as a way of working together, and my labels might themselves serve as convenient words or maybe even starting points for different metaphors that serve the group's needs more appropriately.

As a system of patterns of interactions with the Teaching Mind Exploration Group, it can be visualized where participants offer ideas which are placed in the Gallery, and then every other participant uses the idea of the Sieve to retrieve them from the Gallery and make determinations about which should become the focus of attention and reflection. The Gallery is the public space to exhibit ideas, and the Sieve is the personal process for dealing with them.

What Can Be Learned From Previous Experience

There is no shortage of previous research and writing on lifelong learning, adult education, and pathways toward progress and understanding of the potential of human learning. Within this research, I find that 4 specific areas of focus help to inform the strategies and ideals that relate to putting into practice the kinds of group interactions that make the Teaching Mind accessible to Lifelong Learners: 1) Teacher Education; 2) Teaching Within Informal Education; 3) Processes of Facilitating Teachers and Learners; and 4) Use of the Processes of “Theater, Dialogue, and Stories”.

Why do these four areas in particular support exploration of the Teaching Mind? With primary focus on the processes of learning to become a teacher rather than the content, these areas provide insight into way of learning and interacting that are *accessible* to non-professional teachers and in fact welcome “non-experts”, *fun* for Lifelong Learners who are pursuing a topic as complex as the Teaching Mind, and founded upon natural human activities and experiences rather than pedagogy. Roughly, these areas of research overlap well with the four key aspects

that support Teaching Mind accessibility mentioned already; it is *inclusive, communal, expansive, and familiar*.

In particular, the ways that teacher education happens provides several ideas about how people might interact when learning about teaching, and the kinds of activities and relationships that might influence their success. Previous understandings and styles of teaching in informal education help to identify the immense range of possibilities that point to teaching in practice; this is particularly useful for encouraging novice teachers to find areas of their own lives that greatly involve learning and teaching, when these ideas might have been mainly associated with formal schooling previously. By understanding the processes of facilitating (adult) learners, this area of research suggests numerous ways to manage the learning in a Teaching Mind Exploration Group, especially when the learners themselves might be called upon to take a facilitative role without being experts in how to do so. Finally, the use of “Theater, Dialogue, and Stories” refers to human communication that occurs through these forms of expression – rather than require expert ability, these areas use the most basic human abilities – speaking, physical movement, listening, and reacting to others. Understanding of this, along with group facilitation, further provides insight into highly practical and accessible activities and exercises that can be enjoyable as well.

Focus Area 1: Teacher Education

Preservice Teacher Education of Professional Teachers, With Specific Regard for Novice Teachers and Considerations for Teaching Adult Learners

Even though Lifelong Learners are exploring the Teaching Mind, their life situations and modes of teaching likely make it impractical to become involved in the rigorous process of

teacher education (i.e., graduate-level study in a university). Additionally, the *content* of this level of teacher education might be extensive enough to cover the material needed to gain teacher certification and deep knowledge of subject matter that relates to formal educational settings, but because Lifelong Learners as teachers are neither seeking certifications or credentials, nor will they necessarily be working in formal education, there might be a need to sacrifice some understanding of this kind of content in order to open the exploration of the Teaching Mind to ideas that might not be covered in formal teacher education. Perhaps Lifelong Learners might benefit from awareness of the *types* of content that exist in formal teacher education, but learning the content itself is unrealistic. At the same time, the *processes* of formal teacher education might offer more to Lifelong Learners in terms of models of interactions between teachers, ways of discussing education, and methods of teaching that are explored through pre-service practicum experiences and internships.

The literature covering this area directly supports the four aspects of uniqueness of the Teaching Mind. It describes *inclusive* processes that can engage rather than isolate the participants, it utilizes group work in the spirit of learning together, and it refers to kinds of activities that are neither restricted to only professional teaching settings nor absent from other areas of work.

At this point, it is necessary to state clearly that the teaching done by Lifelong Learners is truly a complement to, rather than a replacement for, the teaching that is done by formal education faculty. Again, the intention of the Lifelong Learner process is to help individuals recreate the meaning of teaching and learning in a way that is relevant to their own participation in it, not to turn them into people who can actually do the work of professional teachers, which represents a much more specialized knowledge and expertise in addressing education within

formal institutions. I will explore how some of the processes may be adapted for use in the contexts of Lifelong Learners as well as how connections between Lifelong Learner communities and formal education may be mutually beneficial to both.

Several insights may be drawn from research and writing about formal preservice teacher education in the traditional sense. The following sections describes what this research suggests about processes often used within this type of teacher education that might be utilized in the development of community-based teachers who do not have access to the thorough and highly-structured training that is offered in such institutions.

Core Philosophies and Themes

Although I place emphasis on the processes rather than the content of formal teacher education, this is not to say that Lifelong Learners as teachers have no need to understand the content of teacher education. It may not be possible for such an individual to take the time to learn in extended ways about theories of pedagogy/andragogy, curriculum development, assessment, instructional design, instructional delivery, and classroom management as one would who is in a degree program. One perspective mentions the “concern in the informal learning literature about a lack of awareness among academics and practitioners of the research evidence from the formal learning sector” (Dillon, 2003, 220). Lifelong Learners who are pursuing the Teaching Mind might benefit from being aware of such ideas even if the content cannot be covered thoroughly. That is to say, Lifelong Learners might at least be aware that such concepts exist, that formal teacher education is organized in highly structured ways, and that the areas mentioned are supported by extensive research, practice, and practitioners who have varying levels of expertise toward them. For example, it might be considered that the idea

of assessment can go well beyond the system of grading that is commonly used in school systems, such as using rubrics, direct verbal and written feedback, portfolio reviews, and self-assessment, among others (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005, 283).

In Vella's Taking Learning to Task: Creative Strategies for Teaching Adults (2001), she articulates how we might view teaching and learning along broad and fine levels of granularity. Perhaps it is sometimes too much to ask of those seeking the Teaching Mind that they actually "learn" about teaching or "understand" it, as these words are "huge verb[s]...[they are] too big for a learning task" (51), where learning tasks are individual activities and exercises in which the Lifelong Learners are engaged. If the "huge verbs" are realistically accomplished only over a length of time, then in the individual Teaching Mind learning sessions, we might focus directly on "active verbs". These verbs actually hold meaning about real, short-term accomplishments and involve specific ways that participants do something more tangible with each other. Identifying the active verbs and framing the activities in those terms can clarify how and why they are useful with a manageable scope, and these can take the form of "tough verbs" ('edit', 'decide', 'organize'), "productive verbs" ('list', 'design', 'compose', 'select'), or "respectful verbs" (those that recognize the specific audience being addressed, with respect to physical ability or learning style) (52).

If understanding of teaching means moving beyond the action of "telling" in a unidirectional way from an expert to learner, then teachers need to be able to be "critically reflective", which encompasses a way of being for teachers that might not be directly observable in a given moment. In Brookfield's view, a common trap is that teachers "teach innocently", where they assume that they know what they are doing and how it affects others, which ultimately may lead to "blame and negativity" when things do not work, as deeply sincere as

these teachers are (1995, 1). Even as a concept such as “interactivity in the classroom” gains acceptance as an alternative to the lecture-style, desks-in-rows facing-forward arrangement that seems to be the archetypal image of traditional education, he reminds us that teachers must be sensitive to the “[beloved progressive practice of] having students sit in a circle...as a physical manifestation of democracy”, which can be intimidating for students who are not used to such exposure who find the circle to even be “painful and humiliating...with oppressive potential” (1995, 9). Another idea is that teachers who look beyond the didactic delivery of knowledge should themselves learn about teaching with a “critical literacy” point of view (Luna et al., 2004, 70), where they recognize how and what they are learning relates to broader dimensions such as “disrupting the commonplace” and “focusing on sociopolitical issues”.

Within the framework of the Teaching Mind, “reflection” describes the process by which this happens; in addition to learning and practicing the communication of knowledge, managing groups of learners, etc., the Teaching Mind includes the Lifelong Learner’s awareness of self and perceived position in the journey to find the Teaching Mind and decisions about what to do next to get closer to it. The awareness of self might include memories, relationships, and both formal and informal ways of labeling one’s role, since “Developing an identity as a teacher is an important part of securing teachers’ commitment to their work...” (Darling-Hammond, 383). While the reflective process need not always be made explicit when Lifelong Learners are acting in the capacity of didactic instructors to other learners, it seems to be very much a social process as Lifelong Learners interact with each other when directly discussing the Teaching Mind. Brookfield adds a further qualification that “Reflection is not, by definition, critical”, since reflecting might only focus on task-level details of classroom practice (although this type of reflection can still be highly valuable and important). Reflection becomes critical:

...when it has two distinct purposes...to understand how considerations of power undergird, frame, and distort educational processes and interactions...and to question assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching lives easier but actually work against our own best long-term interests. (Brookfield, 1995, 8)

Brookfield goes on to name the four “critically reflective lenses”: our autobiographies as learners and teachers, our students’ eyes, our colleagues’ experiences, and theoretical literature (1995, 29), where the necessarily social, peer-driven component of reflection “unravels the shroud of silence in which our practice is wrapped” as teachers and “serve[s] as critical mirrors reflecting back to us images of our actions that often take us by surprise” (1995, 35).

Social Change Within, and Through, Teacher Education

It is also suggested that as a foundation of effective teaching, novice teachers might also be directed to consider how their work will be a source of social change beyond facilitating new knowledge and understanding. The change that occurs might be seen within the field of education itself, where “we must attend simultaneously to both sides of the reform coin: better teachers and better systems” (Darling-Hammond, 5). Approaches to understanding knowledge development in teacher education includes “development of knowledge *for* practice, knowledge *in* practice, and knowledge *of* practice.”, respectively referring to the knowledge of content and pedagogy, the knowledge of personal reflections and practical in-person experiences, and the knowledge of theory of best practices and how they relate “situationally” (Darling-Hammond, 382).

In another respect, teacher education might be positioned such that the role of the teacher can inspire social change in broader ways as well as change within schooling itself. In one view, developing the “critical orientation” of novice teachers means combining “a progressive social

vision with a radical critique of schooling.” Michael Newman, author of Teaching Defiance, reminds us that:

...critical thinking derived from critical theory...and meant not letting others make up our minds for us...and meant abandoning the search for some fixed set of principles and adopting a stance of informed and continual critique...[it] was associated with the pursuit of social justice. But the term has been domesticated... (Newman, 2006, 9)

Meanwhile, the idea of critical thinking has become a theme of human resource development and workplace learning and “reduced to a corporatist competency” (Newman, 10).

In questioning the actual relationship between the organization of typical (American) schools and the true demands of teaching and learning, Darling-Hammond, in addressing the preparation of school teachers, suggests that “the goal for preservice preparation...is to provide teachers with the core ideas and broad understanding of teaching and learning that give them traction on their later development” (2). Beginning teachers must develop the capacity to improve their own teaching during their formal teacher education, and they must act upon that need using that capacity long after the preservice preparation has ended.

In one study of preservice teachers in which they were asked about preferences in their academic coursework (Wenzlaff and Wieseman, 2004, 121), they offered a number of possibilities about what they needed most. The responses included the mention of relevant, authentic assignments that could be applied in real classrooms, support from professors including use of direct observation and interviewing about learning, sufficient time to reflect on learning, and flexibility in the way to demonstrate what has been learned through varied activities such as presentations, exhibitions, tests, portfolios, and projects. It seems then that such teachers seek an environment for learning that allows for a number of options; if some choice is involved in the practices used, presumably the broad needs of teachers can be addressed, with respect to individual learning and interacting styles. According to the teachers

in this study, “a graduate program that supports teacher learning focuses on the personal meaning of teaching and learning as the basis of teacher knowledge” (122).

Group Experiences in Preservice Teacher Education

Various other kinds of experiences, especially collaborative ones, can contribute to the teacher learning. In addition to direct classroom learning, “teachers are situated in a variety of other opportunities in which learning takes place: in-services; workshops; structured courses; faculty and district meetings; and school-based professional conversations” (Wenzlaff, 113). Many of these experiences point to the general theme of collaboration and developing interpersonal relationships, where teachers are participating in a group in situations where they make observations, have discussions, and participate in activities. Other themes identified by another study involving novice teachers observing classrooms and peers in their preservice field experience were the following: classroom discipline and management; pedagogical practices; general positive influence and reinforcement of good behavior; in addition to more minor themes of teacher self-reflection; questioning strategies; and direct observations of students (Anderson, 2005, 105). All such themes necessarily involve collaboration because they at least require mutual agreement of how novice teachers will be present with others in their learning, and often the collaboration extends much further in the form of interpersonal communication and group tasks, sharing, and problem-solving.

Transferring Teacher Learning to Practice

One other general theme of teacher education that is particularly applicable to peer support around the way that Lifelong Learners pursue the Teaching Mind involves the idea of

transfer – the way that what is learned in one context may be reinterpreted and used effectively in another (Tishman et al., 1995, 13; Caffarella, 1994, 86). It is further suggested that transfer happens through deliberately attending to it on the way from the learning context to the practice context – it cannot be taken for granted (Tishman, 156; Caffarella, 204). Presumably, Lifelong Learners who are participating in group activities in a learning context are not only creating new understanding that is applied to later teaching, but also they are actually modeling for themselves the processes that can be used in their later teaching contexts. For example, a dialectical discussion during a Teaching Mind Exploration Group session might occur about how to arrange the most comfortable meeting space. The Lifelong Learners who are doing this should then also recognize that this form of discussion could also be employed by them as they teach future groups of learners about some other subject matter. A key to transfer is that this recognition might be made as explicit as possible—Lifelong Learners should “clearly identify what needs to be transferred and use specific questions during the learning experience to understand where the learning is to be applied” (Caffarella, 214).

Because Lifelong Learners will have highly diverse expertise across many subject areas, individuals will have to decide for themselves to what extent the learning context can transfer. For example, if one Lifelong Learner is developing the Teaching Mind in order to teach others about “personal budgeting”, and another Lifelong Learner is doing so to teach “organic gardening”, a process such as dialectical discussion may appear to have questionable relevance to their own practice in those teaching contexts. Even so, the Teaching Mind involves strong awareness by each individual about how they *do not* prefer to teach as well as awareness about how they *do* prefer to teach. A learning interaction that *appears* to have no connection to one’s

own future practice as a teacher is useful, as long as conscious attention to it helps a Lifelong Learner to know *why* this may be the case.

Another way to think about degree of transfer, to place it in a more positive light, is that a given Teaching Mind learning experience can still be applied through “far transfer”, where learning application contexts seem quite different, as opposed to “near transfer”, where the context in which material is taught is very obvious and similar to the one in which it is used. Perhaps it takes creative thinking, reflection, and openness of mind to make the connection (Tishman, 158-9). A possible strategy in this case is for Lifelong Learners to provide explicit examples of “areas where learning transfer has been blocked by some real-life situation” and then take advantage of the diversity of the group to brainstorm ideas about transferring what has been learned into the subject-specific area (Caffarella, 86) and use specific questions during the learning experience to understand where the learning is to be applied, and “incorporate the learning context as part of the learning environment” (Caffarella, 214), which is a type of a “backward-chaining” approach. Rather than engaging in an activity toward the Teaching Mind and then asking Lifelong Learners to figure out how to apply their insights, first ask the Lifelong Learners to identify clearly to each other their areas of subject-matter knowledge, and then try to develop their peer interactions to be those that are most appropriate for knowledge transfer.

Cohorts

Teacher cohorts provide a way for teachers-in-training to establish a consistent group of others with whom to learn, and this aligns teacher experiences over a period of time in such a way that they might form some common bond. In some cases, the cohort forms a structure for interacting in the spirit of learning without having an “expert” available to guide the process, for

example, when “meaningful graduate study experiences stem from thesis support groups, which assist graduate students in finding solutions to their struggles” (Wenzlaff, 114). A cohort in itself can be a model of the teacher experience, at least in formal schooling, such as in one study by Bullough (2001) where the cohort of the preservice teachers “paralleled the rhythm of the school year” in the sense the teachers had to get to know a new group of people, establish academic expectations for their interactions, and find routines of working, which are quite like what would happen in a real school setting (100).

Cohorts can also contribute to the forming of relationships, and in Relationships in Preservice Teacher Preparation, Dinsmore and Wegner (2006) refer to three benefits in this area: cohort members form supportive peer groups; they become more involved in cooperative learning; and members learn more about teaching and learning as they spend more time together (60). Further, she echoes research that “non-traditional-age students place great value on participation in peer cohort groups to combat isolation...” and that relationships with both peers and instructors are enhanced through the cohort experience (Dinsmore 59, 71; Darling-Hammond, 336).

In addition to the types of cohorts described above, small teacher learning communities may be defined by other factors in common between the developing teachers, rather than simply the fact that they are progressing through teacher education in the same institution at the same time. One highly-developed example of the use of cohorts comes from the Alliance for Catholic Education, founded by the University of Notre Dame in 1993. This teacher education program links teachers, not only by their career field but also by a common “sense of mission...[and] desire to lead a life of service” (Watzke and Dallavis, 2007, xvi). The central theme of community growth as the purpose of the learning process in this case, along with the well-

established connection between those of similar religious faith, formed a foundation for the ongoing interactions between teachers in the program. Furthermore, the community has been observed to extend across generations of teachers, as “it has led to a commitment among its graduates...to contribute to the school communities in which they now teach.” (32).

Mentoring

Continuing with the idea that direct relationships contribute to teacher education, the establishment of mentoring relationships suggests a way to involve people with others having different levels of experience and expertise, unlike cohort relationships which may include people with about the same experience who need to work out issues together. Hicks, author of What Successful Mentors Do, suggests that a mentor is not automatically destined to be successful by virtue of experience alone, and in the case that is more common than realized:

Coming out of years of classroom teaching, new mentors [who are guiding novice teachers] think they are equipped with all of the tools and knowledge they will ever need to mentor new teachers. Often they will find themselves sadly disappointed. (Hicks, 9)

Mentors provide several functions:

[They] encourage beginning teachers to look at conflict and tension as opportunities for personal growth and change...Encourage beginning teachers to add humor to student interactions...Encourage beginning teachers to define themselves as teachers beyond their subject matter or content knowledge...Remind beginning teachers to become classroom managers before becoming content specialists...Help beginning teachers sensitize themselves to and embrace the diversity of today’s classrooms. (Hicks, 11)

While serving as one-on-one support to new teachers through relating, assessing, coaching, and guiding (Portner, 7), however, these functions do not mirror those of a supervisor, since “mentors cannot be evaluators”, since they use “data to reflect, [not to evaluate]” (6). The mentor role of “assessing” then refers only to assessing situations and responding, not directly assessing the performance of the new teachers themselves. Other suggestions are that mentors

can be integral to the process by which new teachers can better “avoid information overload” (Portner, 91; Hicks, 9), be good listeners, see themselves as future mentors to other new teachers (Portner, 91), and “move from mentor-mentee to peer-peer” (Portner, 78).

In addition to their interactions with novice teachers, mentors might also adapt other behaviors and model attitudes that encourage teachers. Wisehart proposes that mentors should let novice teachers know that “they should not have to make a choice between bringing up test scores or promoting lifelong learning” and help people to become “passionate teachers” by “demonstrating the habits of a reflective practitioner—living the life of inquiry, reading the research, analyzing my practice to make more of an impact on student learning” (Wisehart, 2004, 46). She continues:

I want to tell beginning teachers how to create a community of learners in their classrooms, in stark contrast to the ‘game of school’ (Fried, 2001) that most students are used to. I want to help them engage students in honest discussion about learning. I want them to see their students as co-learners who have much to offer, rather than as people with deficiencies. (Wisehart, 47)

Other considerations for mentoring help to orient the mentor toward effective levels of interaction as teacher guides: relinquishing control to new teachers to try new things and accepting differences between the mentor and mentee (Glenn, 2006, 88); acting as instructional models; sources of advice; “sounding boards” for concerns and fears; sources of challenge; and sources of common ground for mutual understanding (Street, 2005, 9-20), maintain confidentiality in mentor-mentee exchanges and show support verbally and non-verbally, transcend the typical situation where “Professional development is something that is often done *for* or *to* teachers instead of *with* or *by* them” , and “not to endow their own style to new teachers but to help new teachers discover their own” (Hicks, 7-9).

Modeling/Observing

Another process of teacher education involves the opportunity for novice teachers to observe expert teachers in action, make and reflect upon the observations, and interpret these observations to develop mental pictures of what effective teachers might do and how they appear. Describing the ways that teachers develop a culture of thinking in their classrooms, Tishman, et al., mention the “four powerful ways in which a culture teaches, or enculturates, patterns of good thinking” through models, explanation, interaction, and feedback (Tishman, 13). This idea might also apply to the experience of learning to be a teacher as well, where expert teachers model behavior in the way that they themselves guide the novice teachers, forming a sort of recursive process where novice teachers observe a model and through doing so learn how to become models for others. Mentors then might apply the other three ways of enculturating good teaching, by explaining their own teaching methods, by working with mentees to engage with others to experiment with teaching activities, and by asking mentees for feedback and then reflecting on this feedback to prepare for future cycles of mentor-mentee exchanges.

Lane cites Haberman’s (1993) conclusions that “only 5-8 percent of the current teachers in urban schools are considered outstanding teachers”, suggesting that Lifelong Learners who are pursuing the Teaching Mind might be quite careful about making quick conclusions about the behavior of model teachers that they observe, or at least make effort to observe a large and diverse collection of teachers in action over a long period of time. Another possible dilemma in formal preservice teacher education programs is that “most teachers...do not conceive of their role as being a change agent” (Lane, 2003, 56), meaning that potential model teachers may not often initiate the experience of serving as models for novice teachers. Lifelong Learners who

observe teachers as they themselves develop the Teaching Mind might discriminate to a much greater degree when determining which observed actions or behaviors to adopt into their own future practice.

Dialogue

The participation among learning teachers engaged in dialogue, in the form of dialogical discussion, is another example of a process used by novice teachers as a way of making meaning out of learning and discussing shared experiences. In the situation where relationships described previously have been formed (mentor-mentee, peers within cohorts, peers and supervisors as future colleagues), one possibility is that this allows novice teachers to have discussions through different kinds of voices, beyond the one that they express purely as a “learner”. In one example where such an environment had been created within a preservice teacher education program, a school administrator noticed that preservice teachers had “‘teacherly conversations’ not normally shared amongst [experienced] teachers” (Hopper and Sanford, 2004). Dialogue can amount to a “learning conversation”, which are most effective when they are “reciprocal and involving”, when they “entail diversity and disagreement” (Brookfield, 1987, 239).

Vignettes/Storytelling

Although perhaps not in itself a process of learning to teach, the use of vignettes and stories in teacher discussion may be defined in clear ways to make them more useful in the search for the Teaching Mind. A vignette, defined as a brief, representative illustration of a particular incident with some clear focus on a person, situation, or other idea, might be used to stimulate the kind of imaginative thinking that can help novice teachers explore situated

examples of teaching work that they may not have encountered in real-life practice. Typically, a vignette has a “narrative story-like structure that preserves chronological flow and that normally is limited to a brief time span, to one or a few key actors, to a bounded space” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, 81). The incident, which may be completely fictitious or based on real-life happenings (Huebner, 1991), might help to:

...promote reflection and critical thinking; they can stimulate, problematize and rouse interest; and they can evoke imagination, feelings and thoughts at the same time. In addition, with the use of vignettes teachers can easily express their own perceptions on topics familiar to them. (Angelides, 2006, 14)

Since certain narrative details of the event may be artificially amplified, it is also worth noting that a vignette is “an abstraction...an analytic caricature” that helps to direct attention to particular areas of discussion and still may reflect genuine understanding (Angelides, 114).

Possible goals of discussing the vignette then would be to help teachers reconceptualize their perspectives on teaching and learning situations, bring beliefs and attitudes to the surface and be articulated, and practice imagining the consequences of actions that might surround the incident expressed in the vignette.

Summary of Key Learnings

The traditional elements of teacher education described above have particular relevance to the development of Lifelong Learners who are seeking the Teaching Mind. Specifically, the following key concepts might be considered:

- Learning about teaching involves interactions that involve peers, teacher education instructors, and teachers already working in the field
- Potential teachers greatly depend upon verbal discussion as a form of communication and reflection

- There may be as great a need to explore dichotomies, challenges, and contradictions of real-life practice as there is to learn about best practices and models of teacher behavior
- More expert teachers may help less-experienced teachers to expand their tools and resources rather than simply offer advice to “correct” flawed behavior
- Teachers learn content but also learn through the process of coming to understand the relationship between personal experience, cultural messages about education, direct observations, models and theories, and institutional expectations and needs.

Focus Area 2: Informal Education Concepts and Models

Supporting Participation in Informal Education as a Serious and Respected Endeavor Toward Social Change and Authentic, Valuable Learning

Because informal education includes scenarios of learning that may happen throughout many areas of life that are not represented in a formal institutional setting, its possibilities may be seen to be as broad as life itself. Because the idea of learning the Teaching Mind as a Lifelong Learner has implications of recreating an understanding of teaching and learning from a personal point of view, it requires an examination of one’s own perspective on the process based on their personal experiences through the years of formal schooling. Because this formal schooling model might be the only or most obvious one upon which Lifelong Learners may draw, it might enhance the flexibility of their interactions if they can additionally recognize and appreciate some of the existing models of informal education.

By the nature of these situations, potential teachers in community settings may not have the support or resources normally possible from formal institutions, and therefore they may be generally forced to find creative, grass-roots ways to support each other, develop relationships,

develop teaching materials, and meet together and exchange ideas. Having this awareness of the variations of existing communities within informal education will demonstrate to Lifelong Learners how they may personally start to put their own level of Teaching Mind into practice, think creatively about teaching styles and environments that are very different than those in formal education, and identify with others who may be involved in similar subject-matter areas.

The research summarized in this section supports the four unique aspects of the Teaching Mind, particularly the aspect of being *expansive*, as it often points to ways in which the meaning of teaching can reach beyond professional teaching in schools and it support a level of teaching that might happen broadly in community, family, and other informal settings. Additionally, it crosses into areas of personal life that are relevant to people across many economic, cultural, and social scenarios.

The Flexible Nature of the Teaching Mind

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the terminology of education is controversial—the use of terms such as formal education, informal education, non-formal education, informal learning, and so on, may be caught in a perpetual loop of redefinition and reframing. I will continue to refer to “informal education” as my area of practice, particularly with respect to the way that this term implies that when it happens, it originates from the will and intentions of the individual rather than from the institution and it typically centers on learning that happens after formal post-secondary education. Of course, a Lifelong Learner who is seeking the Teaching Mind might intend to become part of a formal education environment or teach in a workplace setting, but my definition is *specifically inclusive of those people who might never do so and may participate in that journey only to develop for themselves the spirit of what it means to be a teacher as an*

approach to personal lifelong learning. This allowance is why my perspective might add a unique element to the understanding of teaching, as it makes no requirement that a person will apply the Teaching Mind at some minimum level or know exactly when and how it will manifest itself. Instead, it is a way for a person to have greater awareness as oneself as potential teacher and even regard teaching as a type of “habit of mind” (Costa, 2000).

The following people are thus equally Lifelong Learners: an engineer with experience in process safety who looks to share this experience with co-workers; a filmmaker helping other novice filmmakers to navigate the complexities of fundraising a new project; a community member working with civic leaders and private citizens about how to improve signage in a neighborhood; and a parent who wants to have a better idea about how to assist their young child to learn to read. The expected diversity of Lifelong Learners adds complexity in the group experience of seeking the Teaching Mind, suggesting then that this process must seek to address those most general, powerful processes and ways of teaching that are common to any situation where one with knowledge, skills, and/or wisdom is making it easier for another to attain them. In this section, I will explore the diversity of what happens across so-called lifelong learning situations throughout informal education and consider how those that are quite structured can speak to the Lifelong Learner engaged in developing the Teaching Mind, as well as how those that happen in more incidental, personal settings can do the same.

Historical Perspective and Current Status of Lifelong Learning

As described earlier, experts have attempted to define lifelong learning terminology in a way that has been suitable to the realities of education for adults outside of school settings as well as in the spirit of the intentions of various institutions and cultural movements. In the

traditional meaning of non-formal education as the systematic, structured learning outside of school, La Belle points out that it is:

...normally associated with so-called 'underdeveloped' countries, [where] such educational efforts include agricultural extension, community development, consciousness raising, technical/vocational training, literacy and basic education, family planning, and so on. (La Belle, 1984, 80)

There remains the implication that in developed countries, such ways of learning are superfluous, since the formal system is perfectly sufficient for supplying all educational needs of the people.

In discussing the origins of non-formal education, Coombs refers to its long-time existence:

How old is non-formal education? Many experienced educators think that it is a contemporary concept. In fact, its origins predate formal education- a child of 19th Century Europe and North America-by many centuries...Jomo Kenyatta's well-known book, Facing Mount Kenya, provides fascinating insights into the indigenous 'educational system' of the East African Kikuyu society, before the western colonizers and missionaries arrived. (Coombs, 282-3)

Another milestone has been identified in the way that learning has taken place beyond the formal school system for (mostly) young people, according to another view, where major growth and recognition of adult education occurred upon the commencement of the GI Bill, which "financed education for military veterans" and caused the attitude about higher education to change "from a conception of college attendance as an elite privilege...to the idea that higher education should be universally available to any who could benefit from it" (Maehl, 2000, 9).

On the international scale, though, another perspective states that:

...the work of training educators through the governments is in actuality not generally considered as a priority in Latin American countries, and it is scarce despite international agreements reached at conferences on adult education. With few exceptions, governments do not show interest in this training because public policies fail to recognize it and assign to it the needed resources. (Madrigal Goerne, 2006, 37)

On the other hand, it does seem that work continues to define and develop lifelong learning, such as when:

...a 1998 UNESCO world conference on higher education in the twenty-first century charged higher education to embrace all forms of learning and to become an active provider of lifelong learning opportunities. Lifelong learning and adult learning concerns permeate the entire conference report. (Maehl, 5)

Further, another explanation of lifelong learning emerged:

European Lifelong Learning Initiative's first Global Conference on Lifelong Learning, meeting in Rome in 1994, enunciated this active definition of lifelong learning: 'A continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills, and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity, and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances, and environments' (Longworth and Davies, 1996, p. 22). (quoted by Maehl, 5)

Within the U.S., The Commission for a Nation of Lifelong Learners met from 1995 to 1997 with a proposal:

...in its report, *A Nation Learning: Vision for the 21st Century* (1997), called for a collaboration and change among all those parties to meet the dramatic new demands and opportunities for lifelong learning. It urged that we as a nation recognize lifelong learning as a national priority. Its recommendations fall into five categories: acknowledge the link between lifelong learning and global economic success, establish equity of access, incorporate new technologies in lifelong learning, rethink and reorganize educational delivery, and make resource commitments commensurate with lifelong learning's importance. (Maehl, 7)

Informal Education as a Response to Formal Education

A particular challenge in the ongoing development of the way that informal education is organized and utilized seems to be in the way that it is defined by some not on its own terms, as a way of being during one's life, but instead as primarily a response or reaction to the failures of the formal school system. After World War II in Latin America, it was perceived that addressing adult illiteracy was a priority and that it "would disappear once the regular system of education succeeded in incorporating all children in the educational process..." and even though adult

education clearly focused addressing literacy, “today, more than fifty years later, [this problem] is still not resolved” (Madrigal Goerne, 35). In 1970, Ivan Illich was documenting this failure along the way and noticed that:

...most countries in Latin America...[have moved towards] modernized poverty; their citizens have learned to think rich and live poor...the average citizen defines an adequate education by North American standards, even though the chance of getting such prolonged schooling is limited to a tiny minority. (Illich, 7)

Illich then further suggests that this condition allows people to be exploited as they become “fanatic” about being schooled, which is also a way of “increasing acceptance of social control by the many” (Illich, 7). In reference to Vaill’s (1996) statement that traditional learning is “as much a system for indoctrination and control as it is a system for learning” (Maehl, 24), the implication would be that informal education as a component of lifelong learning should be “drawing upon continuously changing experiences and involving a variety of qualities of learning” (Maehl, 24). Another view summarizes that “in relation to education in developing countries from 1968 until about 1986, non-formal education was seen as the panacea for all the ills of education...” (Rogers, 2004, 1).

Grass-roots educator John Holt, who claims that formal school environments as defined in the modern age do more to remove the natural tendencies of children’s learning than to support it through teaching, reflects that:

...what often happens to kids in school is that they are required to repeat, as sense, what makes no sense to them, to the point where they give up trying to reconcile what people say about the world with what they really feel about it. They accept as true whatever authority says is true. They do not try to check or test it. They soon forget even how to test it. (Holt, 1990, 100)

At a further extreme, Holt criticizes the blind acceptance that teachers are the (only) source of learning by stating that “not only is it the case that uninvited teaching does not make learning, but...for the most part such teaching prevents learning” (128). This view seems to define

traditional teaching and school as a destructive process, where it systematically removes the natural inclinations of children to explore, experiment, use the scientific method and deep inquiry to the point which they may have much difficulty using and getting back these inclinations as adults (see Holt, 153, 159-60). He advocates the involvement of parents, in homeschooling arrangements or otherwise, in the more active approach of giving children direct access to the real people, objects, and environments of the world from which to learn using these inclinations (Holt, 127). Llewellyn refers to a practice of “guerilla learning” as “coloring outside the lines, finding the shortest direction between two points, moving directedly toward goals, doing the best you can with what you’ve got to work with now...”, particularly as a parent-learning guide of children, where the five keys directing such parents toward the most beneficial guidance are opportunity, timing, interest, freedom, and support (Llewellyn, 2001, 62).

Ivan Illich’s monumental Deschooling Society spearheaded a way of thinking that sought to dethrone the monolith of formal schooling as the solution of all problems; in addition to “learning webs” (73, 78) as a model of learning exchange between people when and how they desired it, he called for a revolution in education to be governed by certain goals:

...liberate access to things by abolishing the control which persons and institutions now exercise over their educational values...liberate the sharing of skills by guaranteeing freedom to teach or exercise them on request...liberate the critical and creative resources of people by returning to individual persons the ability to call and hold meetings—an ability now increasingly monopolized by institutions which claim to speak for the people...liberate the individual from the obligation to shape his expectations to the services offered by any established profession—by providing him the opportunity to draw on the experience of his peers and to entrust himself to the teacher, guide, adviser, or healer of his choice.” (Illich, 103)

Within all of these types of frameworks, informal education may face deeper challenges, since, “If we assume...that early and constant failure in school leads to lowered self-esteem, then those with poor records of school achievement will be unlikely to seek education as adults, because to

them school means threat of further failure” (Cross, 98). If informal education retains some association with the concept of “school”, it would need to overcome such a challenge. Where informal education is able to exist outside such association, it still might be met with skepticism as far as it does not seem to be sanctioned by a formal institution.

Other authors have suggested other layers of purpose to informal education that reach beyond its perception as a corrective measure against the failures of formal schooling. These concepts include informal education as a bridge between basic schooling and youth/adult education (Carmen Lorenzatti, 423) as well as way to connect learning to social movements of the time and place of the learner and encourage active citizenship (Carmen Lorenzatti, 430; Malvicini, 450). Within the frameworks mentioned, informal education is more than just a complementary system of learning to formal education; it presents a concurrent, overlapping way to view learning at various orders of magnitude. Informal education can address the minute elements of a specific task or broad ideas of a cultural change.

Core Philosophies and Themes of Informal Education

La Belle suggests a model where any particular learning situation may be defined along two dimensions: “organizational” and “process”, where each one may be formal, non-formal, or informal. For example, an experience that might be formal along the organizational dimension, and informal along the process dimension would be a peer group within a school, where the formal institution creates the structure and opportunity, but the specific learning that takes place would be informal in the sense that ways of interacting within the peer group may be left open and happen spontaneously. Another example is that parent-to-child instruction might be informal in the organization dimension (completely outside of structured, school-initiated

influence) but non-formal on the process dimension (structured in the sense that the parent is purposely trying to use a certain strategy/methodology with the child) (1984, 82).

Other frameworks of informal learning involve or include further ways of recognizing social-political-cultural implications of learning and learners. Some of these frameworks are “conscientization”, or conscious-raising, originated by Freire (1970), dependency-liberation and deprivation-development (La Belle, 1984, 86-7), informal learning as a process of “non-traditional students” as both sets of populations and engagements in different modes of learning (Schuetze, 2002, 311-13, 322), homeschooling as an alternative to formal school systems (Holt, 157; Llewellyn, 36), networks of self-directed learners and opportunities (Illich, 73), instrumental-interpretive-critical forms of purpose in learning (Newman, 238), community action as a stimulant for informal learning (Kenny et al. 2000, 117).

Adult Learning Practices and Principles

Informal education is inclusive of adults beyond the age when formal schooling happens, and therefore it is helpful to make a connection between contemporary views of adult education, lifelong learning, and informal education. While those terms referring to “education” often involve broad systems, institutions, or cultural movements, the specific reference to “adult education” takes into account the unique needs and life situations that might be attributed to individual adults. These factors include several perspectives on the “principles of adult learning”, which seek to identify ways of thinking about organizing the learning for adults so that these unique needs are categorically addressed. Such principles have been outlined in fundamental ways by Knowles (1978), who is seen as a pioneer of andragogy within U.S. culture, and Freire (1969), a pioneer among popular educators worldwide.

These principles of adult learning have been further refined by researchers such as Brookfield (1986), Cranton (1994), Cross (1981), Merriam & Caffarella (1991), Vella (2001), and others, and in some cases reformulated in different terms, such as Ahmed's conditions of "lifelong recurrent learning" (1982, 133-141). Principles are phrased to refer to the learner's self-concept and motivation (Knowles, 4; Maehl, 35), adult education as unlearning habits of conformity and awareness of assumptions (Malvicini, 452), and adult education as gradual increasing one's awareness of forces and structures that create a continuous pattern of dependence (Freire, 1970; Brookfield, 1986, 15). Schuetze raises another issue by citing a 1987 OECD study that distinguishes four categories of adults, meaning that even the term "adult" should be qualified in the effort of developing educational opportunities (314). Frameworks such as those proposed by Vella (2002) are multidimensional, in which twelve principles define the foundation of effective adult learning through dialogue, and each establishing each principle in turn can be achieved through a systematic response to how seven common design steps relate to that principle (38-9).

Obstacles in Informal Education Situations

Other works cite obstacles that particularly affect adults and therefore must be addressed within the context of adult education. These obstacles include those that are:

...situational (one's situation in life, such as time, family or job responsibilities, etc.), institutional (practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities, such as course scheduling or location, physical barriers for disabled, expense), and dispositional barriers (attitudes and self-perception that is held by adults as learners). (Cross, 98)

Others, such as Verbitskaia in studying adult education in Russia, refers to the "basic contradictions" of adult learning, such as the great need of adult education to recognize life

experience versus the lack of research in this area, and the selective attitude of adult learners about content versus the lack of resources to provide support across so many areas of content (2004, 74). Brookfield lists the numerous forums of adult education, which may increase confusion about how adult education is understood, including labor education, women's education, adult basic education, continuing professional education, correctional education in prisons, industrial training, armed forces education, health education, community development, mass media, cooperative extension programs, continuing ed. at universities, voluntary organizations, cultural institutions (museums, libraries), and proprietary schools (1986, 147).

As discussed already, agreement upon the terminology of learning and education is an ongoing challenge and seems to redefine how responsibility is distributed. Use of terms without complete agreement on meaning (which seems unlikely) leads to conflicts; Coombs refers to the “misconception that non-formal education is simply another name for adult education” as a cause of those two areas being placed in “competing positions” (284) and mentions that non-formal education is “constantly overshadowed, upstaged, and out-prestigated by formal education” as well as often requiring dedicated, enthusiastic volunteerism to keep it operating well, since there are no “captive audiences” as participants must be convinced of the value of what they are doing within the learning that takes place. (290). At the same time:

...when one looks carefully at what Coombs and Ahmed say about informal education, there is a major problem...They are really speaking about ‘informal learning’, not ‘informal education’...they define ‘education’ as planned and purposeful learning; but they call ‘informal education’ all that learning that goes on outside of any planned learning situation—such as cultural events. (Rogers, 2004)

Informal Education and Social Change

Because informal education is able to stand outside of the formal schooling institutions, there is a perception that it also can stand outside of other institutions and hierarchies of power.

This then implies that informal education is an appropriate forum for that teaching and learning which serve to create social change, since social change is often about removing, reorganizing, or displacing institutional power. As mentioned, several writings mention informal education as the “system” of learning empowerment in lesser-developed countries (La Belle, 1984, 80; Verbitskaia, 72; Coombs, 285-89; Rogers, (3); Maehl (5); Bekerman (2006, 140); Madrigal Goerne, 37). Even in more developed countries, there exists an idea that informal education is rooted in social change. A connection is made between adult education, lifelong learning, and social change in the idea that:

...popular education may seem like a strange bedfellow to lifelong learning, because the former has its roots in community-based struggles against injustice while the latter is an institutional expression of adult education. (Malvicini, 443)

In this context, the phrase “popular education” refers to the vision of education promoted by Freire, Boal, and others as a way of involving the people, rather than the authorities, in taking control of their own learning and reforming of political power. Another view of the “learning society” describes how:

...practically every community action initiative from parents pressing for day-care facilities or a safe street crossing, to villagers attempting to build an irrigation system... exhibits a strong educative dimension in that the adults involved are engaged in a continuous process of developing skills, acquiring knowledge, and reflecting on their experiences, mostly in collaboration with other adults. (Kenny, 117-8)

Informal Education and Inclusion

Because informal education might include forms of learning engagements that can happen in many kinds of places and spaces (including online/virtual learning) and involves many types of content, there is also great opportunity for it to include individuals who may not normally be associated with academia. “Lifelong learning” initiatives in informal community groups, community-based organizations as well as in schools can include adults beyond

retirement age who are seeking new learning experiences outside of workplace need. Coombs states the sentiment that the flexibility of informal education is a key requirement of learners exhibiting different physical abilities and is “crucial when working with students with disabilities” (Coombs, 281; also see Melber and Brown, 2008, 36) and he also describes an example in which informal education is supported by technology in the ACPO project of Columbia, which:

...serves many thousands of rural people of all ages throughout the country. It makes extensive use of radio broadcasts and printed materials that feed into small local learning groups organized by volunteers who are simply members of the group. There is no designated ‘teacher’ or ‘discussion leader,’ just ordinary villagers learning together and teaching each other. The professional teachers are at the other end of the circuit. (Coombs, 289)

Community Organizations and Models of Informal Education

Actual models of informal education in action represent a wide range of environments, communities, and ways of organizing the way that teaching and learning happen. It would not be possible to highlight all aspects of these models here. Instead, I would like to show how the great diversity of these situations corresponds to the diversity of the Lifelong Learners who are pursuing the Teaching Mind together and potentially preparing themselves to apply it across these many areas. They share a common spirit in their way of operating and openness to participation from the many rather than the few or elite.

Folk Schools

The folk school movement, growing to maturity in Denmark in the early 1900’s under the name *folkehojskole*, created a model of learning that sought to engage people, particularly in rural areas, to learn farming and trade skills and to organize themselves as a way of protecting workers (Borish, 1991). This was intended to help maintain the cohesion of communities such

that it prevented young adults from leaving behind family farms to seek further education, and very often such schools were, and still do, operate on the principle of shared experiences and mutual support in learning, where no grades are given and no certifications, credits, or labels of competence are awarded. The schools very much recognize and celebrate local culture, and very often the extent of organized classes and workshops relate to home arts and sciences, which help individuals become more self-sufficient in those activities aimed at meeting basic needs, and social activism, which help individuals to organize themselves to work together toward addressing social issues. In the U.S., among the most prominent organizations that mirror the spirit of the folk schools are the Highlander Center (New Market, TN), The John C. Campbell Folk School (Brasstown, NC), North House Folk School (Grand Marais, MN), Tillers International (Scotts, MI), and the inactive Poconos People's College (Henryville, PA), Waddington's People's College (Wheeling, WV), and American Peoples School (Gladden, MO). Other examples of efforts to create organized learning communities are The Farm School, at Maggie's Farm (Athol, MA), Wild Food Adventures (Portland, OR), the School of Self-Reliance (Los Angeles, CA),

Small-scale and Alternative Schools

Some schools serving K-12 education might be related more to informal education rather than formal education, in that they maintain a spirit of openness in the way that students learn and interact. In a recent visit to the Sudbury Valley School in Framingham, MA, I spoke to a former student/current member of the board of trustees about his experiences in this called a "free" or "democratic" school. In an environment where no explicit grade levels or formal classrooms exist, students of all ages are encouraged to explore the many resources at the school

within their own way of working, and although there are no formal “teachers”, adult staff members serve as guides to the students to help direct them to learn more within their areas of interest. Students make decisions for themselves about academic pursuits and appear to help each other do so as much, or even more than, is done by the adults. A core principle of the school is the notion of freedom of choice, where individuals make decisions for themselves, and all members of the community, including students, have equal vote on those decisions which affect the community as a whole. Hundreds of other examples of alternative schools exist around the world (with varying missions but sharing similar attitudes of rejecting traditional K-12 school education); some of the others in the U.S. are The Free School (Albany, NY), The New School (Kennebunk, ME), and The Tutorial School (Santa Fe, NM). Examples outside of the U.S. include The Small School (Hartland, England) and Escola Lumiar (Sao Paulo, Brazil). Several other types of schools that focus on philosophies or methods usually applied in childhood learning often embody alternatives to traditional lecture-based formal schooling and may be areas of further idea-generation, such as those employing Waldorf, Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and other models.

Alternative Community-Based Education

Certainly, many kinds of forums exist for organized learning for adults. While many of these forums are part of formal university education or university-managed education (university continuing education/extension schools), many others operate independently. In a number of these cases, there may be formal structure in the form of for-profit or non-profit agencies or with other boards or administrative bodies, but the learning itself is flexible in a way that it is directed by the individual learner and does not lead to certification or formal credential, much like the

folk schools mentioned earlier. These institutions might be classified as adult/community education centers, such as the Boston Center for Adult Education (Boston, MA), the Learning Connection (Providence, RI), the Learning Exchange (Sacramento, CA), First Class, Inc. (Washington, D.C.), and the Colorado Free University (Denver, CO), which all offer public classes and workshops across a number of subject areas.

Holistic Education

Another kind of group that supports informal learning and teaching is the holistic education center, which focuses on spirit, body, and mind wellness. Some examples are the Kripalu Center (Stockbridge, MA), Hollycock (Vancouver, B.C., Canada), the New York Open Center (New York, NY), Esalen Institute (Big Sur, CA), and the Omega Institute (Rhinebeck, NY). Others have more specific areas of focus, such as Ecoversity (Santa Fe, NM), which is a center promoting sound ecological design, environmental awareness, and sustainable living; another, Universidad Earth in Costa Rica would be considered formal education as a university, and yet it maintains a spirit of student-directed, highly collaborative learning toward a purpose of utilizing natural resources responsibly.

Cambridge College (Cambridge, MA), is a formal college offering Master's Degrees and yet reflects the spirit of informal education by a highly flexible model of learning that seeks to meet highly diverse needs of adult students, often who work full-time. Here, the model of learning is designed to provide "access for learners beginning from different starting points" and holds core principles which enhance the flexibility: student participation through seminars as well as class work; thorough advising throughout the program; options for courses of different lengths (semester-long, 5-day intensive, etc.); use of student portfolios as one basis for

evaluation of progress; special learning modules for academic skills in writing, English-language proficiency, and math; and approximately 70% of faculty members are employed to teach at a part-time level or even less, maintaining regular work in their related fields (Maehl, 105-6).

Other International Settings and Communities

Some other small-scale informal education efforts around the world also inform the diversity of how learning might occur outside of formal school settings. The School-on-Wheels (Mumbai, India) is a grass-roots effort to bring education to children living in poverty in the city. The organization uses a bus as a “mobile classroom” to drive to local communities and bring lessons and resources to the children. Another example, described by Bekerman (2006), demonstrates a model of teaching used by the Zinacantec Mayan group in Chiapas, Mexico. Within this group, a method of apprenticeship is used to help women gain the skill of weaving. Structured activities are used, including directed observation, contextualized talk (in which weavers purposely talk about the practice of weaving in general and specific ways while they are actually doing it), use of scaffolding (in which weaving tasks are described as a set of more manageable components, body-guiding (in which master weavers physically move and adjust the body of learners), and use of multiple teachers (those with more, the same, or less experience can contribute directly to the learning of another) (Bekerman, 141).

During a particular observation of this group at work, it was noticed that:

...the [two-year-old] learners made use of all the information coming from each teacher present. In one typical multiage learning situation, the learner often referenced the behavior of a four-year-old to see how to do a task, used the materials delivered by a six-year-old, and followed the didactic instructions of the eight-year-old present, who was in charge of all the children. Overall, learners acquired cultural knowledge from more than one teacher, each of whom taught according to his or her own skill level and social status. (Bekerman, 158)

In another example described by Mantina Mohasi, a group of young men (“Herdboys”) in the small African country of Lesotho must use informal education as a complement to formal schooling, which is difficult to access due to distance and other factors. Part of a “marginalized” population (Mohasi, 160), the Herdboys hold responsibility for taking care of animals on local farms, where they learn administrative and problem-solving skills from each other about animal care, herbal healing, and partnership, as all of these skills are necessary in their work and no adult experts are involved to serve as guides in any formal way. Still, the informal education is incomplete, as the learning that takes place in these situations can be arbitrary. Since many barriers get in the way of formal schooling, there is an opportunity for adult education, as a substitute, to “strengthen or sharpen their [existing skills based on direct experience] for purposes of empowerment and self-employment” (162). In other words, the role of existing experience is critical, and the key is not so much to “teach” the young men the new, foreign skills of professional work but instead to build upon what they know already and help them see how to develop it into more powerful forms.

Homeschooling

The role of homeschooling in supplementing or replacing traditional K-12 schooling has become an increasing issue in recent years, as parents have decided to take control of their children’s education by serving as teachers and guides while being challenged to make sure that the children are able to meet the demands of rigorous standards. Still, the issue of socialization is controversial and problematic, since homeschooled children are not afforded the same kinds of opportunities to engage frequently with other children that might occur in formal school classrooms. This forces parents to consider more creative ways of presenting the space for

children to interact and for the parents to interact with each other as well to form a network of support.

“Unschooling” pioneer John Holt suggests in any case that parents might recognize that trying to “teach” in the typical sense has a tendency of getting in the way of learning. He states,

Helping children explore and learn in the world is best seen as a branch of natural science, like trying to raise exotic plants or little-known animals...what is called for and needed is something that very few teachers have, which is the ability to observe very closely and accurately, with a great eye for detail, and to report very accurately what is seen. (Holt, 132)

Holt also encourages parents to recognize and be careful not to replicate the problematic “dominant metaphors” in organized, formal education, which relate it to any of the following: an “assembly line [with] well-defined containers”; a “laboratory with rats in cages being trained to do some kind of trick”; or a “mental hospital”, where students are assumed to be defective and therefore diagnosed with labels of their learning ability, which is supposed to make addressing their needs easier (148).

The use of homeschooling directly informs the possibilities for Lifelong Learners and the Teaching Mind in many ways. First, the suggestions of Holt and others highlight a view of learning and actually address the “destruction”, rather than the “construction” of knowledge. Adults who have experienced an early life of traditional schooling might need to less “learn” the Teaching Mind but rather first remove the habits of learning to which they were exposed. Lifelong Learners might therefore benefit from the effort involved in examining their own biases and working together to remove them as far as they are constraints in their journey.

Second, homeschooling parents are very much like the kinds of Lifelong Learners that I outline, where they have very different personal experiences and areas of expertise among themselves, but in a sense they are all seeking a kind of Teaching Mind as well and might find

support through interactions with other parents. Some homeschooling support groups, such as A-Ok Home Learners in Boston, sponsor get-togethers, where many serve as social functions for both the parents and children in homeschooling families, strengthening their interpersonal network as well as ability to share practical resources. Voyagers, a home school cooperative based in Acton, MA, offers a physical space for homeschooling families to engage in study groups, offer peer-run workshops, and share resources directly.

Third, in the limited opportunity for, or absence of, in-person meetings between homeschooling parents, extensive resources are developed and shared (especially electronically) between them. The Massachusetts Home Learning Association web site (www.mhla.org), for example, helps to point parents to resources, such as local meeting groups, information about state standards, learning resources and curriculum, and research and articles about homeschooling.

Personal Learning and Teaching

In addition to all of the forms of informal education mentioned previously, many others might be described. Although some of these forms take on a fairly organized structure, they exist outside of formal schooling and therefore retain a flexibility to address individual needs. At another extreme, I also consider the kinds of informal learning that might take place within personal individual, family, and community settings. Although the nature of such situations means that qualified research may be somewhat scarce, I anticipate that many Lifelong Learners might be seeking the Teaching Mind within this context. Examples might include a family visit to museums, libraries, religious services, serving as a leader on a group wilderness trips, or leading an effort to establish a recycling program in a workplace. In supporting these kinds of

short-term teaching experiences, the Teaching Mind can be involved in any level of social change, since such a change depends upon communicating with others about reasons, consequences, and nuances of a social issue. The social change happens here on an individual level, where a person might even engage the Teaching Mind to teach oneself how to develop some understanding of a previously unnoticed social issue before actually engaging with others to address it.

Professional Learning Groups

Two specific personal experiences have much to offer in my own growing understanding of what it means to “learn together”. First, my participation with the UMass-Boston Critical and Creative Thinking Program’s CCT Network has allowed me to be involved directly in an effort to engage program alumni and current students together in a process of peer learning and mutual sharing of experience. Through my work as a graduate assistant staff member, I am involved in helping to organize monthly events that seek to attract current students and alumni, as well as other program community members, through sharing of presentations, activities, and informal mentoring. Because the program attracts students from multiple fields of interest, relationships between current and former students in similar fields can be just as rewarding as those within the group of current students. My own experience in this effort has helped me to develop some insight in a few unique areas: publicity and marketing in informal education, where attendance is not mandatory and must be built through relationships as well as through organizing tasks; realistic sense of time commitment needed to engage in setup and planning, implementation, and post-event assessment when developing events for groups of learners; and use of technological

and other tools to support the development of the in-person experiences through communication and sharing in forms outside of those experiences.

A second personal experience comes from my involvement as a member of a local Toastmasters club. Toastmasters, International is an international non-profit organization dedicated to learning directed toward the development of communication and leadership skills. Toastmasters was founded in 1924 as a social club within a single YMCA for helping people become comfortable with speaking publicly. Although commonly familiar to non-members as a type of professional speech club for adult learners, the practice of delivering speeches is the foundation of a wider range of learning that takes place. This includes many aspects of interpersonal communication, listening skills, evaluation skills, facilitation of meetings, brainstorming and decision-making, creating inclusive and inviting environments for sharing, and others.

I have participated as a member and officer at various times throughout the past years. This experience has helped me to appreciate and understand the operational aspects of the club and observe many examples of effective group work. I have been involved in efforts to develop publicity for the club and incentives for members, initiate a process of matching mentor-mentee pairs, and develop other forms of training. Although each club is a branch of a very large organization, there exists a highly self-conscious balance between the support offered from the parent organization and the degree of flexibility allowed to each club to define how it operates based on the wishes and culture of the individual members.

An immense set of resources has been collected by the parent organization over years of time, including written and multimedia materials, operational manuals and reference guides, periodic conferences and meetings, and more. These materials have mostly been created by

members of individual clubs – the relatively small staff at the parent organization headquarters mainly performs administrative functions. At the same time, individual clubs constantly evaluate and rework the way that members are directed to these resources and the way that they are put into use in practical ways. This experience provides a rich model for understanding how a learning group for Lifelong Learners might address the Teaching Mind, largely with respect to the following key points:

- Each club is completely managed by members; club officers are simply a small team of members who volunteer to organize meeting logistics and communication to the parent organization
- Almost always, club members are learning to develop communication/public speaking skills as generic skill; they are not seeking to become professional public speakers but rather are becoming better prepared for speaking in personal and professional settings
- The processes used in a club meeting have been developed through constant experimentation over years of time as the best practices of holding such meetings, and individual clubs are encouraged to make adjustments that fit the needs of the members. The content of the meetings (topics of discussion, dialogue, and speeches) are determined by individual members—members are encouraged, and even expected, to draw upon personal experiences to make their learning and sharing authentic
- There are built-in chances for participation from everyone at every meeting—there is no such thing as a “lecture-style” meeting
- A wide range of experience, knowledge, and comfort levels are present in a club. Informal mentoring occurs frequently as experienced members guide new members

- Much room for “mistakes” is allowed, where taking risks is rewarded and encouraged as a way to learn. Feedback is pervasive among all areas of club and meeting organization.

Several of these previous points seem to mirror some of the ideas that I have developed about a learning group for the Teaching Mind. Although I have participated in some other similar kinds of professional learning communities in other ways, the two mentioned here seem to be the most promising, as far I have had some position or responsibility of leadership involving communicating with groups and individuals, cultivating relationships with others and between others, establishing priorities, administering logistics, and fulfilling low-level tasks.

Possible Challenges to Learning the Teaching Mind in Support of Informal Education

A number of challenges specific to the nature of informal education might present themselves in the development of Teaching Mind Exploration Group. These challenges come from a number of potential sources: specific objections of individuals or institutions; logistical considerations; technological considerations; cultural considerations; and others.

One challenge to the fulfillment of those in such a group concerns the ability to create meaning through group learning when the learners may have so many different areas of interest and intent. As discussed, some may want to develop their teaching skills for community workshops, some may want to pass on knowledge and skills in apprenticeship situations, some may want to develop more thoughtful written guides/educational articles in a workplace setting to enlighten colleagues on a relevant area of personal expertise, and some may wish to pass on knowledge within neighborhood communities or families. Across these cases, addressing this challenge seems to mean at least two things: 1) guiding the group interactions toward generic

activities so that all can participate and 2) creating space around the group interactions to allow each individual to relate what has been observed or learned into their own form of use of the Teaching Mind. Further, it needs to be clear that not every specific activity will be equally applicable to each person, and perhaps this means that a single session may address only a subset of a larger group of potential participants—those who are most interested in the theme of the particular session.

Another challenge is the need to address a range of numbers of participants who could be involved in such a group, which I have called the **Teaching Mind Exploration Group**.

Although some interactions of a group might take the form of one person sharing with the whole group, others might involve small group work, such as pairings of individuals or groups of three-four who work with each other first and then bring results back to the greater group. The use of small-group work might then scale to different numbers of total participants. Since, as mentioned above, only a subset of participants might actually be in attendance at a given session, others will not get to participate directly in “real-time” but perhaps other options are available.

Referring to the concept of the “self-educating community”, Burbules and Rice (1991) claim that “The Internet has become one of the most important resources for formal, non-formal, and informal learning” which has the “capacity to support new kinds of community, usually in the absence of face-to-face contact” (Bekerman, 273). Modern information technology, as of 2009, offers numerous choices for sharing, transmitting, and communicating messages in written, audio, and video formats. Various combinations might be used then to include those who do not participate in person during the sessions, which likely then involves some high-quality note-taking or recording of the session. At the same time, although I focus on the face-to-face interactions here, these formats do not necessarily take the main control over how this

group of Lifelong Learners is defined. I imagine a situation where face-to-face sessions and external, asynchronous interactions complement each other. Exchanges might happen between “in-person” participants, among in-person and “absent” participants (those not physically present during the sessions), and between both types of participants outside of the face-to-face sessions. Sharing that takes place creates a feedback loop into future interactions, and that the group is defined by the culmination of all such interactions.

Possible caveats regarding the use of technology in support of this inclusive learning are that “the very impersonality that some see as liberating, others see as alienating...”, and that:

...self-educating communities often run into a tension between being self-critical (which is necessary for remaining open to new and challenging points of view) and being self-congratulatory (which can reinforce internal bonds of commitment, but which can also yield a kind of complacency. (Burbules, 280)

The point is taken that simply participating in the online exchanges of this community does not necessarily mean that one is really participating in the development of the Teaching Mind, since I view this skill within the context of interpersonal connections that involve sharing physical space with others somewhere along the way.

Another possible challenge related to the Teaching Mind as a facet of informal education is the perception of being too much of a relativist endeavor. There may be no standards, and there may be no pressure to make sure that one’s learners have a certain level of competence. Areas of teaching in informal education might relate to culture, personal interest, hobbies, community awareness, and many other areas that have nothing to do with proving one’s ability to be selected for a job although the learning might need to be highly developed in order to be effective.

One example to demonstrate this difficulty involves someone who teaches others about basic wilderness first aid. The Teaching Mind offers much freedom to make personal choices in

teaching. The question might arise, “if one Lifelong Learner develops a notion of teaching in one way, and another Lifelong Learner takes another approach, must it necessarily be acceptable either way?” Or in another form, the question is, “Is it not clear in some situations that one approach to teaching is better than another?” Lifelong Learners engaged together might need to find a common place to balance judgment about such an issue. If our hypothetical first-aid instructor concludes that her intended subject matter and audience demand a completely lecture-based, highly-disciplined form of teaching, should this be challenged by others? First, I would answer that such a decision by the Lifelong Learner is perfectly legitimate, since that person alone knows her potential use of the Teaching Mind and must justify it to herself and to the learners primarily, not to the other Lifelong Learners in the Teaching Mind Exploration Group.. Second, the Teaching Mind Exploration Group does not exist to tell anyone how to teach, it exists to give them an environment to make up their own mind and engage with others under the assumption that they can always continue to redefine what that might be. Our first-aid instructor might insist upon a strict lecture style at first, but through engagement with the Teaching Mind Exploration Group, perhaps it can become clear that such an approach *is not the only one possible, all the time*, and the instructor becomes more sensitive to that possibility through Teaching Mind learning. As that growth happens over time, it does not nullify the benefit of the instructor’s previous lectures though – it *does* allow those previous experiences to serve up memories that expose contrasts to possible future teaching.

In his book To Open Minds (1991), Howard Gardner develops a narrative that seeks to find the rational balance in this challenge around the tension between highly-disciplined and highly-flexible learning and teaching. After the experience of visiting China in the 1980s a number of times to observe students learning the fine arts, he recalls an early impression that:

...no longer are students being introduced to a new expressive form; rather, they are now being groomed to be the next generation of performers or 'creators'. Not only is much of the training simply tedious drill; but the kind of investigating of options...which are never completely absent in a Western context, is essentially 'off limits' in China. (Gardner, 150)

Several other comparisons are made between the strict, regimented style of Chinese art student learning where they are asked to choose a certain form in first grade and then perfect that form over the next six years.

Early on, Gardner expressed pity and was "appalled" for these students—"how dictatorial, I thought..." as he was reminded of the "positive aspects of the 'looseness' in our [U.S] educational system as well as the value of liberal education". Later, though, he reflected that his experience reminded him of:

...certain educational virtues often lost sight of in our own country but still happily manifest in that more traditional society...children from an early age deeply involved in and excited by activities of learning...by late childhood, they would already have achieved considerable mastery...were neither proud nor boastful... (Gardner, 292)

Also noted is another bright ray of light shining through was used to be a dark cloud: "[the Chinese students] gained "an understanding 'in their bones' of what it is like to *gain gradual mastery* of a valued area of skill." He recognizes the need for balance as he continues:

I have little sympathy with the uncritical emphasis on fact-learning and standardized test-taking...nor am I comfortable with a program that focuses on electives, that allows children to switch at will from one subject or hobby to another. (Gardner, 299)

My interpretation of these conclusions relate to the equilibrium of ideas in the Teaching Mind. Although there might be a (western) perception that a teaching style might need to foster interactivity, openness, flexibility, and be highly relative to individual needs, a more closed, strict style could be useful to a Lifelong Learner acting as a teacher, as it may at the least give the learners the experience of knowing, for themselves, how such a style feels, and it may even be necessary at times to develop the kind of discipline that helps knowledge of some subject to

actually be most useful. A *Lifelong Learner-as-teacher* retains the responsibility to employ such a style if that seems to be the most available and effective given the situation. Just the same, a highly-flexible teacher who encourages constant group interaction and democratic learning retains the same responsibility. I would hope that through engaging with each other in Teaching Mind group learning, each individual would develop a sensitivity to notice how “other” styles *just might* be appropriate in their own environment, at certain times.

One other challenge to the growth of the Teaching Mind is the possible resistance that might come from professional teachers in formal education. It is possible to imagine a situation where such teachers avoid comparisons to informal education teachers, insisting that they are not “real teachers” and that such a system of learning allows for many holes in contrast to the rigorous nature of a school-based education. Those seeking the Teaching Mind without official ties to an institution will be questioned: “What makes you think you are capable of teaching?” “How can you think you are teaching when you have not had all of the training?” “What evidence do you have that your teaching methods are the right ones?” “How can your efforts actually address the ‘real’ issues of the world?” “Does what you do really help people to be more competitive and effective workers, citizens, family members, or neighbors in the real world, where serious problems are happening?”

First, I repeat that Lifelong Learners engaged in the pursuit of the Teaching Mind need not actually know how their efforts will pay off as they understand how to teach others. These individuals are allowed to place primary importance on their own lifelong learning through exploring teaching rather than on outcomes, measurements, and justifications.

Second, this process is not meant to create a new vertical market of skilled practitioners but rather to create a different kind of opportunity for *involvement of many individuals across a*

wide range of fields and experiences to work together to make a habit out of “perpetual re-understanding” of the complexities of learning, teaching, and education.

Third, the idea of more broadly embracing of the Teaching Mind means an increase in the appreciation and empathy for teachers in formal schooling and what they actually do. The potential is that that broader engagement in exploring the Teaching Mind will reach areas of learning across informal education in ways that actually relieve the pressure faced by formal teachers to carry out immense and unrealistic educational directives that place upon them all responsibility for the success of students. Still, it seems possible that this third issue will surface in unpredictable ways, since it implies some tension around the power and politics of “who is in charge” in learning.

Summary of Key Learnings

Just as with the concepts of Teacher Education, some particular aspects of the study of informal education contribute to the development of learning about the Teaching Mind:

- Well-organized, resource-rich formal education institutions may not take away the need for complementary systems of learning in informal settings, but they may change the power structures, politics, and opportunities for how people may be part of these settings
- Increasing the reach of informal education does not mean necessarily decreasing traditional forms of teaching such as classroom-based lecture, but it might mean supporting the capability of teachers to be sensitive to *when* such forms might not be used in favor of alternatives, and *how* such forms are effective or limited and under *what* conditions
- Modern technologies and mediums of communication create opportunity for learning that transcends the bounds of physical space that traditionally has defined group learning

- Rather than associating mainly with single schools or institutions, informal education encourages participation by individuals in multiple, distributed, concurrent communities of learning
- Innovations in formal education (and especially higher education) may have been perceived to originate from western, and particularly U.S. institutions by people in these areas, but innovations in informal education may be greatly inspired by the efforts to promote learning in very diverse worldwide locations, including poor and undernourished countries and regions, where informal means might have represented the best option available.

Focus Area 3: Facilitating Groups of Learners

Facilitating Groups of Lifelong Learners with Diverse Modes of Potential Teaching to Develop the Teaching Mind

Through understanding how the processes of facilitation can be used to help individuals learn how to teach, we may also connect how these processes may be applied in the context of the Teaching Mind. In order to consider how facilitation might work in group interactions involving the Teaching Mind, we encounter a challenge to first identify exactly *what* is being facilitated. Regardless of the nature of a particularly interactive session between Lifelong Learners in terms of the subject matter being discussed, it seems that facilitation of such a group will always include (at least) the following goals: ensuring a balance of participation among all present; helping group members to identify and expose ways of thinking to each other; helping to maintain an environment where all present are sufficiently comfortable; and noticing and communicating when the group has deviated from agreed-upon ground rules, agendas, and timing. A single, unbiased individual will likely not hold main responsibility for facilitating

along each of these aspects at every session, but the group may develop a way to systematically or informally allow lead facilitation to switch among participants over time. This way of working means that part of the development of the group might include explicit attention to reviewing facilitation practices, and these processes might be identified in simplest terms to keep them manageable. Literature on facilitation of adult learners offers a number of other principles that might be useful in such a setting.

One special quality of facilitating interactions of the Lifelong Learners seeking the Teaching Mind might also be an area of confusion. Here, I intend to discuss “facilitation” as a *process* used by the Lifelong Learners, rather than a *content area which is the literal topic of focus* in the exploration group session. I realize, though, that the two can become confused, since indeed they are actually related. Like most processes of the exploration group, this one has a recursive nature. The Lifelong Learners are using the process *amongst themselves* to learn about teaching, and at the same time, they are possibly also modeling the process for each other so that they can actually *transfer* it for use it in their future teaching with *other groups in outside situations*. Throughout this discussion, I am referring to the former but constantly implying the latter. Lifelong Learners use processes of facilitation both as a *means to an end* (learning about teaching for their own benefit) and as a demonstrative model of a *specific way of behaving* when they are actually engaged in a teaching situation on their own. Lifelong Learners are students of teaching just as their future learners are students of some other area of expertise. As stated by Paulo Freire and others, a teacher is “often a co-learner. He or she works with learners and tries to find out about their lives and experiences even as learners may be questioning their values” (Cranton, 107).

A Process of Engagement: The Interactive Arc

This area of research also provides support for ensuring that the four aspects of the Teaching Mind can be met to make it globally accessible. Effective facilitation maintains the *inclusive* nature of within-group interactions and encourages newcomers to participate. Facilitation is naturally *communal* and also *expands* the meaning of “teaching” to include the prospect of guidance, support, coaching, and encouragement that makes it even more evident that the learning experience in this group is not one of static lecture. Further, facilitation can help to mitigate the practical activities of the learning group to using the behaviors that are *familiar* to learners, such as discussion, reflective writing, brainstorming, or others.

Lifelong Learners maintain primary control and responsibility over their own participation and contributions to the face-to-face interactions that serve to improve their Teaching Mind, and so there exist no supervisors, administrators, institutions, or executives to provide a template for how to interact or what to accomplish. Within my initial framing, facilitation of Lifelong Learners might start with guiding the individuals through the three-step

Interactive Arc:

1. reflect upon past experiences and existing understanding of teaching and learning,
2. engage in activities together in order to examine and interpret the reflections more closely and create new insights
3. imagine how these new insights might influence future teaching opportunities in the context of future real-world situations that the learners might encounter relative to their own lives

This Interactive Arc would potentially be used each time the group meets together. The particular logistics, operations, and ideals of a group of Lifelong Learners involved in such a

cycle would be determined through peer support and leadership. No single participant may be an expert on the topic of facilitating a group of Lifelong Learners toward the Teaching Mind, and so I look to those practices and methods of facilitation that might help such a group to find a basic recipe for facilitating their own interactions and continuing involvement.

In particular, I am also quite interested in how the concepts of play, humor, and fun can be established within the interactions, how engaging activities are used that require no special knowledge beyond natural modes of communicating and behaving, and how the operational considerations of the group can be made to require the minimal amount of “work”, distributing what work is needed among numerous participants. Sustenance of ongoing interactions means that there are clear reasons for a person to keep returning to the group over time and that organizational and logistical requirements do not extend beyond the minimum of effort required from people who already have busy lives. The following review of research and experiences identifies the best practices of facilitation in groups of potential teachers, clarifies what kinds of group interactions can be used in collaborative ways without specialized knowledge or expertise, and suggests what kinds of meeting structures and scaffolds provide a simple and flexible way for Lifelong Learners to learn together and make the most out of the experience. In the simplest forms, these experiences should at least support the Interactive Arc, even if the three phases are not always completely followed as strictly as described.

Core Philosophies of Facilitation of Groups of Learners

Ultimately, exploring the Teaching Mind suggests that some change will happen in the Lifelong Learner’s individual approach to teaching through interactions with others. Part of the process of facilitation then is to identify the “old” way of thinking or knowing and guide the

learner to view a path toward a new one. Cranton defines transformational learning as “the process by which people examine problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change”...where “[d]iscourse is central to the process [as people] engage in conversation with others...” (36). If group learning of the Teaching Mind is to be transformative, then facilitation might require that participants are sensitive to their own and each others’ frames of reference. A possible question to ask oneself, then, after a group learning experience is, “Have I come to understand a new possibility that I had not considered before?”, perhaps substituting for the previous one that is now seen to be much less important, “Have I convinced everyone else that *my* way of knowing about the Teaching Mind is valid and valuable?”

Dialogue and Discussion

Another concern of those conscientious about facilitation is the use of types of discussion in the course of a group learning session. A key element of participatory facilitation is to recognize that there are multiple ways of holding discussion beyond open-ended, whole-group spontaneous talking. Other possibilities include formal dialogue process (Isaacs, 1999; Senge, 1994, 356), focused conversation (Nelson, 2001), “learning conversations” (Brookfield, 239), and other structured forms of discussion. Participants in a group learning environment may share in the responsibility of directing the group to learn about, understand, and use various forms as they become aware of them or experienced in them from other sources.

Facilitating Critical and Creative Thinking

Because the Teaching Mind involves imagining alternatives to prior ways of thinking about teaching, reflecting upon one's own thinking on the topic, and developing new ways to understanding what it means to teach, the process is inherently one that involves critical and creative thinking. Facilitation means having some awareness of ways that these types of thinking might be defined and helping the group to explore them. This area is another that possesses the "recursive" nature described previously: Lifelong Learners might use techniques of critical and creative thinking while also modeling for themselves as teachers how such techniques can be transferred to their other settings. Although direct attention to critical and creative thinking as a topic of focus may be endlessly fascinating, it may not always be able to be addressed directly in the interest of other areas.

As with practices of dialogue and discussion, facilitation may be distributed among the group to bring attention to specific kinds of methods of critical and creative thinking in the form of exercises/activities with which to experiment in the course of brainstorming, problem-solving, or idea-generating. These techniques might include the SCAMPER technique (Michalko, 2006), approaches to using convergent and divergent thinking (Guilford, 1968), and others.

One responsibility of facilitation is to help maintain a "safe" environment in the midst of activities that involve the perception of criticism, since:

...thinking critically is intimidating to people who are not used to doing it...people's egos are frequently invested in being seen as capable, competent, or sophisticated, and that a helper suggesting to someone that perhaps he or she is operating under false assumptions threatens this self-concept. (Brookfield, 1987, 72)

Along the creative dimension, "[r]isk taking is at the heart of all creative and exciting teaching" (Brookfield, 81), and indeed:

...[s]everal varying approaches to helping people imagine alternatives...do not require specialized training...[and include] brainstorming, envisioning alternative futures...developing preferred scenarios...futures invention...esthetic triggers...”
(Brookfield, 1987, 117)

Of course, some of these methodologies probably *do* take some specialized training, or at least the experience of having been introduced to the method by another more knowledgeable person. Very specific, well-defined activities involving concepts such as these mentioned may require a member of the Teaching Minds Exploration Group to step forward as a single lead facilitator.

Collaboration

In addition to the face-to-face group work that might take place during the Lifelong Learner interactions, facilitating the experiences might also involve noticing specific ways that collaboration happens. Of course, it might be claimed this entire process of learning the Teaching Mind is naturally collaborative, but it seems possible that such a term might be viewed as a cliché with respect to modern use in so many settings. Perhaps, then, a facilitating action might be to directly engage the group to find more specific ways to implement collaboration within their own context as Lifelong Learners in partnership. Does “collaboration” mean peer cooperation between pairs of individuals outside of the group learning sessions, distribution of practical roles during the learning session, or sharing of resources such as meeting space or costs? Perhaps all of these possibilities need exploration. In a way, finding a clear interpretation of this word might actually amount to making sure that responsibilities for maintaining the exploration group sessions are distributed fairly. In that case, it is up to each individual participant to facilitate by taking on leadership/administrative roles and also communicate when such roles are beyond their means and find assistance. Further, the idea of collaboration might be thought of as an ongoing, self-sustaining process. The participants become more skilled at

being effective collaborators over time as well as accomplishing other explicit outcomes, focusing not only on products created through the collaboration but also on positively-charged principles of engagement, such as the “4 R’s”, where Respect, Risk, Revelation, and Re-engagement catalyze the ongoing collaborative efforts themselves (Taylor, et al., 2008).

Collaboration reaches beyond interpersonal communication to mean a very active process of individuals who all contribute perspectives (consistently but not necessarily constantly) and then attempt to combine them and reveal novel meaning, which then takes (at least) two different forms. One form is the “collective meaning”, which refers to the generic meaning that an individual *perceives* to be the one that is accepted by the rest of the group; it reflects actual statements, claims, or suggestions made within the collaborative group setting that are directed to the rest of the group and attempt to summarize conclusions being made about the outcome of the collaboration. Another form is the “individual meaning”, which refers to the degree to which an individual *accepts* the collective meaning and the ways in which personal meaning is understood relative to one’s own situation and perspective. Rather than suggesting that collaborators must come to agreement, this perspective implies that participants make forward progress by weighing multiple “truths” that have been hypothesized during the collaboration as the method used to make decisions and take action, as opposed to allowing a single “truth” to reign supreme and point toward the most obvious, dominant decision or action.

Establishing Ground Rules and Principles of Practice

An individual group of Lifelong Learners seeking the Teaching Mind might find that they need a common basis of understanding how they can intervene in the processes that are taking place. Such a concept implies that ground rules for the group in general as well as for

specific sessions or activities might need to be defined. According to Peter Senge, who provoked a modern renewal of interest in the field of systems thinking, “teams need to set up their own ground rules for conversation...including clarifying how decisions are made, dealing with violations of the rules, and establish safe ways to challenge each other” (Senge, 357). Possible examples include the need to “test assumptions and inferences...share all relevant information...agree on what important words mean...jointly design next steps and ways to test disagreements...discuss undiscussable issues...” (Schwartz, 1994, 90-91). Facilitators and participants within a Teaching Mind Exploration Group experience are encouraged to find new words or phrases to replace those such as “ground rules” (or “role-playing” or even “collaboration”), since these words have gained wider use in more formal business-oriented facilitation practices and so might now be perceived to have loaded meanings. It might be counterproductive to Teaching Mind engagement if participants are distracted by terms that are perceived as clichés or hyperbolic jargon even though the underlying concepts are innovative and sensible.

Appreciating and Utilizing Diversity

Facilitation of a Teaching Mind Exploration Group may also involve the need to recognize the nature of diversity represented in the group and direct others to notice it. A conventional view addresses the way that observable diversity might be handled:

One important aspect of creating cooperative learning groups is maximizing the heterogeneity of the [learners]...[they] should be placed in groups that are mixed by academic skills, social skills, personality, race, and sex. (Thousand, 1994, 52)

Of course, the notion might be understood more deeply to include what might be called the “hidden diversity” of the group, composed of attitudes, memories, political perspectives,

learning and communication styles, thinking dispositions, genetic factors, and other cultural qualities. Also, forcing “heterogeneity” may not be possible in group settings with adult Lifelong Learners. Even so, the topic as a general area of open discussion might be directly addressed. If diverse perspectives are uncovered through a Teaching Mind Exploration Group, there is simply a greater range of possible new ideas that each participant may adapt into one’s one future teaching.

Models and Examples

Many examples are noted in the research concerning peer-facilitated group learning experiences in informal education settings. Brookfield notes the TLE learning network in Evanston, Illinois, which “has no affiliation with formal educational institutions, and [where] fees are arranged by participants among themselves” including the use of bartering of services rather than monetary transactions (153). The participants are fully responsible for their own interactions without a formal central leadership. Another example is the organized “study circle”, originally popularized in Sweden; for example, the “Study Circle Consortium [throughout New York State] runs over 400 study circle groups in community agencies, hospitals, health centers, churches, libraries, businesses, and homes”(Brookfield, 1986, 155).

Another example (albeit officially operated within a formal school) is the “Classwide Peer Tutoring (CWPT)”, developed at the Juniper Gardens Children’s Project in Kansas City in 1986. This is a model of peer teaching (originally meant to help integrate children with disabilities into classrooms) using four elements: competition between teams; highly structured teaching procedures; scoring of progress and public exposure of scores; and direct practice of

well-defined academic skills. Although a teacher is present to monitor activities, the students themselves manage and agree upon the processes that they use (Thousand, 232).

In The Art of Play, Blatner (1988) describes another model that could be developed as a peer-facilitated approach to group learning (perhaps with some initial input from an experienced person). The “Art of Play” model uses theater to allow participants to re-enact situations to be observed and examined without needing a theater expert, since the focus of the method is on creating a theatrical interaction, not a performance, where “the action occurs only for the benefit of the group of people playing together...no effort is made to perfect or even improve the quality of the performance...” (Blatner, 25).

Another model, the “Interactive Meeting Format” developed by Teen Empowerment in Boston, includes a thorough methodology for developing ground rules, creating exercises and activities, and sharing responsibilities that can help take the pressure off of a single facilitator to “sell” the benefits of the group learning by involving all members of the group in the formulation of how they interact (Pollack and Fusoni, 2005, 4). The methodology includes a six-part meeting format and specifically addresses some of the key challenges of getting started with group work. The suggested activities create a framework for allowing all participants to take part in the facilitation by defining clear guidelines in a fun way (19, 36).

Summary of Key Learnings

A number of points summarize ideas about facilitating groups of learners will relate to the way that Lifelong Learners engage toward the Teaching Mind:

- Facilitators may use a range of techniques and behavior to guide the process of learning about the Teaching Mind, and learning may most often originate from discussion and verbal

communication that occurs among the learners, rather than between the facilitator and the learners

- Facilitation of Lifelong Learners may add to the learning experience by introducing and reinforcing new and very different ways of learning that in and of themselves becomes new “knowledge” or “understanding”, apart from the actual subject-level facts, concepts, ideas, and skills that are acquired
- Facilitation of group learning may involve the development of simple or foundational “recipes” that the learners may use to orient their face-to-face interactions when a formal facilitator is no longer present
- “Orthogonal” factors that affect group interactions may need to be recognized and directly addressed throughout the process, perhaps interrupting the learning that participants assume was supposed to be happening; facilitators may help learners to “step out of” the intended path during a group session and revert to a more basic goal of building relationships between learners, for example (i.e., the “intended learning” may need to be put off until later because it is dependent upon a more fundamental condition of group work that has not been established yet).

Focus Area 4: Theater, Dialogue, and Stories

Use of Behaviors that Mirror Real-Life Interactions and Draw Upon Natural Abilities of Spoken, Written, and Non-verbal Communication

As a result of my own personal involvement and participation over time within groups of learners, I have come to find that my own attitudes about group behavior have influenced my experiences in addition to my reflections on the content and processes of what was actually done during these interactions. Some particular kinds of personal experiences have shaped the way that I go about putting myself in the frame of mind that helps me to feel comfortable and excited about being engaged with others, and I refer to these experiences as my “theater, dialogue, and stories” perspective on group engagement.

My recent exposure to theater has culminated in the completion of a two-year training process in improvisational theater, followed by a one-year period of improvisational performance in public settings. Through this exposure, I have come to appreciate the ways in which methods of theater reflect the behavior of real-life interpersonal communication and interaction and provide a practical way to use concepts such as character development, point-of-view, physical movement, and imagining hypothetical life scenarios as tools in these areas.

My journey in the Critical and Creative Thinking program has enlightened me on a number of practical uses of dialogue, both in the specific proper form of Dialogue defined by Isaacs (1999), and in other structured, multi-person, special forms of conversation, such as dialogical/dialectical discussion (Paul, 1995) and Socratic questioning.

My participation as a member of a local Toastmasters, Inc. club (as described previously) as well as my experience in the Critical and Creative Thinking program have additionally inspired me to consider how personal stories can be translated into personal meaning and insight

through speaking/listening collaboration, using activities such as speechwriting, small group sharing, freewriting, verbal storytelling, and others.

The “theater, dialogue, and stories” perspective not only refers to an undercurrent of my current style of approaching learning, but also it indicates an area of personal growth in which I would like to become more proficient. More directly related to the development of face-to-face Lifelong Learner interactions, relating these ideas to the group interactive learning process may further color the specific ways of introducing and implementing facilitation as defined in the third area of research that has been reviewed above. In fact, this fourth area of research focus may be viewed as a subset of using facilitation with Lifelong Learners to develop the Teaching Mind, but particularly with the idea of theater, I find that certain elements do suggest a required level of special skill and experience related to performance, so I address this area of research separately to distinguish those from the more natural elements that reflect the behavior of life and therefore become easily accessible to the interactive learning process.

This area of research particularly supports the fourth aspect of the Teaching Mind; a theater, dialogue, and stories perspective provides tools that can turn *familiar* behavior into starting points for deeper discussion about teaching and learning. At the basic level, these behaviors involve speaking, physical movement and body or facial gestures, watching others, and manipulating common objects. These tools also are highly dependent upon *communal* engagement, since the experiences involved are actually created through the interactions of people in various roles, such as speaker/listener, actor/observer, etc. The perspective supports the *inclusive* nature of the Teaching Mind by seeking anyone who is prepared to exhibit the familiar behavior, and it certainly reflects an *expansive* view of teaching and learning by introducing notions that address life situations outside of classrooms and schools.

Main Concepts

More specifically, why are “theater, dialogue, and stories” mentioned together, and what common qualities do they offer to the Teaching Mind Exploration Group? Although my suggestion is that these forms of interactive behavior are used in what might be considered an informal education setting, I also consider these forms to be the behaviors of life itself. This means that at least some elements of each mirror the way that people really act in interpersonal exchanges, and therefore they do not actually need so much to be learned as simply to be recognized as existing foundations of learning. When considered together, I view them as intertwined expressive forms that utilize the physical presence through voice, body, and senses. When considered at a finer level of detail, I view them as complementary expressive forms that hold nuanced distinctions. Stories and storytelling represent the most deeply personal levels—those that recapture the past filtered through memories. Theater (sometimes called *drama* or *dramatic arts*) represents the interpersonal levels, considering the possible futures and fantasy other worlds, the “what could be”, filtered through our own imaginations but possibly with respect to the minds of others. Dialogue represents the “here and now”—awareness of the present as a source of energy which can be tapped by listening to self and others.

Specific tools and uses of theater, dialogue, and stories provide additional resources for what it means to engage Lifelong Learners in the Teaching Mind. Many branches of this perspective follow from the work of Augusto Boal, who developed the Theater of the Oppressed within the context of popular education as a way of engaging people to explore situations that relate to power, politics, and social awareness in communal ways (Boal, 1979). General outlines of a Theater of the Oppressed experience involve a public re-enactment of a social situation—a real-life challenge, issue, or problem that faces what might be considered to be an oppressed

community. Within the theatric activity, some “spectators” (173) act out a scene that reflects the real situation, playing roles of actual people involved. Others who have been watching are able to stop the action, “rewind” the scene, and play a role differently to show how something “should have been done” or explore alternative ways of handling the situation. Of specific interest is the special role of the Joker, who helps to guide the spectators and physically “edit” a scene to help identify how points of view have been portrayed, while also being “brought in connection with the audience” (Boal, 175). In a group of Lifelong Learners, such a role might serve as the center of the facilitation process. Because a spectator can fluidly move between the roles of direct participant or active observer, involvement is supported for all present, and all have a voice to define and refine the situation at hand. An adapted approach may be used around the Teaching Mind, where the Lifelong Learners in the group may be acting out situations that relate to teaching. These activities might include directly portraying scenes representing actual memories of their own school experiences, encountered or anticipated situations in current life in their own teaching forums, or fantasy situations which allow potential teachers to experiment with hypothetical ideas.

Several writings provide theoretical frameworks and libraries of well-defined theater-based exercises that are applicable to group learning. Some draw upon Boal’s attention to learning within the context of social issues (Boal’s Games for Actors and Nonactors (1992), and Michael Rohd’s Theater for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue (1998)). Others focus directly on applications in teaching and classrooms (improvisational theater pioneer Viola Spolin’s Theater Games for the Classroom (1986), Tauber and Mester’s Acting Lessons for Teachers (1994)). Still others present theater as a foundation of more general group work related to personal growth and creativity, such as David Diamond’s Theatre for Living (2007), Kat

Koppett's Training to Imagine (2001), and Hahlo and Reynolds' Dramatic Events: How to Run a Successful Workshop (2000). All provide ample descriptions of exercises that can be used by groups of Lifelong Learners, and many of these exercises have potential to be adapted for use toward the Teaching Mind.

As suggested by some of the titles and content of the works above (e.g., "Theater for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue" and the Boal works), the specific notion of dialogue is often strongly related to theater as it often "wraps around" a dramatic scene: Isaacs' special form of the Dialogue Process as well as other forms may be used before a scene to set the tone and prime the use of listening skills or after a scene to connect observations of the scene to reflections and new insights. This specifically also integrates well with the idea of learning about the Teaching Mind with others who are doing the same, as:

...dialogue process can help us to address four habits of thought that tend to sustain 'thinking alone': *abstraction* [i.e., seeing the world as divided solitary items (fragmentation)]...*idolatry* [i.e., confusing memory with thinking]...*certainty* [i.e., certainty of one's own ideas such that one becomes disconnected from other possibilities of thinking]...and *violence* [i.e., imposing views upon others and judging and defending]. (Isaacs, 52)

Likewise, storytelling is related to a dramatic scene in the way it presents a situation to observers and allows reflection, examination, and empathy to form as storytellers and listeners gain newfound mutual understanding or appreciation of each other. Such a connection might be an invaluable approach to finding common ground between Lifelong Learners, particularly when they seem to be seeking the Teaching Mind with very different apparent motivations or intentions.

These examples also support the use of theater, dialogue, and storytelling not as a performance but rather as a source of creative output that can be useful for reflection and clarification of personal understanding, particularly with adults who may not immediately be

comfortable as the center of attention. From one perspective, adults may perceive “acting” as a person in disguise, hiding the true self, but the alternative view is that:

...the opposite is more likely to be the case. [Acting] is rather more about a journey inwards...about an openness and willingness to reveal the character you are playing through the prism of yourself, using the resources of your body, voice, and imagination. (Hahlo, 110)

Models and Examples

From several of the writings referenced above, models and examples of theater, dialogue, and stories have actually been used and can serve as foundations for new applications to Lifelong Learners. Rohd’s “Hope is Vital” model, based on Freire’s core principle that learning happens by doing something oneself rather than being told or shown how to do something, directly outlines how to connect theater to learning by “creating safe spaces, using dialogue, explore choices and consequences, and involves practice for real life [situations]” (xvii). Britain’s Breakout Theater-in-Education, a theater group based on Boal’s principles and practices, addresses youth groups in schools by acting out life situations facing them. The attention to making the experiences as honest and true as possible inspires a similar theme of Lifelong Learners; as one participant states, “our theatre allowed those bad things, raw, and uncut, to be re-enacted without apology, comment, or the last-minute appearance of a lurking moral produced in the soothing afterglow of self-righteousness” (Caffarella and Schutzman, 1994, 54).

Summary of Key Learnings

Some general themes inform the way that the Teaching Mind might utilize these concepts:

- Theater, dialogue, and stories may be implemented with varying levels of “interactivity”

- These ways of behaving need not be associated with the idea of performance for an audience; rather, primary importance is self-observation and self-knowledge inspired by observing others
- Sometimes, the “point” of a particular activity or exercise may not be to simply take away metaphoric meaning but rather to decide to what extent the activity might be applied to one’s own future teaching situation.

Conclusions from Literature Review

All of the concepts discussed throughout this chapter refer to processes that support the four aspects of the Teaching Mind that allow it to be as accessible as possible. These processes integrate to form a group learning experience that is *inclusive, communal, expansive, and familiar*. Certainly, more elaborate and specialized processes are potentially applicable to Teaching Mind learning, but our focus on making the Teaching Mind as accessible as possible means that the processes already described here provide a sound starting point for any exploration of what it means to teach.

Figure 4 displays the overview map segment that highlights the areas of literature that inform how processes of teacher education may be applied to exploring the Teaching Mind.

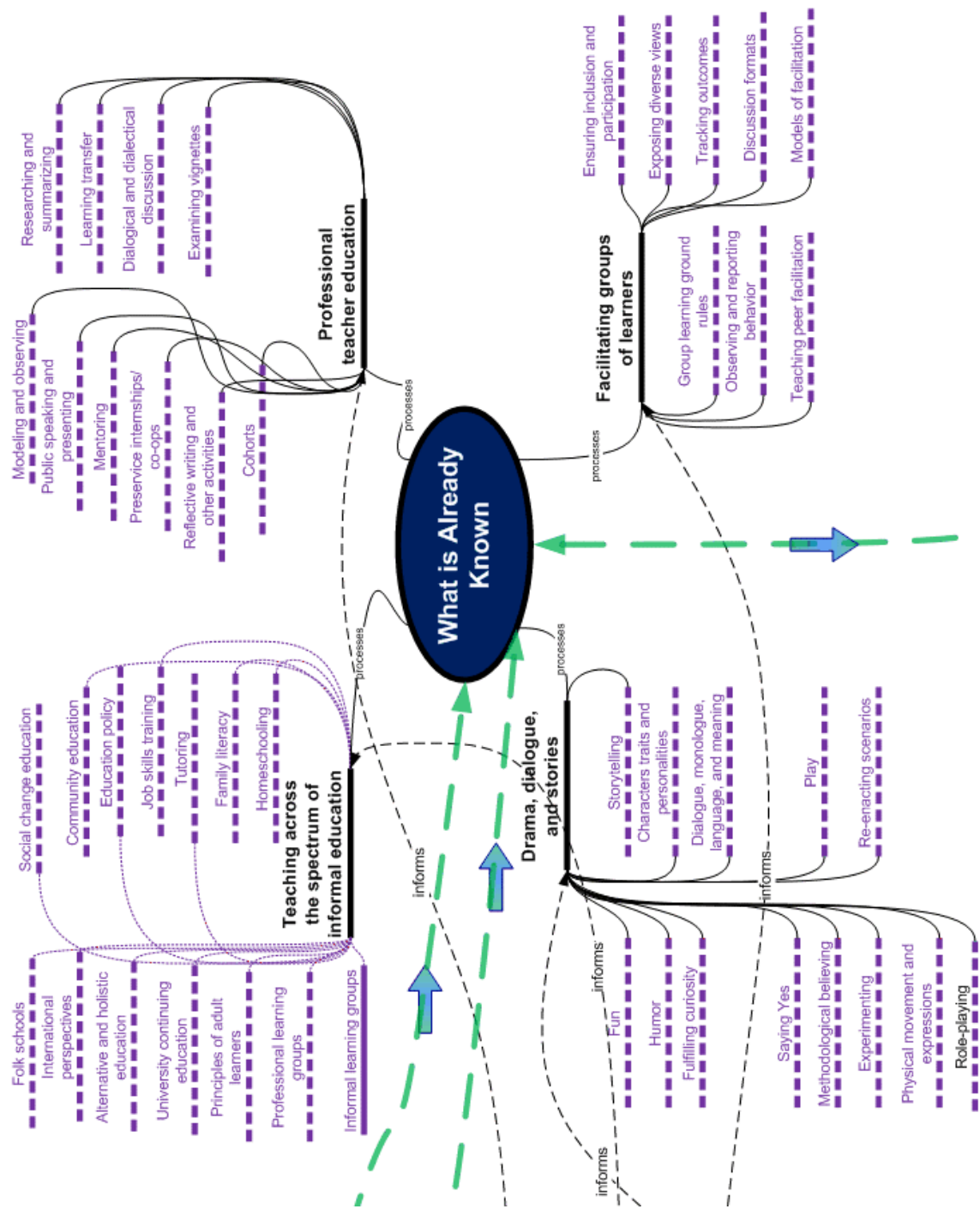


Figure 4: Map Segment Relating to Literature Review of Processes that Inform Teacher Learning and Preparation

Imagining the Past: Part 2

Looking back at the records of 2009, I can tell that education seemed to have been centered around the school as an institution and the teacher-student relationships being played out between individuals within the school setting. Teaching was primarily regarded as a profession, a skilled role in society with well-defined and high-quality, but perhaps not always consistent, parameters and protocols.

I can tell from these articles and records that teaching was often defined at the primary, secondary, and university levels, but somewhat less so at other levels. Clearly, many financial and organizational resources were put forth to improve the opportunities for “teachers to learn” and for “learners to be taught”. Most of the evidence of teacher learning seems to point to university-level programs, where novice teachers were able to follow a thorough process for learning theory and engaging in practice in preparation for formal roles in a school. Even so, I notice that a disproportionate amount of the teacher training seemed to occur at this level, but I am having a difficult time finding consistent, high-quality training at other levels. Younger students did not seem to have much explicit attention to the possibility of teaching, professionals in other fields did not seem to have much opportunity either back then. Ongoing retraining similarly seemed to be most available to existing teachers with respect to their school roles, but such training was minimally available to many others not normally associated with the industry of education.

I wonder what efforts were being made back then to start to include others more directly in the process of learning to teach others? Here in the year 2109, it seems that the role of educating others is mostly considered a basic skill, assumed of everyone, and present in varying degrees all throughout the culture, but I sense that this skill and the appreciation for it was slightly more confined...

CHAPTER 3

A PILOT EXPERIENCE IN TEACHER LEARNING WITH STAFF OF MEMBER CENTERS OF THE TIMOTHY SMITH NETWORK

Introduction

My journey to work with developing support for Lifelong Learners and specifically regarding the Teaching Mind originated with my early days as a student during my own school experience. More recently, though, recent workplace experiences have resulted in a new vision for a lifetime of learning supported by the process of learning what it means to teach. In these experiences, I have been called upon to teach others in various capacities, even in formally-defined roles, and I have served as an instructor, trainer, teacher, tutor, program manager, and facilitator of learning.

Most recently, these experiences have included my work at two Boston-area community-based organizations, United South End Settlements (2003-07) and the Hattie B. Cooper Community Center (2007-present). The work has included teaching classes to students ranging from the age of two to the age of ninety-five (particularly in the areas of technology education, information literacy, workforce development, and adult basic education and literacy). I have had the chance to observe and manage the processes of informal education in these settings, and among the many challenges, I found that my own development as a teacher seemed to be among the greatest. As rewarding as the work in a non-profit human service agency can be, several

themes dominate the experience when it comes to growing as a teacher. First, neither myself nor most colleagues had been formally trained as teachers (i.e., through a university teacher-education program) – our capabilities have come from our varied amounts of experience and have developed more organically. Second, informal education in such settings has often been more difficult to define, as the roles of such work include a multitude of overlapping responsibilities within the officially defined role that extend it far beyond classroom teaching, including the following: developing and promoting classes and workshops; administering grants and progress reporting; performing assessments; addressing equipment problems; interviewing and conversing with patrons; and assisting with whole-agency projects that might not relate directly to education. As I have come to understand from my own observations and from informal discussions with colleagues in similar environments, most forms of “professional development” for staff teachers are nonexistent—it is an area which is simply not funded (or evidently much supported) by parent agencies.

There is boundless creativity expressed by these colleagues through the self-directed, “just-in-time” learning that often occurs as they find ways to remain aware of new teaching methodologies and tools. At the same time, I observe that working in such a way creates a great fragmentation, as priorities about what should be learned next become lost within the complexity of possible options, as individual teachers encounter barriers to taking next steps in their own development (costs, time, access to knowledgeable people and high-quality resources and materials) and simply allow their own professional growth to be put on hold as they address day-to-day tasks. The flexibility of the informal education environment creates an openness to a diversity of needs and unpredictable nature of working with human service needs, and at the

same time, it can make it difficult to create the dedicated space needed to consistently focus on one's own professional growth.

A Network of Informal Education Teachers

Both of my workplace agencies mentioned above are member organizations of the Timothy Smith Network (TSN), a group of non-profit agencies in Boston that typically include some programming that serves clients through technology education and access. The Network itself is a non-profit agency that serves as the liaison between the agencies and the Timothy Smith Fund, a financial account bequeathed to and managed by the City of Boston by local merchant Timothy Smith in the early 1900's with the directive of being used to support residents of what was known then as "Old Roxbury". More recently, the fund is used to support around 30 member organizations through the provision of updated, modern technology equipment at no charge around every four years, in exchange for development of programming, classes, and services that directly engage residents in technology-related education. The organizations offer a wide and diverse array of such programs, serving children, teens, adults, and seniors, and the topics covered range from basic computer skills to digital photo/multimedia/arts creation to financial literacy to supporting ESOL and adult GED programs to job readiness skills.

Recently, I spoke with Susan O'Connor, the director of the Timothy Smith Network, about the issue of ongoing support for staff at the "TS Centers", our familiar name of the specific departments (and physical spaces) within the member organizations that actually implement the technology education programs. Over the course of the discussions, we conceived of the idea of reviving what had once been called "instructor meetings" years ago—face-to-face gatherings of staff across all centers to discuss issues and share resources as a collaborative group. Due to

O'Connor's many increasing responsibilities, she had been unable to attend to the idea in a dedicated way recently, and I viewed this as an opportunity to become more directly involved. In alignment with my current Synthesis work for the Critical and Creative Thinking program, I have committed to helping develop the idea of the instructor meetings and taking the lead on the initiative, with the support of O'Connor as an advisor to the process.

Some core observations and assumptions underscore why I felt that such an initiative would actually be useful and perhaps even highly effective in the support of continued success of the TS Centers. First, because each Center is local to its own small, independent organization, there are very likely many opportunities to transfer knowledge between centers and also likely many cases of duplicated effort as the various centers create and use classroom curriculum, student handouts, exercises, and reference materials. Highly diverse programmatic offerings can be found, but technology education that focuses on more basic skills is quite common through the centers, meaning that there is some commonality between materials and instructor needs.

Second, there currently exists no dedicated, consistent way for instructors to share experiences, tips, concerns, and advice in person. Other meetings do happen that involve TSN agencies but are typically focused on more specific issues. I think of the revived instructor meetings, above all, as a dedicated way to create the space needed for the center staff to interact. It allows us to set aside time, leave our own environments, and focus on sharing and listening with peers, all the while with the potential that new ideas and connections will be discovered. Generally, there is a low number of staff members at each parent organization that are formally connected to its TS Center; in some cases, a TS Center is staffed by a single person, representing the entire "technology education" department and maybe even maintaining concurrent responsibilities elsewhere within the whole organization. One possibility that I see is that such

individuals may often have as much, or more, in common with staff from other TS Centers as they do with colleagues within their own organization as far as day-to-day work tasks.

A third assumption that I make is that through the ongoing instructor meetings, valuable and rewarding collaboration might follow from the relationships and familiarity that start to develop. It is not predictable how this will happen, but at the very least, the interactions between instructors will stimulate the process through which shared experiences emerges out of individual, isolated thought and create new insights for improving our work. My earlier attention to the use of theater, dialogue and stories seems relevant here, as these areas offer some of the kinds of tools for engagement that can turn into shared experiences for the instructors.

Even as current teachers, the instructors who participate in the meetings are indeed developing the Teaching Mind together, since it is another way for them to draw upon the experience of others (“instructors” include those formally in instructor roles and any other staff associated with the TS Center in any way, such as technical administrators, assistants, volunteers, program directors, and others, since they very often have some teaching responsibility). This distinction is consistent with my earlier framing of the idea of the Sieve, where participants in a group learning setting are encouraged to contribute to the common understanding being developed, hear the ideas and messages that are being created, and then make choices about those to be considered next for their own environments. Although I have stated earlier that Lifelong Learners exploring the Teaching Mind need not know exactly how and when they will use new insights gained from the group learning interactions, I suspect that this still applies to the TS center instructors even though they appear to have well-established forums for teaching. It seems possible that elements of what has been heard in the meetings will influence them in unintended ways.

Reviving the Instructor Dialogues

Initial ideas for the project involved a few potential areas of current work of the Timothy Smith Network. These areas related to the increase in participation of member organizations in continued development of class assessments, planning and holding one-time community/family learning events, and integrating various curriculum and materials into existing programs that had been given to the agencies as charitable donations from outside institutions. My preliminary ideas about how I could participate included my role in the following: organizing logistics of monthly instructor meetings and publicizing them by inviting TS center instructors; facilitating the meetings and ensuring that key learnings and requests were recorded; and following up after meetings by communicating with participants and developing an agenda/outline for future meetings.

This project informs my understanding of developing the Teaching Mind in a group setting in a number of ways. Although many of the potential participants in the meetings are not quite “novice” teachers, the range of teaching experience is very wide. Certainly some of the participants hold a formal workplace role that explicitly requires them to teach classes or workshops within their organization, but some participants might also be site coordinators who have teaching responsibilities. In any case, it might be true that a fundamental purpose of a TS Center is to create opportunity for learning, and TS Center instructors are the human resources that connect the broader community to it. Through the process of organizing the instructor meetings (complementing my experiences with the CCT Network and Toastmasters), I expect to take particular notice of the practical matter of building interest in learning together and continually seeking to help shape the meetings to make them as worthwhile as possible for the participants. Also, I expect to work directly with the facilitation of the meetings and consider

ways to stimulate peer facilitation among those attending (since I myself am one of the TS Center instructors and hope to be able to participate as a learner, rather than simply helping to facilitate on behalf of the learning of others).

I anticipate some issues will emerge as challenges to monitor and address in the building of ongoing participation in the meetings. First, because all previous Timothy Smith Network-wide activities have been chiefly initiated and managed by Susan O'Connor, TS Center instructors might continue to look first to her for answers, direct participation, and guidance in the meetings. While O'Connor ultimately has expressed that she would prefer that I establish myself as the conduit for these, we both acknowledge that in the first few months, she will likely receive inquiries and requests and may need to directly offer answers or clarifications about the meetings. Ironically, this has a potential of creating unexpected work for her at the beginning, but hopefully this will be corrected quickly as the communication between all of us becomes more systematic.

Another issue is that the choice of a single face-to-face meeting each month certainly limits the participation of TS Center instructors, whose diverse schedules inevitably create participation conflicts. It has been decided so far that upcoming meetings will take place during the lunch hours and rotate between various TS Center locations. This was established in order to attempt to be inclusive of instructors in youth-oriented centers, since they are generally occupied starting with the early afternoon due to after-school workshops and programs. Also, the lunchtime meeting suggests an element of social interaction around sharing of food, which might serve as a key part of the relationship-building discussion between participants. Because all of the TS Centers have a natural connection to technology education, technology equipment in the centers is often more modern than that in the rest of the parent agency, meaning that high-quality

resources are available to instructors. It therefore seems highly appropriate to develop an online support system for instructor sharing. Through the use of online collaboration tools, such as those utilizing wikis, blogs, and social networking, among others, I expect that the development of the instructor meetings implies the concurrent development of a complementary online system, where these meetings work together within the “whole” of the TS Center collaborative community.

One other issue to be addressed is the way that I, as the one introducing this initiative, will manage the work involved and be conscious of how I take responsibility in a realistic way. The capacity of my own participation is that of a “self-indentured” volunteer, meaning that I have made a commitment to take on a certain level of involvement amidst my own other life responsibilities, so it is necessary to remain cognizant of how I continue to engage myself in the process. If asked to work with instructors at individual TS centers or provide assistance in some way outside of the meetings themselves, to what extent am I prepared to do this (anticipating that those who are actually present at the instructor meetings will likely be asked to help with follow-up tasks that evolve from the discussions)? As I am listening to feedback about the meetings that include incompatible requests or suggestions, what prerogative do I have to personally take action to address the implicit requirements of each? Although I am a peer of other participating TS center instructors, how can I also take a leadership role in steering the nature of the instructor meetings toward the highest-priority items as determined by the Timothy Smith Network board of directors?

Finally, the question needs to be asked about how much the instructors actually *want* to share with each other. An implicit theme throughout this entire Synthesis is that sharing resources, ideas, and materials is automatically and obviously beneficial to all, desirable, and

positive. It might easily be assumed that instructors working within human service agencies, as part of the non-profit industry, and as part of informal education, can be taken for granted as ultimately generous, self-sacrificing, and altruistic workers. It is not difficult to believe that we clearly have more to gain than to lose through collaboration and resource-sharing of the kind that might be developed through the instructor meetings. Possibly, it might be the case instead that some rivalry exists between different organizations, who must compete with respect to two distinct “customers”: getting participation from clients (who are those individuals actually served through the organization’s programs) and getting funding from donors (who are private and institutional sources that issue grants to organizations with the understanding that the monies will be used to fund programs that reflect the donors’ values). Commonly in non-profit reporting, yearly increases of both types of customers are expected and scrutinized during audits and other review procedures.

It is conceivable that sharing (to some extent) is not always in the best interest of instructors, since the ability to create uniquely high-quality services may represent the difference between another year’s funding or losing the program altogether. Within my framework of learning the Teaching Mind, I recognize the need that “intellectual property” should be respected, and yet I remain optimistic that sharing through meetings can strengthen the work and individual growth of all participating instructors. Indeed, I suspect that this kind of collaboration might even prove to be essential as small organizations must cope with increasing challenges of remaining vital in their communities.

Starting with the planning of the first meeting, my reflections on progress are included in Appendix A. I include periodic updates of the status of instructor meetings, my own observations and interpretations of the process of engaging instructors, personal concerns and perceived obstacles, and areas where further exploration and experimentation are needed.

Imagining the Past: Part 3

Looking back at 2009, I notice that there were some differences in the ways that communities of teachers were organized. Relationships seemed to be oriented with respect to the schools, grade levels, and subject areas (which, by the way, seem to have been much more standardized than they have come to be in 2109). In other words, the relationships seemed to be highly prevalent “within” the teacher communities but much less active “between” different communities – between different schools, between different geographic areas, and between different types of professions. This certainly started to change, but it seems that people back then just did not have the same opportunities or ambitions to reach across these divisional boundaries and associate with others that were not teachers with similar level of formality and general level of participation in education.

In our time now, I can tell that there is a much more fluid relationship between those who education “for a living”, and those who perform other roles. In fact, I might even say that people more commonly now take active responsibility for teaching somehow, and yet most of these are not professional teachers but instead engaged in a sort of mutual sharing of knowledge that celebrates the more fundamental parts of what it means to teach. I can even take this further and mention that even the role of a “teacher” and “learner” are rarely used today, since the words have less distinct meaning today than they did back then – someone engaged in one of those is generally assumed to be engaged in the other, as they are inseparable. The issue of teacher “capability” is less recognized, since there are many kinds of standards – professional teachers have their own, but all others have them as well, reflecting particular nature of their lives.

CHAPTER 4

CONSIDERATIONS AND PRINCIPLES FOR A LIFELONG LEARNER FORUM

Introduction

The previous chapter describes a number of observations and considerations of some kinds of practical matters that might surface when it comes to working with Lifelong Learners to develop the Teaching Mind along with others. Motivation, willingness to share, sustainability, and resources are among many factors driving the long-term success of a Teaching Mind Exploration Group. At several points earlier, I alluded to the difficulty of using the most appropriate terms for the ideas presented across the broad concept of lifelong learning, as it relates to learning, teaching, education, and collaboration. Through this process, I have now developed an instinctive apprehension to continuing to use such terms casually. In some ways, I have even been mapping these concepts to the established field of work that is generally called “education”, and I now suspect that this has been done as a convenience of communicating to them, although ultimately it may provide a challenge to communicating my true meaning. Education, along with Biology, Economics, Music, and any other recognized field of study, is categorical identification that serves to create fragmentation between ideas (Isaacs, 53; Senge, 492). This fragmentation is a tool of human culture used to scaffold learning and human development, often in the interest of finding a “career path” and developing one’s identity and

associations with others within the same field, along with obviously labeling knowledge to create the language needed to discuss it.

My own perspective is that although this fragmentation might be intimately related to the human need for interpersonal connection, it may also have been structured with respect to the particular nature of the economic life that we maintain in U.S. culture. In other words, the particular way that the fragmentation (of these fields) has occurred is an artifact of culture, rather than a natural framework for living. At present, my only conclusion from this interpretation is that people have the potential to develop their identities independent of this structure; that is, that they can develop, learn, and grow in ways that reflect numerous points among the wide spectrum of all human life:

“Learning” is not at all the gaining of new knowledge within a specific area of interest, but rather the personal growth that happens from recognizing how relationships between disparate ideas have the potential for allowing the process of “understanding” to proceed.

Of course, I do not expect such an abstract view to overtake the “reality” of functional modern society or supersede the role of epistemological study. At the same time, the above statements propel me to regard the idea of learning the Teaching Mind as one that spans all areas of study. The knowledge about how to do this properly is not “owned” by the sanctioned scholars of “education”, “adult education”, “informal education”, “lifelong learning”, or any other term that can be used to identify a commonly-accepted field. Actually, this knowledge is actually widely distributed across countless areas of study, people, and cultures. The proper way to address the “Teaching Mind” is owned locally, within the groups of people that are engaged to explore it, and then ultimately in the individual mind of the person choosing to understand it.

Indeed, now I may have created a contradiction as I state that the exploration of the Teaching Mind is highly localized and yet claim to offer a model for group interactions that lead

toward it. Actually, from this point I now focus on what is really *one possible starting point* to group learning about the Teaching Mind among Lifelong Learners. My intention is that this chapter presents a framework of the *core principles* by which we can address the Teaching Mind in our own future work. I intentionally present this framework as a “living document” that can be revitalized as this work is continued beyond the context of this paper. Core principles are those that hold true in any new initiative developed with respect to the Teaching Mind, and yet they are held loosely enough that they can be modified as we reflect on such initiatives. The core principles include the standards by which we hold ourselves accountable and those that we endeavor to convey to others as we learn together. Specifically, the principles address the particular issue of what it means for people to join together for the particular purpose of gaining understanding of the Teaching Mind through face-to-face interactions. This understanding might happen as a consequence of the immediate activities in which people are engaged during a particular session, or it might happen as a consequence of long-term relationships that are formed as people engage together over several sessions (or even years).

Foundation of Core Principles

Previously, I defined what I called my “Thinker’s Pledge of Contradictions” (Szteiter, 2007). These items were first offered in the context of “critical thinking”, but I now project them into this discussion, as they relate to the Teaching Mind:

- I will be a Teaching Mind scientist by making the world my teaching laboratory, AND I will also be a Teaching Mind artist by developing my own aesthetic style about the nature of teaching and how to communicate it to others

- I will attend to my own teaching and trust my own style, AND I will also encourage others to find their own styles of teaching
- I will always ask the question, “What should my next question be?”
- I will not be fooled to believe that I will *achieve* the Teaching Mind, AND yet I will still continue to seek the Teaching Mind
- I will honor all that I have learned, AND I will also embrace perspectives that have never been offered to me
- I will take ownership of my own Teaching Mind, AND I will also share my ideas with others
- I will allow my mind to guide my teaching, AND I will allow all of my bodily senses to experience my teaching
- I will have confidence in my point of view, AND I will also notice the relative nature of my thinking about teaching
- I will develop, build upon, and revise this list constantly.

These contradictions serve to remind us that aphorisms and rules that are stated about the Teaching Mind might be revised, challenged, questioned, abbreviated, or modified at any time. The wholeness of the Teaching Mind is not understood, by definition, and so surprises or incongruities that seem to occur in our pursuit can actually be accepted as benevolent interjections that help to guide us away from a rigid area of belief about teaching.

The following sections formally begin the self-defined “living document” as stated earlier and enumerate the specific core principles that will be withheld as the fountainhead of future personal involvement in group work related to the Teaching Mind. Admittedly, these principles suggest an ideal, but they are maintained with the optimistic view that although

attending to all of them completely may be improbable in every situation as stated, they are nonetheless possible and perhaps at least serve toward our inspiration to continue to look for agreement with others in finding ways to work together. They are described generally here, and in various future settings of groups of learners developing the Teaching Mind, some of these principles may be explicitly stated in the form of ground rules to direct attention to their importance. In fact, each principle has two applications related to the “recursive” nature of the group learning: 1) the principle’s influence on the way that Lifelong Learners engage with each other when actually learning the Teaching Mind in group interactions and 2) the principle’s use and applicability when Lifelong Learners take new understanding of the Teaching Mind and use it in their own individual settings and environments. As stated previously, during the group interactions, Lifelong Learners are actually directly engaging in the behavior that will help them to understand the Teaching Mind, and at the same time they are modeling this behavior for themselves as a way of engaging others to understand other areas of knowledge. For each principle discussed below, it is both *implicit* in the interactions among the Lifelong Learners in each other’s presence as they develop the Teaching Mind and *explicit* as a concrete topic that might actually be directly discussed by Lifelong Learners and enlightens us about how to actually facilitate the use of the concept in future teaching situations.

Declaration of Core Principles

1. Use Concepts of Critical and Creative Thinking to Support Learning

Previously, I wrote, “Critical thinking is really about what we are *not* thinking right now...” (Szteiter, 2007), meaning that we must maintain awareness of our own thinking to understand that important, salient, and relevant ideas constantly hover just outside of our current

thinking. We hold the current thinking in working memory in order to attend to it, but we are simultaneously preparing our mind to make a transition to updated thinking about ideas that are not quite in view yet. Attention to critical and creative thinking includes awareness of own thinking and the will to adjust it when necessary as a means to finding new insight from existing ideas. Along with the kinds of definitions of critical and creative thinking attributed to Brookfield and others in previous chapters, the general idea of critical and creative thinking itself needs to be used in learning the Teaching Mind. Part of the Teaching Mind learning process might be to continually redefine what critical and creative thinking means and ask if participants in Teaching Mind Learning Groups are honoring that meaning in their own interactions. Other elements of this principle include the use of inquiry to explore situations and uncover origins of existing knowledge, exposing assumptions and testing them through direct observation, questioning of others, respecting the concurrent presence of conflicting ideas, and reflection of alternative interpretations. Within this principle, uncertainty is viewed as a positive force as it motivates lifelong learners to see beyond stagnant conclusions to the new realities that will eventually come into being. Metacognition, in the form of conscious awareness of one's own thinking and use of memories, learning aptitudes, and thinking dispositions, is also a key factor of this principle, not only as a tool of learning but also as a direct topic of discussion among lifelong learners, where various components may be presented to others in the group as areas for further understanding.

2. Maintain the Ethics of Individual Behavior and Participation

A Teaching Mind Exploration Group also might establish certain ethics for working together, including social behaviors for interacting and agreement about how to be responsible

citizens within a community of learners. These ethics focus on the balancing of various issues. The first is that participation is voluntary rather than enforced, while opportunity for participation is created as much as possible. Another is that participation of an individual is motivated by the desire for personal and social change rather than the desire for more advanced employment, financial gain, or credential. An ethic that is critically important is that Lifelong Learners view themselves as active creators of the educational process through their development of the Teaching Mind, rather than passive observers who learn simply as a result of a “system” created by others. This implies that another point of balance is that Lifelong Learners share with each other as they feel able in their direct interactions, and also they seek to share their own personal areas of expertise with others outside of the Teaching Mind Exploration Group.

Another ethic is that the group focuses on the general principles of the Teaching Mind when possible, while leaving room for individuals to move from the general to the specific when framing new understanding for their own settings. Yet another is the idea that all Lifelong Learners have value to bring to the group and must be allowed to use personal experiences as the starting point for their own participation, while also allowing them to serve as listeners to others who are revealing their own personal experiences.

3. Strive for Inclusion and Diversity

Lifelong Learners engaged together might naturally remain aware of the participation of all individuals that are present during a particular learning experience. Taking this further, striving for inclusion means to not only invite participation from each but also to be flexible enough to allow for various types of participation, which may include behaviors such as

speaking or listening within the whole group, facilitating small group interactions, or taking roles during the gathering that assist with activities. Inclusion also works on a more universal level, where it means seeking involvement of the learning community from those individuals who may appear to stand outside of the normal role of “teaching”. Because the pursuit of the Teaching Mind is available to all people, inclusion means that, between the face-to-face learning sessions, participants are to be sought from a range of people, where a wide representation can be found with respect to age, areas of subject expertise, prior teaching involvement and experience, intentions for using the Teaching Mind, and experience levels at engaging in group learning.

These factors, along with others such as belief systems, world views, cultural backgrounds, and other personal memories and experiences, comprise a type of social “hidden diversity” that has the potential to enrich the outcomes of the interactions for the Lifelong Learners. Such elements of diversity might be addressed directly also as a topic related to the Teaching Mind and group work, in addition to those types that are viewed as more traditionally noted , such as age, gender, ethnicity, race, language, sexual orientation, physical ability, economic status, and religious identification. Learning within group settings involves recognizing that tension exists between exposing elements of diversity among participants and respecting individual privacy. Attention to diversity will hopefully supply a way to highlight diverse views as components of new creative output rather than sources of conflict. At the same time, the process of revealing the diverse views may also stimulate how the participants find commonalities between them, in even the most basic ways.

4. Support Humanistic Values

It seems clear that a group of Lifelong Learners engaged together would make efforts to promote and model humanistic values when working together in the context of the Teaching Mind, as this behavior both directly impacts how they interact as well as how they formulate the messages and attitudes that they will project onto their future “students”. Such values might include respect, dignity, empathy, kindness, trust, and tolerance. While not intending to belabor an obvious point that this principle needs to be maintained, I include this item as a reminder that the meaning of many, or perhaps all, of these words might be understood inconsistently among Lifelong Learners. Therefore, these areas are possibilities for direct discussion and exploration in addition to simply being individual behaviors that are used when exploring the Teaching Mind.

5. Follow Best Practices of Group Interaction

Along with those principles that more generally set the tone of group interactions of Lifelong Learners, this principle addresses a more tangible system of working within the group from an individual perspective. By using the ideas of the Sieve and the Gallery as I have already discussed, individuals in a Teaching Mind Exploration Group have a way to encounter and internalize new ideas and insights presented in the group learning in a way that promotes respect among the participants without needing to explicitly affirm or deny what others are saying. The Sieve refers to the way that a person gains access to multiple new ideas within group learning but may not be able to “accept” each one as presented immediately but instead might choose some to acknowledge and some to disregard, at least temporarily. From those acknowledged, they might also then be believed or deemed important to any degree, including not at all. The

imagery of The Sieve purposely invokes the idea that permission is granted to an individual to concentrate on only a small number of ideas that are put forth. All such ideas are automatically held on display in the public space of the Gallery.

Another part of this principle is the need to strive to define and follow other “best practices” while looking to re-define them as needed. These practices might refer to how responsibility is distributed in group learning, how to respond to certain kinds of situations of conflict or confusion, and how to develop standards for communication among learners. The existence of this core principle is not a suggestion about which best practices are to be used in a Teaching Mind Exploration Group; rather, it is a reminder to have and evaluate them continuously.

6. Maintain the Safe Environment

The idea of the safe environment is one which seems to be globally recognized as a clear need of the group learning experience (Cranton, 4; Senge, 357; Blatner, 28; Rohd, xxvi; Melber, 36; Pollack, 4). Most often, the use of the term “safe” alludes to the emotional comfort that accompanies a setting where learners will not be ridiculed, judged, or labeled in a negative way, either as a result of the expression of personal viewpoints or some biographical quality about the individual. That most critical question of *what* this means and *how* to do it seems to be mostly left unexplained by many of these authors as the proverbial “exercise to be left to the reader”. For example, in Rosemary S. Caffarella’s Planning Programs for Adult Learners, a thorough and extensive guide at around 400 pages that includes explanations of adult learning principles, worksheets for logistical organization, and many other informative aids to successful learning program planning. Only superficial attention seems to be given to the specific notion of

the safe environment, mentioning the need to be sensitive to cultural differences between participants and conscientious of the space being used (Caffarella, 1994).

Does this suggest that the “safe environment” is not so much part of the planning process but instead is really the responsibility of the facilitator during the learning interaction? Does this simply need to be defined with respect to each specific case of learning, such that no a priori suggestions are possible? Is the safe environment something that comes to be organically, only through time as the learners participate with each other, or does it need to be established and defined from the first moment the interactions take place, through the ground rules or other formal communication? Are we talking about the issue of *trust* between participants, or a *promise* of confidentiality, or a *freedom* from threatening forces or criticism, or a *guarantee* of no negative consequences from taking risks? Are these definitions based on some absolute notion or do we need to strive to respond dynamically from individual feedback that indicates a lack of safety for that one person? Does “safety” mean that one should not be made to feel discomfort in any form, that awkward moments are avoided, or that expression should be withheld if it is perceived as disturbing in any way?

Pollack attempts to suggest some concrete responses to these questions, mentioning that “[i]f people are in an uncomfortable environment...they are less likely to relax and follow the agenda you’ve designed”. Further, the “ideal setting...is a quiet, private, and comfortable space where people can sit in a horseshoe shape—not around a table—and have some room to move around” (53). Factors that prevent the ideal setting include being too cold, hot, noisy, dirty, or with limited space or constant possibility that interruptions will occur. Still, this kind of description of the safe environment still begs the question, since any well-framed description

will challenge learners in any situation to have to decide, “Is this environment ‘safe’ for me, now, given the current circumstances, my emotional state, and the relationships here?”

At the risk of appearing to avoid giving concrete meaning to this concept myself, my frameworks so far are consistent with the notion of defining the safe environment as a process, rather than a condition, to be addressed. In the course of exploring the Teaching Mind, “establishing the safe environment” *is itself* the very *process* to be addressed by a group of Lifelong Learners. In other words, Lifelong Learners engaged together toward the Teaching Mind must recursively address this very question in the course of understanding how to establish the safe environment for their own teaching situations, and by doing so, they find themselves actually establishing and re-establishing it for themselves within their group interactions, over and over again. Much like the Teaching Mind itself, such a concept must be continually sought by Lifelong Learners, without the expectation that it will necessarily be found in final form.

7. Reflect Upon Applications of Learning

Another core principle of the Teaching Mind Exploration Group is the idea that individual Lifelong Learners are allowed to make final judgments about how the insights that they have gained will be applied to their own situations. This flexibility might even mean that as a result of a given exercise or discussion, a Lifelong Learner may leave the group learning experience with the conclusion that what was decided, expressed, or claimed has no bearing upon their own potential teaching situation, and that it will not be used in those situations. This realization may even be revealed to the others in the group, where it should be honored by others, not as an assumption of failing to benefit the given Lifelong Learner but as helping that person to clarify why the particular subject matter of the learning session was not useful (the

inverse of the common meaning of “failure” in learning; to know that something does not work or is not effective is a special and valuable type of knowledge). Only the Lifelong Learners themselves understand their own contexts, and therefore such a conclusion might still be regarded as successful participation of that individual, since there may have been some understanding gained about what general kinds of ideas may not be relevant to a particular kind of potential teaching situation. At the same time, it is not necessarily the case that the idea or claim being presented can *never* apply to the individual’s situation, but that a connection has not been made *at this time* and therefore will not be considered.

Another implication of this principle is that individual Lifelong Learners engaged in exploring the Teaching Mind reserve the right to learn about themselves, even in ways that appear to have nothing to do with their preparation to actually participate in teaching. This kind of self-learning may be of the most personal kind and might not be revealed to others in the group. Still, it may touch upon issues such as the Lifelong Learner’s hopes for life, approach to managing relationships, or ways of communicating with others. With all of the attention given to the idea of potential teaching, the point of this whole process remains individual involvement with lifelong learning as a broader motivation.

8. Encourage Humor, Fun, and Play

This principle of the Lifelong Learner group maintains that enjoyment of the experience of pursuing the Teaching Mind is permitted, and therefore these concepts of humor, fun, and play might be encouraged. Perhaps it goes without saying that they should be implemented in a style that emphasizes positive use, based on ideas or conditions, rather than based on individuals, which might be understood with negative, mocking, or critical undertones. The entire Teaching

Mind learning session is itself a space for play, where there exists an understanding that the decided agenda might be interrupted in light of spontaneous experimentation that is suggested by an individual participant. Use of the theater, dialogue, and stories detailed contributes to the space for play, since related activities cannot always be bound easily by time or meeting format. The allowance for play and humor also suggest that the idea of “goals” might be extremely flexible, where the participants in the Teaching Mind learning experience are challenged to “discover what they have learned” during the session rather than “discover the reality of some external, imposed idea or concept”.

In the same way that the idea of the “safe environment” is described above, the idea of humor, fun, and play are perhaps achieved not through creating a rigid structure in which to allow them, but instead by occasionally making them a topic of discussion meant to help Lifelong Learners figure out how to use them in their own future teaching situations. By actively seeking how to use these activities with their own future students or learners, it seems that Lifelong Learners might find ways to use them for themselves in their own interactions that take place during Teaching Mind learning.

9. Take a Multi-role Perspective

Although a perceived main focus of participation in the Teaching Mind Exploration Group may be to come to understand how to teach others, it can also be stated that participation may lead to understanding about other “roles” that tend to surround the entire process of education. During a given specific learning session, a Lifelong Learner may actually take on the role of a teacher and/or facilitator (guiding others in the group in some exercise, activity, or discussion), learner (observing and participation in activities led by others), administrator

(handling logistical needs of the learning session or assisting with the internal operation of the session, such as taking notes or monitoring timing of activities), or observer (noticing the nature and details about a particular activity without participating directly), among other forms, such as the “spectator” defined by Boal (173) or even character roles defined by a drama-based activity.

By having an open-minded perspective about taking on these roles, group participants get to experience several types of activities that ultimately may all be required at various times for those who teach in some form in informal settings which may be community-based, small in size, or without well-defined structure or ample human resources to delegate specific functions to different individuals.

10. Keep Learning Free

In the field of software development, there is a movement that refers to “free software”, which essentially states that software and computer code should be able to be viewed, modified, examined, discussed, changed, and improved without restrictions. According to the Free Software Foundation:

To use free software is to make a political and ethical choice asserting the right to learn, and share what we learn with others. Free software has become the foundation of a learning society where we share our knowledge in a way that others can build upon and enjoy. (<http://www.fsf.org/>, viewed on 4 February 2009)

This is not a financial ideology; it does not mean that practitioners are not allowed to charge a fee for their creative products. It *does* mean that the content of these products cannot be proprietary – that the ideas, algorithms, and information within them can be reused by others and should be exposed as much as possible; they cannot be restricted in the name of creator rights.

With respect to the Teaching Mind as a factor in lifelong learning, a similar idea holds true. Knowledge about teaching is not “owned” by one Lifelong Learner or another. Instead, it

is available for public use, and this knowledge itself cannot be subject to commissions, royalties, or restrictions about who may have it. As a purely legal matter, more exploration might be required concerning the literal interpretations of knowledge and rights, but for the purpose of the Teaching Mind, such knowledge cannot be abducted by a limited number of parties or persons and then be withheld from others until payment is made. Lifelong Learners challenge any efforts to contradict this idea. A growing effort supported by organizations such as the Open Courseware Consortium (www.ocwconsortium.org) and K12 Open Ed (www.k12opened.com) is helping to define and frame the possibilities and implications of free learning, at least with respect to teaching materials.

Using the Principles

The principles above describe a starting point for guiding the understanding of how Lifelong Learners conduct themselves when pursuing the Teaching Mind in their face-to-face, interactive group learning sessions. These principles may themselves serve as the actual topics of discussion and focus during these sessions, since the way to achieve them may not actually be truly understood ahead of time so that they can be assigned meaning directly; rather, the process of how to achieve them may need to be actually addressed in a given group over a period of time, where the group is asking frequently, “have we achieved this particular principle?” Further, the principles may be explored in the context of how the Lifelong Learners will utilize them in their own potential future teaching endeavors, and in doing so, new insights may be found in how to utilize them within the Teaching Mind Exploration Group sessions themselves.

Figure 5 presents the segment of the overview map that presents the core principles.

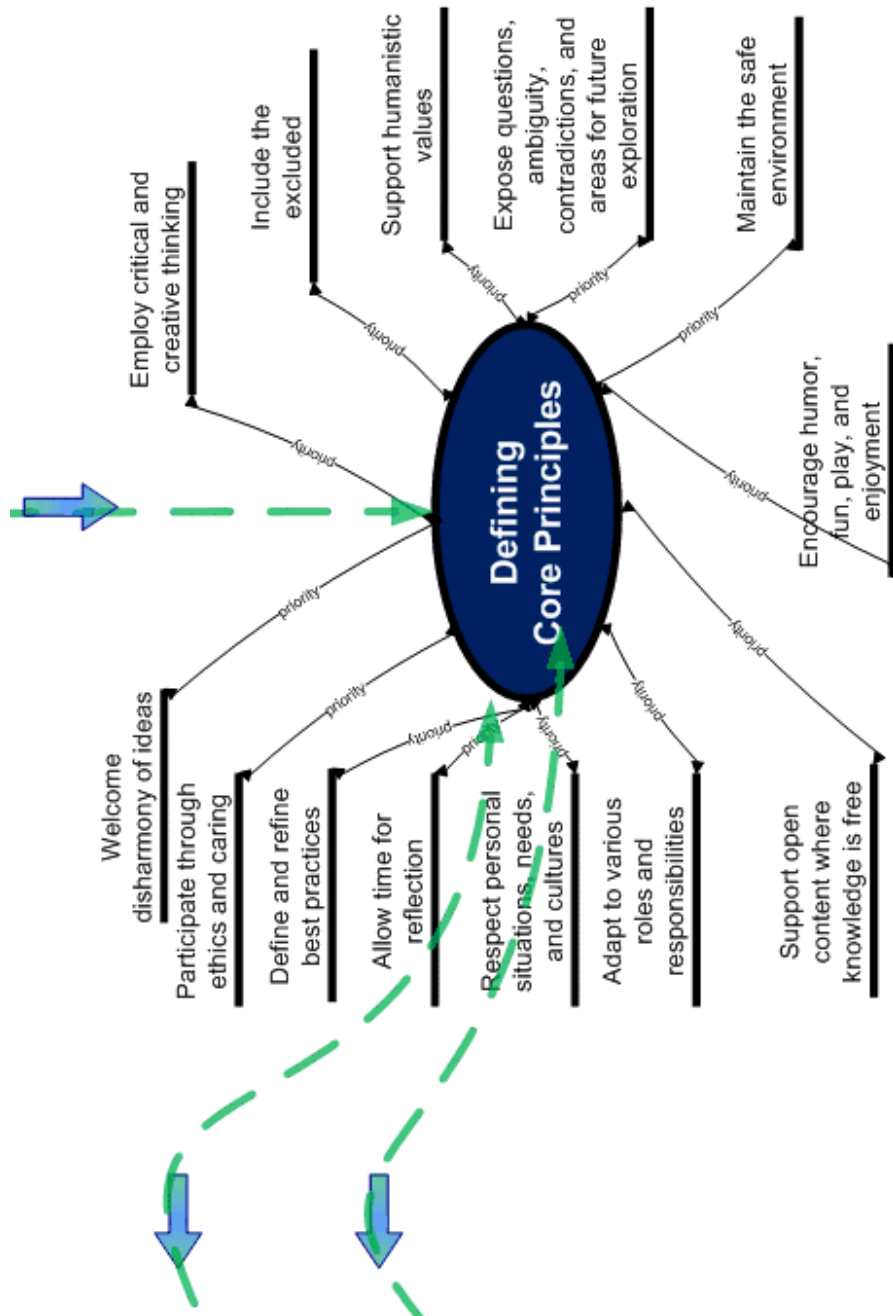


Figure 5: Map Segment Relating to Core Principles of Teaching Mind Exploration

Imagining the Past: Part 4

I must admit – I've always been a fan of the classic films and literature of the turn of the twenty-first century. It's fascinating how the stories of that particular time in history are not just recounts of the period but seem to encapsulate all of the symbolic meaning of the mood, attitudes, fears, and wishes of a culture. Now, I've seen a lot of the research on how schools and teaching were organized, and some of the ways in which people learned through life. In addition to the more literal records of the year 2009, I have also found that examples of film and stories of that era reflect the fantasy of how people view education. We have our own arts forms here in 2109 of course, but there is an incredible and vast pool of samples that I might examine from that early period. Actually, I can see that a number of common themes seem to be emerging as I recall some of these recorded stories.

Certainly, some of these themes create an exaggerated and distorted reflection of reality, while they still make bold statements that attempt to encapsulate the tragedy or comedy of educational life back then.. Among these themes are the following: heroic teachers in the schools who work against the odds and guide the most troubled youth into a life of learning, the renegade teachers who break through the monotonous and oppressive nature of the school administrative system and create an often-criticized but later praised way of engaging the young students; the idea of school as a place of vicious politics related to student relationships, power, adolescent struggle, even violence; the view that some teachers are ineffective at best and are completely oblivious to the real value of learning and who the students really are as human beings; the students who relate to each other deeply and find a level of true learning that transcends the surface-level learning experience; the school environment that seeks to break down the natural joyful spirit of the students, which may be perceived as dangerous; and the truly inspired learning that happens when people connect with each other in the most unexpected ways, within or without the institution of school.

As a predominant form of art of the early twentieth century, the fictional films, books, and other works that supply these stories and themes have a way of providing a commentary on the nature of the times. More than just entertainment or simple pastimes, they footnote the culture in which they are created. If we can just manage to get past the exaggeration, the satire, the caricatures within these works, can I then find the kernels of truth? – the hints that guide us toward the reality of the inspirations, fears, suspicions, the longings of the people who care about learning?

CHAPTER 5

A MODEL FOR A TEACHING MIND EXPLORATION GROUP AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR BROADER COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Introduction

I arrive at this point in my writing with a new appreciation for the process of thinking through what it means to seek to develop one's Teaching Mind in the company of other Lifelong Learners. From the previous chapters, I now present a more specific idea of how to implement this in a way that can directly involve me and others in ongoing ways. The model and plan for practice that I will present takes shape if viewed within three scopes: the face-to-face learning sessions themselves; the organizations and established channels through which people currently participate in lifelong learning and might be ready to explore the Teaching Mind; and the broader community of support for a culture of lifelong learning through the idea that all people are potential teachers, such that a "teacher" takes many forms beyond traditional definitions.

The model allows space for several kinds of elements, including the following: tangibles (e.g., meeting locations, costs, outreach activities) and intangibles (e.g., the Sieve and Gallery concepts); models (e.g., Bohm's Dialogue Process and Boal's Forum Theater) and individual experiences (e.g., via homeschooling resources, professional learning groups, my own Timothy Smith Network involvement); and resources that support the technical, critical, creative, and reflective (e.g., the range of those that inform about organizing adult learning to using online

resources for promoting community to facilitating interactive role-playing exercises to creating records of assessment of progress).

This model is presented in order to suggest a foundation of how the Teaching Mind might be practically integrated into a wide range of institutional settings including the following and others: workplaces with stable communities focused on a specific fields where the Teaching Mind might be beneficial; community organizations where participants are seeking to learn from and educate each other; schools that might want to introduce the Teaching Mind as a perspective on learning for students; and others. Of course, this model is also designed to work with groups of individuals without existing support systems for mutual learning and peer sharing. Because it supports the four aspects of the Teaching Mind (*inclusive, communal, expansive, and familiar*), it is meant to make the Teaching Mind as accessible as possible to all kinds of people. This might often require a sponsoring organization to initiate the learning group, but it also might be used by private individuals who are able to self-organize as group who meet together specifically to explore the Teaching Mind and for no other reason connecting them to each other.

Favoring Simplicity in Teaching Mind Exploration

By now, I have attended countless workshops, learning sessions, and meeting groups where I have seen many presentations, interactive exercises, “icebreakers”, agendas, whiteboards filled with concepts and diagrams, discussions of and proposals for “participation”—“relationships”—“community”—“collaboration”, and many other related elements that demonstrate where facilitation, teaching and learning, and interactivity meet at a common point. Often inspiring, sometimes educational, occasionally inadequate, these experiences span the spectrum of what has been suggested as the “modern” way of viewing group participation in

learning. In the model that I present, what I further seek takes the spirit of these elements above and yet establishes a forum that is easy to enter, *so* easy that it allows the individual to stop asking the question, “Do I belong here?” The implication is to focus on *simplicity*. When choices need to be made, choose the simple one before the labor-heavy one. When something needs to be defined, take the simple approach rather than the elaborate one. This does not imply a lazy approach to Teaching Mind exploration but instead an approach that allows the group to get started quickly with new ideas, materials, or structures and build upon them easily if they are flawed.

This fundamental idea will provide a scaffold for pursuit of the Teaching Mind, such that elaboration and complexity are introduced into the process only when the participants are ready for it (as defined by the participants themselves). This does not mean that the use of sophisticated knowledge and organizational tools are discouraged but that attention to the Teaching Mind always keeps in clear focus those ideals that are universally accessible and addresses them as simply as possible and inclusively of all participants. The model defines a flexible structure that allows the freedom to use only the highest level of interactivity that is desired by the group. This approach will help to encourage inclusive participation.

A further consequence is that different amounts of “interactivity” are possible within a single group learning session or throughout an ongoing group experience. A “highly interactive” collaborative experience is not necessarily a panacea that is automatically and unconditionally favored, and a straightforward lecture is not automatically condemned as an archaic, boring waste of time. This idea helps to support the *inclusive* aspect of the Teaching Mind; those not experienced in such highly interactive exercises are permitted to be engaged at the levels that keep them involved. In the various workshops to which I refer in the previous paragraph, the

term “interactive” has been used in promotional material and speech as irrefutably positive in an absolute sense (“Highly Interactive!”). Most often, this has meant that the workshop involves a series of activities that involve high levels of dramatic activity, bodily motion, emotional expression, and physical contact with others. A key shift in my perspective of developing the Teaching Mind from these previous scenarios is that “interactive” is a neutral description, that interactivity may be used in varying degrees across a continuum, and that the degree to which it is used is best determined by the participants themselves within a learning group (not automatically by the facilitator) and is adjusted over time and in incremental ways. This experience is “highly interactive” in a very different sense – it is simply very self-conscious about the level of interactivity throughout the process, rather than needing all activity to be at high level of interpersonal connection and behavior.

The model is provided first as a more abstract one and then through a few concrete examples of how it might be applied in practice.

Teaching Mind Learning Sessions

The Core Model: Use of Three Phases of “Bringing to the Surface”

Three phases are used in any group learning session to move one’s current understanding of the Teaching Mind to another in an incremental way. Most importantly, the phases are defined this way to create space needed to give sustained attention to some aspect of the Teaching Mind. Holistically speaking, we are asking, “How do we make clear what we already think we know about teaching and stimulate curiosity about what new insights are possible?” These phases correspond directly to the Interactive Arc described in Chapter Two.

1. reflect upon past experiences and existing understanding of teaching and learning
(looking at what we already know)
2. engage in activities together in order to examine and interpret the reflections more closely and create new insights (exploring meaning, implications, and wishes)
3. imagine how these new insights might influence future teaching opportunities in the context of real-world situations that the learners might encounter relative to their own lives (projecting new insights into future life of self as teacher).

Each stage involves use of the Gallery and the Sieve – the questions, answers, responses, or expressions raised in each of the three stages originate from the individuals and are placed into the Gallery for public recognition, and then each individual uses their Sieve to attend to those ideas that are most salient personally.

Levels of Interaction

The interaction levels help to clarify how each one of the three phases will be carried out. Depending upon the group culture, dynamics, and requirements for the learning that is taking place, activities may be drawn from any level of interaction that is most appropriate. Defining these levels this way creates maximum flexibility in the interactions in order to respect personal styles and readiness in learning the Teaching Mind. Perhaps the ideal situation is that all participants within a Teaching Mind learning session will become comfortable enough to use any level of interaction.

Presuming that this might not be appropriate (especially for a new or inexperienced group), the level of interactivity can be chosen at the will of the participants until greater degrees

of comfort are established. A role-play activity (level 7) can be used to act out an observed or anticipated teaching situation (such as a classroom memory); a presentation by a lifelong learning experienced in some area made to the participants (level 0) can be used to provide direct information about practical teaching life. Appendix B lists further examples of the specific kinds of activities that might be used at each level of interactivity.

Levels of Interactivity in Teaching Mind Group Learning

0. lecture (single presenter with others as listeners, observers,
1. open-ended discussion (gentle facilitation or distributed facilitation, possible spontaneous transitions between ideas within the session topic, complete freedom of level of participation)
2. highly-facilitated discussion (helping to clarify topic and goals, expected participation from all or most)
3. structured discussion/Dialogue Process (well-formed guidelines for how to participate and ground rules involved, including the topic to be discussed and parameters of discussion)
4. multi-modal activity (reading, writing, speaking, where any of the lower level activities may be part of a larger activity)
5. physical activity (bodily movement – getting up, walking, moving around the room)
6. full interactive activity (interpersonal exchanges happen along with physical activity)
7. role-play (personal identification gets redefined in conjunction with any elements of the lower-level activities)

Using the Model

Initially, it is recommended that a single facilitator (individual or team) will have responsibility for implementing the model. Ideally, if a Teaching Mind Exploration Group is organized and persistent over time, the individual participants might take over responsibility of designing the particular activities that are used during the three phases and then serving as the facilitator of each one. The following activities might take place in order to help define the overall structure of a Teaching Mind learning team:

Setting Up a New Teaching Mind Exploration Group

The following list indicates steps to be taken when forming a new Teaching Mind group experience:

1. Understand the group being addressed and identify goals subsequent key topics related to teaching that reflect the goals
2. Identify expectations for how to balance that promote relationship-building and those that promote idea-building
3. Identify logistics (time and place, number of sessions, setting to be used)
4. Establish facilitators for each session (either a single person across the whole experience for a new group, or a schedule of rotating facilitators if the group consists of people who have participated in similar experiences before, such that the participants themselves are comfortable to take this role)
5. Agree upon ground rules that explicitly state expectations for behavior
6. For each session, identify one of the key topics (related back, and establish an activity for each phase, using appropriate interaction levels, that will be applied to the topic.

Two Types of Teaching Mind Group Sessions

Pilot Sessions

Focus on Self-Awareness and Relationship-Building

These sessions involve basic introduction to the idea of the Teaching Mind through high-level descriptions and suggestions. Pilot sessions “set the stage” for the ongoing progress of future sessions, and are used to establish goals and expectations that have to do with the framework of the Teaching Mind as far as new participants might understand it. They provide an opportunity for relationship-forming between participants. Also, they provide an opportunity for participants to engage in activities where they can explore personal areas of knowledge, expertise, or interest that are likely to become focal points of later participation in the Teaching Mind Exploration Group and in their own future teaching experiences. Pilot Sessions, if used at all based on the particular circumstances and available time of the group, may be limited in number and perhaps may only happen once. Typically, Pilot Sessions may need to be fully facilitated experiences but may involve simpler activities. A proposed agenda for a Pilot Session follows.

Pilot Session Basic Agenda

1. Introductions of Participants – this includes a brief “check in” of each participant’s current state of mind
2. Brief Explanation of the Teaching Mind (within the context of the particular group of participants, using the language appropriate for their relationship)
3. Main Activity – this helps the participants to expose areas of personal interest for future teaching, perhaps through discussion, sharing, reflective writing, or reading relevant stories/articles

4. Debriefing - this might consist of a brief group discussion of the Main Activity, in addition to a brief “check out” of each participant’s current state of mind.

Regular Sessions

Focus on Direct Attention to the Teaching Mind

These sessions involve the full experience of exploring the Teaching Mind through organized activities that draw out the current personal understandings of teaching and encourage participants to reflect upon them together, finding insight and relating the insight to future use in teaching. The main facilitator is responsible for helping to provide explanations when needed and move the group along through the meeting, consisting of the following agenda pattern:

Regular Session Basic Agenda

Introduction

1. General announcements and introductions
2. Clarification of the main topic
3. Clarification of roles (depending upon the needs of the group, formal roles might be defined such as a time-keeper or note-taker)

Three Phases

1. Reflecting upon what we already know (about the main topic)
2. Engaging with others to find meaning, implications, new insight
3. Imagining later uses of insights

Debriefing/Conclusions

1. Evaluation Question 1: How well did we, as a Teaching Mind Exploration Group, actually demonstrate the kind of behavior that we would want to see when we

guide the learning of others? Did we model it the way that we would actually use it ourselves? How? If not, what would be changed?

2. Evaluation Question 2: What challenges did we encounter today? (Responses can address a range of issues, from limitations of the room where the session was held to questions about procedural issues and ground rules)

Connections to Existing Communities and Channels of Lifelong Learning

Generally, all ideas presented about the specific Teaching Mind group experiences in the sections above assume that practical matters have already been settled. These matters include the need for physical space for sessions, participants who are willing to join the sessions and possess the motivation and understanding to expect the sessions to be useful, enjoyable, or advantageous, and in some cases the sponsorship of a larger organization, which may have an interest in the particular way that individuals within that organization are participating. These concerns are hardly trivial, since they connect in to the central idea of readiness of a community to develop the Teaching Mind and may require resources of time, money, attention, and support when these resources are already in short supply.

The following sections describe considerations for how to bring the Teaching Mind experience to people and groups in the first place. This might range from collecting together community members with no a priori relationship other than curiosity about teaching to specific groups of people within established organizations who are able to build upon their existing commonalities to explore the Teaching Mind.

The Philosophy of Distributed, Small, and Local

There are three fundamental expectations of the Teaching Mind learning experiences. These expectations link closely and are stated more in terms of the “spirit” of informal education rather than as institutional rules that must be followed. Because the exploration of the Teaching Mind has been defined as a highly-individualistic process within this Synthesis, maintaining the notion of “*distributed, small, and local*” is a key part of the ongoing operation. This refers to the idea that rather than the formation of a large learning group, the Teacher Mind learning sessions can take place in many locations, distributed across geographical areas and many types of environments. This implies that each group is relatively small, perhaps between 15-25 people total, and even fewer if needed. There may be short-term runs of the sessions, or there may be ongoing experiences where a single group meets repeatedly. The idea of “distributed, small, and local” supports the accessibility of the Teaching Mind as it addresses the first aspect of accessibility of the Teaching Mind by including people across geographic areas and various fields of experience, and it requires learning with others who might be part of a local community and therefore share some perspectives of local culture and life.

The actual number of participants in a group might be better defined by the specific culture of the group, but the idea is to maintain a number that is fairly low. This limitation is intended to give the participants sufficient opportunity for interpersonal exchange that allows for developing more personal relationships to some “minimum” level, e.g., such that the participants can address each other by name and so that each has had some personal communication with every other participant within some short period of time.

Because the groups will be *distributed* and *small*, this further allows for *local* culture to be recognized, and it allows local customs to be used to shape the exact nature of the learning

sessions. Within the system of exploring the Teaching Mind, there is no “parent” organization with strong influence; the traditional notion of the organizational hierarchy is “turned on its head”, where decisions of the local group override those of any higher-level organization that might be formed simply to link together the local groups and their resources. Not only will this keep power in the hands of the local group, but also it will allow for and even encourage the flexibility of the local groups to determine for themselves if, and how, to adjust the meeting agenda patterns that I have suggested above in this chapter. For example, if a particular group finds a new way to define the facilitation role of a learning session, then that can be tried freely.

The Model as a Means but Not an End

There are two important implications following the expectations discussed previously. First, the entire model that I have outlined at the beginning of this chapter is intended as a *starting point* for an organized group process of exploring the Teaching Mind. Over time, the particular operation of Teaching Mind learning may evolve based on the needs of the local culture of a particular group or the sponsoring organization. New groups or unfamiliar participants may adhere closely to the model, while long-term, ongoing groups may find new directions toward what possibilities exist when they gather in the interest of the Teaching Mind. Second, the possibility of distributed growth of Teaching Mind groups indicates the need for the development of mentors or advisors. In simplest form, these mentors may be people who have participated in the groups in the past in some capacity and are simply willing to serve as facilitators for new groups, perhaps through the Pilot Sessions and first few Regular Sessions. This idea will be shaped and refined by future participation.

The other elements listed here provide a starting structure for bringing Teaching Mind group exploration to the greater community. Turning the idea of the Teaching Mind into action and involvement with people is inevitably a *process* of social change rather than one of reaching some idealized “state of the world”; the extent of tangible connections made between people through the medium of the Teaching Mind learning session includes attention to some elements that are discussed next.

Direct Community Connections that Support Teaching Mind Initiatives

One course of action that might be utilized to establish the Teaching Mind culture is to work with community organizations in which some attention to the process of teaching might be useful for its members. Recall the examples of kinds of people and groups mentioned in Chapter 1 in which interest in developing as a teacher might be found:

- Those who are subject-matter experts in some area but do not consider themselves to be teachers, although they have found that they greatly enjoy sharing their knowledge with others
- Those who are subject-matter experts who might actually like to try to become teachers in formal education or in informal settings within community education, but who are not actually experienced as teachers and would benefit from practicing
- Those who are novice teachers in community or professional settings and simply want to continue developing their understanding of various aspects of teaching
- Those who are parents and would like to be more involved in the education of their children (either as a complement to formal schooling or as a homeschooler)

- Those who have life experience in some unique way outside of typical academic subject areas and would like to find ways to share that experience with others (such as through developing workshops or talks to be delivered to community groups, businesses, or schools)
- Those who are simply interested in becoming more involved in the educational process and would like a practical and direct way to be part of it
- Those who are looking to organize and lead a peer learning group or a community club whose purpose is to provide a place and time for discussion and practice of some skill or idea (even if the organizers do not consider themselves to be “experts” and simply are seeking mutual support).

Where are such individuals found? At the level of business organizations, areas of need might be found within government, business organizations, community-based non-profit organizations, and others. The need for the Teacher Mind here might appear in the way that these organizations are looking to support a culture of more habitual teaching, particularly in situations where informal responsibilities include transferring knowledge and experience to others. Especially in the cases where formal training is not very well-developed, short-term Teaching Mind Exploration Groups or even occasional or one-time experiences might stimulate the potential of staff to think of themselves as having influence upon the learning process. Challenges might include helping the organization to understand how the development of the Teaching Mind with such flexible possibilities actually contributes to the “bottom line” of the quality of the organization’s products and services.

At the level of formal education institutions, such as secondary schools, trade schools, and universities, the presence of a Teaching Mind Exploration Group might be used by the students themselves, if not the faculty or administration. A student involved in a field of study outside of Education may not have a dedicated opportunity to actually reflect upon what it means to actually teach in that field in addition to actually practicing in the field. A Teaching Mind Exploration Group among students might then provide this space and help them to consider current topics of their learning in terms of how they might later teach them to others, rather than just as practitioners in a field. This serves the purpose of enculturating the Teaching Mind with the students as well as providing them a new mode of thinking about the subject matter that they are trying to master for their studies. In this case, the students within a single group would be considering the same subject matter as future potential teachers, so this built-in point of commonality would exist upon which to build understanding of teaching. Challenges in this area might include gaining support for a Teaching Mind exploration forum as an endeavor that requires resources and time in a field with an already-full curriculum.

Figure 6 presents the segment of the overview map relating to the Teaching Mind Exploration Group.

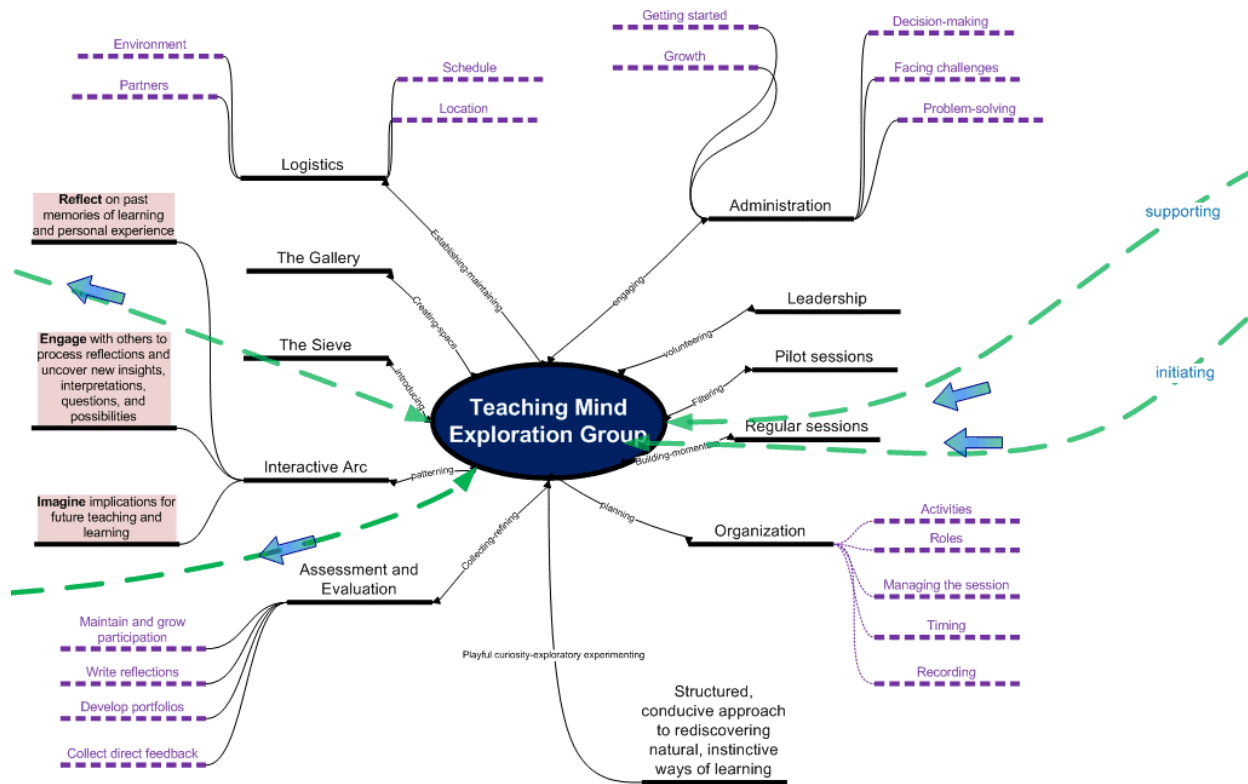


Figure 6: Map Segment Relating to the Teaching Mind Exploration Group

Do Professional Teachers Need to Explore the Teaching Mind?

From another point of view, the involvement of professional teachers might be examined in relationship to the Teaching Mind. If such individuals are not themselves participants in the Teaching Mind sessions as “learners”, they may still have involvement in the wider process as mentors to groups, speakers at Teaching Mind sessions who lend expertise on specific subjects, and supporters of the process by encouraging their own students, parents, community members, and educational administrators to engage in Teaching Mind sessions as a way of gaining awareness and direct experience in the concepts that are part of teaching.

Again, the Teaching Mind sessions are intended to expose existing knowledge about the learning process and help individuals to rework new insight into ideas about

their own future teaching. Even so, this does not mean that the Teaching Mind participants must “invent” new knowledge about teaching completely on their own; professional teachers may be called upon to advise the process, suggest areas to serve as main topics for focus during individual learning sessions, and offer resources in various forms that provide additional detail about subject matter of interest. Since learning sessions primarily seek to help people make personal connections to their potential as teachers, formal pedagogical knowledge, research, and connections between theory and practice will almost certainly be covered very superficially in Teaching Mind sessions, so this is one area where professional, expert teachers can provide additional understanding and link professional teachers with people involved in informal education. Challenges include asking for assistance from professional teachers who might have limited time, and ensuring professional teachers that the Teaching Mind process is about involving more people in appreciating the complexities of teaching by having direct involvement in the process, rather than providing “amateurs” with a “watered-down” version of teacher education that somehow undermines their own work. Additionally, there may actually be many professional teachers who would benefit from their own Teaching Mind exploration and yet remain resistant to the idea if they perceive themselves to be experts with conclusive opinions about what it means to teach.

The Teaching Mind in Other Communities

At the level of local community, need might be found in neighborhood associations, community groups, and between private individuals. I focus most directly on this area, since people within these contexts by definition have more loosely-defined

or nonexistent organizational structures in which to meet and share knowledge in the interest of learning. Individuals within this area of need might span across all of the types of people. Challenges include initiating connections between people who have very different availability to participate together and do not necessarily know each other at all or have clear, obvious common interests.

Publicity and Marketing for Teaching Mind Initiatives

In terms of introducing the idea of the Teaching Mind to various people within the contexts describe above, I attend most directly to creating an answer to the question, “What is in it for me”? In the organizational settings, this may require describing the Teaching Mind learning in such a way that it does not greatly interrupt ongoing ways of working within the organization but fulfills a recognized need. One part of the approach includes the development of a “demo session” – a well-structured example of a Regular Session in which the three phases of exploring the Teaching Mind are followed and where potential participants get a chance to experience the tone of the session as well as some concepts of the Teaching Mind. Some other elements of publicity for a Teacher Mind group include a letter/introductory packet for stakeholders/sponsors in organizational settings asking for support and consideration, an advertisement for participation of private individuals in a short-term Teaching Mind learning experience, a web site for storing multimedia information of interest to prospective participants, and a presentation to be given to school, government, or other officials to explain key ideas and provide examples. Examples of some of these kinds of written materials are included in the appendices.

Other general considerations for publicity include the possibility of developing other ways to attract attention to the idea of Teaching Mind Exploration Groups, including using

different names altogether. While “Teaching Mind” might be described using the explanations that I have given, it may not reflect the nature of the cultures of potential participants, meaning that other terms might be developed to stimulate excitement and interest.

Other Administrative Issues of Teaching Mind Exploration Groups

Often, the issue of “administration” of such a group as that of the Teaching Mind participants invites a number of challenges that are ultimately derived from the need for financial resources. Materials must be printed or photocopied, supplies must be obtained, and the heat and electric bills must be paid for the space being used. In the spirit of “keeping things small”, it is desirable that efforts be made to minimize costs as much as possible. This may require accounting for financial needs in creative ways. Possibly, this means lessening the need for material items through the nature of the activities that are planned, encouraging or requiring participants to bring their own writing materials, or developing a “library” of shared resources that is composed of donated paper items, props, or other objects that might be used.

Within a sponsoring organization, efforts might be made to hold Teaching Mind groups as much within the usual hours of a workday as possible, or perhaps immediately after or before the workday. For private groups, efforts might be made to develop partnerships with schools or libraries, where meeting space might already be available to accommodate small groups and where space rental charges might not be imposed for small private groups engaged in educational discourse. Another possibility is that Teaching Mind groups are held as potluck meals during agreed-upon times, where sharing of food provides some foundation for socializing between the participants and prevents the need for large efforts by a few people on behalf of the whole group.

Assessing Outcomes

When speaking of the general topic of assessment and evaluation, finding the most appropriate strategy creates a challenge and an opportunity. Because the flexible nature of the Teaching Mind Exploration Groups, varied styles and cultures between the groups, and diverse interests and intentions of the participants themselves, it can be difficult to enumerate concrete “one-size-fits-all” goals and measurable outcomes. Still, it seems that there is much opportunity to observe positive change throughout the life of a Teaching Mind Exploration Group. As stated earlier, the purpose of the Teaching Mind group and culture is to encourage people to consider their own potential as direct participants as guides for the learning of others, and an open-minded and flexible view to ways that this might happen in informal ways (where they are quite difficult to observe or quantify). Consequently, evaluation of outcomes must take alternative forms.

Four basic forms are suggested:

Participation. Because the Teaching Mind groups are largely about opportunity for exploring teaching, one possible way to evaluate progress is to determine in what ways participation is happening. Do new participants enter the process as more and more cycles of Teaching Mind sessions take place? Do new organizations get involved? Do past participants get involved in new efforts to form Teaching Mind sessions/groups, and do they help serve as advisors? Do current participants actively speak about their Teaching Mind experiences with others?

Direct feedback. Feedback from participants is particularly important as a reflection of personal reward derived from being part of a Teaching Mind group. One part of the feedback is obtained as individual participants answer Evaluation Questions #1 and #2 from the Regular

Session's Basic Agenda, which indicate impressions directly related to the session that has just occurred. Other direct feedback may be performed in other ways. Within a session, one of the designated roles might be for a participant to provide a "general evaluation" of the session, noting particular strengths and areas for improvement. This might also be done with a very brief written survey of the whole group.

Portfolios. Since the abstract idea of the Teaching Mind has already been described as an ideal to be sought, rather than an observable state to be reached, declaring, for example, that a person has a "1.3 percent increase in Teaching Mind" is pointless. Instead, some assessment of progress might be viewed in terms of actions taken during a session and creations of the group during, and outside of, the Teaching Mind sessions. The "products" of the sessions might be creative works that are developed in the course of a session, but they also could be expressive items that reflect the participants. These products might be photographs of a session, recorded video or audio of some activity during a session, reflective essays, or testimonials of Teaching Mind experiences from participants. Such items might be stored for review and noted in terms of accomplishments as a Teaching Mind group continues over several sessions.

Stories of Teaching Experiences. During the Teaching Mind group sessions or afterwards, some effort might be made to collect stories from participants about finding ways in real-life situations to act as teachers and guides of learning of others. Not only can stories help to connect people back with the Teaching Mind experience but also they can help to inspire new participants to hear ways in which the Teaching Mind can remain active over time.

Broader Community Support for a Culture of Using the Teaching Mind

While face-to-face learning sessions and community connections might help to reinforce participation of individuals in Teaching Mind exploration, a broader issue involves the development of the Teaching Mind as a general disposition, attitude, and skill as a natural part of the growth of a learning culture. In referring to a “new social movement” of educational change, this movement includes the notion that widely distributed individuals begin to “break off” from these initial formations of Teaching Mind exploration and start to shape their own ideas of teaching as a universal, lifelong activity. Primarily, I have discussed the Teaching Mind exploration groups at the “ground level”, where individuals participate together without necessarily having formed previous relationships or experiences ahead of time.

Thinking of the Teaching Mind on the scale of a social movement implies that numerous individuals will take ownership of more specific or refined elements of the Teaching Mind and focus on them more directly through time. For example, there might be a greater level of attention specifically to the idea of helping people to recognize and understand their own areas of expertise and interest as potential material for sharing with others. In my model, this element is simply one part of the Main Activity within the pilot sessions of a Teaching Mind exploration experience, and so in this context it may only be a simple discussion or reflective writing exercise. When considering the Teaching Mind as a cultural reality though, a full workshop, course, community group, or publication may be dedicated to this element.

Figure 7 presents the segment of the overview map relating to the Teaching Mind as an element of social change in lifelong learning.

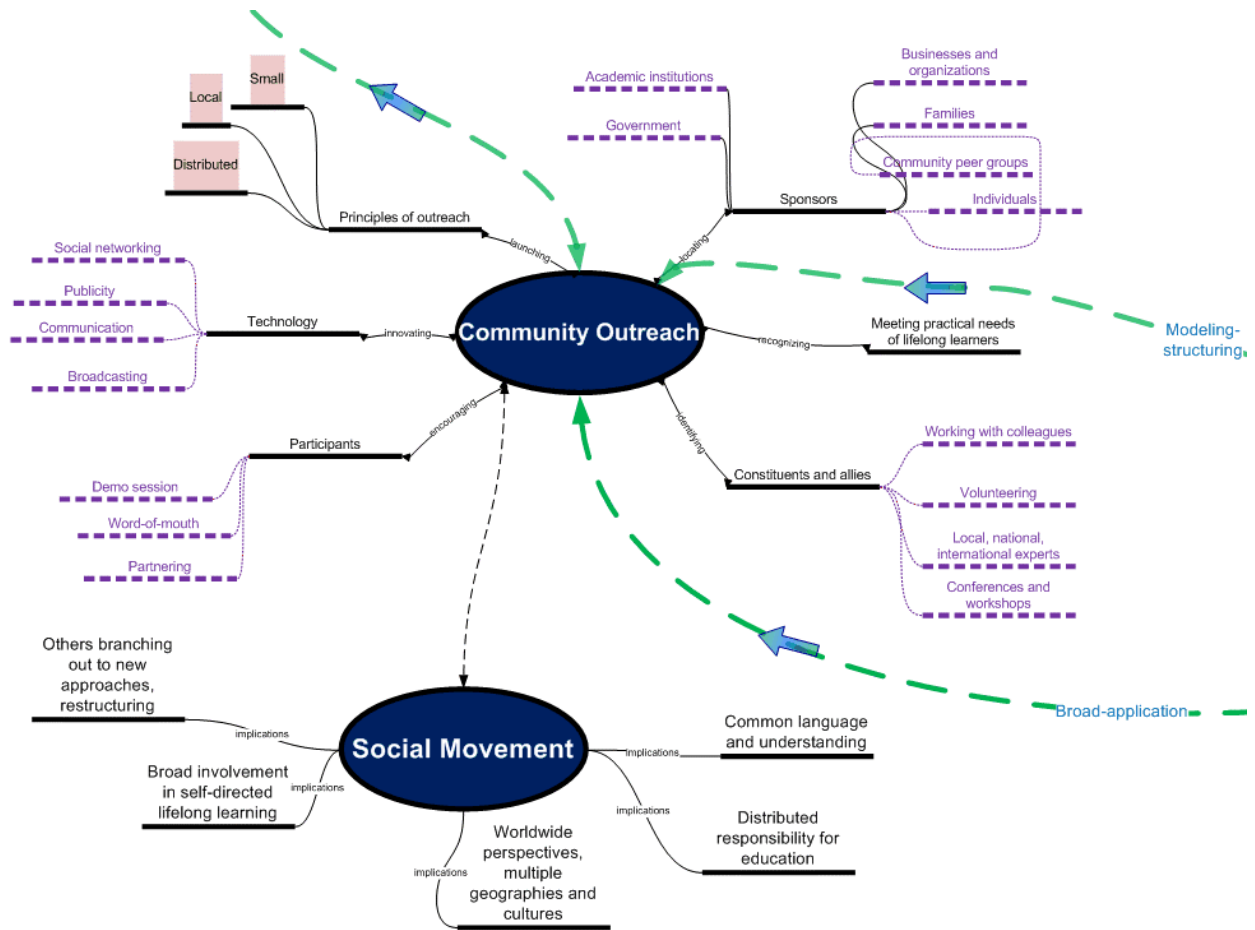


Figure 7: Map Segment Relating to the Teaching Mind and Social Change

Summary of Key Ideas

In terms of a practical starting point for creating opportunities to develop the Teacher Mind, the model and logistical guidelines presented in this chapter represent a starting point to a systematic change in the way that individuals allow themselves to take responsibility for lifelong learning of self and others, starting with their existing perceptions of learning and moving through the process of viewing themselves as teachers on the way to active involvement in teaching others as a way of continuing to learn. The model allows room for evolving to meet

varied needs in different kinds of communities and adjust to people at different stages of readiness to address the Teaching Mind.

The challenge of creating a model with broad potential has influenced the way that it can be applied in small, limited ways, as the idea of the Teaching Mind is introduced and made accessible to those who are far from the recognized academic process. Groups of learners may be formed at the local level and operate Teaching Mind sessions from the point of view of the local culture of the group. These groups may even be formed with very specific populations in mind, such as seniors, students, people who are interested in teaching in community/continuing/adult education centers, or people within narrow professional fields such as visual artists or public safety officers. Forums for future teaching of these participants might arise within community settings, workplace settings, or family settings. Individuals go through this whole process not only to learn about the idea of teaching but also to clarify for themselves what they know, what other people would benefit from knowing the same thing, and how to connect with those people in practical ways as they continue to explore the Teaching Mind.

Imagining the Past: Part 5

In my research, I found a world of great hope and potential with the way that education was understood in 2009. Now, one hundred years later, the interplay of traditional and modern thought have continued to develop the way that learning works and the ways that Lifelong Learners are able to engage in an even more complete, communal, organic, and thriving interconnection of how learning works.

The innovation of learning that corresponded directly to the development of the early computers, those old-style ones. It seems as though as much as this medium of learning had become a trend that invited great passion and attention. At the same time, I see a great struggle by the learners of 2009 to find the proper balance between forms of “interaction” and the implications of how these devices really connected people to learning. Through time, this has certainly been transformed into a natural equilibrium between the old and the new, the customary and the progressive, the ordinary and the revolutionary, and the simple and complex. Along a continuum of the types of media used in education these days, we now find at one end the mere exchange of discussion, speaking, writing, listening, reading, and observing between individuals. At the other end, a multifaceted spectrum of digital innovations, props, environments, artifacts, and machines that integrate in the general support systems of lifelong learning.

One observation that I make about our current time is that all of these elements that influence the level of interaction in learning and education seem to be used in harmonious ways. None dominate, all are essential in specific ways, and the parity of how these are used sustains a healthy tension that drives new innovations.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Summary of Main Ideas

In the course of this work, I have discussed the issues involved in exploring lifelong learning, covering perspectives at the level of culture, community, and individual. Through this process, I often imagined that I was bringing together elements on behalf of the reader that would allow new ideas to be considered and explored and that some assistance could be provided in the journey of revisiting how daring to teach might support lifelong learning. Meanwhile, I find now that I was actually revising my own ideas, exploring new ways of thinking, and creating a “circle of encouragement” around me to continue this work and find additional ways to be involved as an advocate for lifelong learning and a supporter of the process of allowing others to get to know themselves as teachers.

Through each of the previous chapters, lifelong learning has been discussed from a particular point of view. Starting with the Prologue, we explored the personal background and motivations that underscored how and why lifelong learning is a mysterious, endlessly fascinating, and constantly engaging area of interest that is the foundation of my life’s work. Moving through from Chapter 1 to Chapter 2, we questioned the understandings of lifelong learning as it relates to formal and informal education, both in terms of institutions and individuals, and created a collage of ideas that introduced the notion of teaching as learning.

Working beyond the simplified idea that “the best way to understand what you know is to teach it to others”, we considered what it meant to actually become involved in the process of learning to teach. This happens not only from the culturally-accepted approaches of formal teacher preparation but also from the perspectives of how learning happens outside of formal education, and how personal exploration of teaching might greatly benefit from the scaffold of the collaborative learning group.

In Chapter 3, I discussed a more personal journey into the involvement of facilitating and supporting teachers in a real-life community setting who partially represent my definitions of Lifelong Learners as teachers. The individuals in this case are teaching within their work already, but they may be doing so in an informal capacity, have very little and often no resources available or supervisory support toward professional development as educators, and individually bring unique qualities and points of view that reflect common challenges and great opportunities when shared with others in similar settings. Above all, I believe that this experience helps to remind me that the challenges in teaching are quite potent and often indicative that some of the greatest obstacles involve the limitations in administrative support, resource availability, direct allies and constituents, and community and family encouragement. “Ideas” in teaching may be plentiful but are simply far from enough to create lifelong learning. It has been said that a feature film is perhaps the most collaborative work of art in common practice today; a truly positive experience in lifelong learning might similarly benefit from a combination of several small, often unappreciated elements coming together at the right place and time, in addition to the most well-meaning and sincere practitioners.

The discussion in Chapter 4 seeks to initiate what I called a “living document” of the core principles that would be considered in the seeking of the Teaching Mind, my term for the

disposition, ability, and tendency to imagine oneself as a teacher. This aptitude is a way of exploring one's own learning by thinking about personal expertise not just as a passive recipient of knowledge about a subject but at the higher level of reprocessing that knowledge as part of the responsibility of passing it on to others. The principles form a type of ethical compass that guides us toward the general projects and specific approaches that involve our most effective support of the Teaching Mind. In Chapter 5, I then provide a particular model of a Teaching Mind Exploration Group, which considers how to start the process of bringing out existing knowledge about teaching, create a public and conducive space for it to be explored, and then allow it to be reconsidered and integrated into one's own expectations about how and when teaching opportunities will occur. This model, along with some of the examples in the appendices, serve as a starting point to bringing the idea of the Teaching Mind to community supporters in a practical way and begin to explain it.

A Call to Action

Over the course of this study, I have referenced the idea of creating the opportunities for exploring the Teaching Mind, both in terms of gaining awareness of potential for informal learning and in terms of taking action toward involving oneself in group learning where the Teaching Mind might be explored. At the same time, I find that a key component of my own possible future exploration is where I might look to more clearly identify areas within the accepted systems of education that are internally inconsistent, that contain glaring contradictions, and that represent barriers rather than catalysts for the most natural and humanistic expressions of learning. I expect that such an exploration might challenge the institution of schools to adapt

to new ways of working and education practitioners to reconsider how the service of education is provided.

In his book, The Art of Possibility, master conductor and educator Benjamin Zander reminds us:

Michelangelo is often quoted as having said that inside every block of stone or marble dwells a beautiful statue; one need only remove the excess material to reveal the work of art within. If we were to apply this visionary concept to education, it would be pointless to compare one child to another. Instead, all the energy would be focused on chipping away at the stone, getting rid of whatever is in the way of each child's developing skills, mastery, and self-expression. (Zander & Zander, 2000, 26)

I imagine that for many adults, this challenge is magnified, since the block of stone has perhaps been chipped away, with pieces re-glued awkwardly, or else it has been painted over many times through years of education, so that it certainly appears interesting, but now the paint is so thick that the beautiful sculpture is that much more deeply buried inside the stone.

As I have stated several times, learning to develop one's Teaching Mind does not necessarily require understanding exactly how and when it will be applied or in what forums one might be called upon to teach others. Within the context of the broader proliferation of the Teaching Mind as a holistic social movement, it seems that such forums and situations will need to be created, perhaps by individuals within their own lives, but also perhaps by the existing institutions and communities that until now have only utilized people as "teachers" in narrow forms.

What does it mean for not only people, but also for schools and universities, businesses, community organizations, and governments to reinforce a sustainable culture where the Teaching Mind is assumed as a part of life for all people, not relegated to a select group or treated as an extreme experiment? In the existing culture, the Teaching Mind might help

individuals take steps toward genuine teaching in various forms, and still issues of accountability might remain ill-defined and actual benefit to society might continue to be questioned or disregarded as a favorable but trivial amenity. What would it mean then for these larger communities to both *demand* more attention to development of the Teaching Mind and *provide the support and resources* to make it happen? I rephrase this idea as a call to action for all of those involved at any level. Individuals must insist on opportunities to explore the Teaching Mind. Businesses, organizations, and communities must provide resources to enable individuals to explore the Teaching Mind and then create the opportunities for these individuals to use their Teaching Mind dispositions, knowledge, and skills in practice. Private and public centers of leadership must seek to build a Teaching Mind culture, integrate the idea into daily existence, and serve their constituents by helping make connections and match lifelong learners with opportunities for teaching. Everyone must support the transition of culture from an Information Age to a Knowledge Age, or better yet to a Wisdom Age.

Thoughts About a Newly Energized Approach to Learning and Life

On a “microeconomic” scale, rather than even focusing on “learning” or “education” or other such grand ideas, what are the other conditions and actions needed to simply create pathways of access between experts and learners and provide tools and guidance for the type of interpersonal communication that builds relationships? In some situations, “learning” might be seen as a high-level, “big” outcome that is too difficult to understand at a given moment as it implies the need for attention to too many variables and outcomes at once. In such a case, it is perfectly acceptable and even desirable to concentrate on the atoms of communication, listening,

self-awareness, and observation instead, where learning is something that we “worry about later” and, for now, focus on the simple behaviors that engage our minds in positive ways.

Lastly, I continue to examine and comprehend the ways to encourage others to explore basic feelings about their past education and tell the stories that can help them to view their current lives as a second chance to revisit learning. If we consider a continuum of “academic presence” representing people of all types, some lie at one far end of high-level, first-order involvement in teaching and education research, and others lie at the opposite end of great resistance to any involvement in lifelong learning, with everyone else in between the two extremes. If the development of the Teaching Mind needs a starting point, one possibility is to understand where people lie along this continuum and encourage those who are not yet *consciously* involved in teaching, but might actually be doing it somehow and express blossoms of the Teaching Mind. They simply need the most gentle of prompting to become involved through sharing their perspectives rather than keeping them to themselves within their own blissful environment. It is an inspiration whenever such an individual has started to notice that learning and teaching are no longer just something that “other people do”. If we find ways to embrace this potential, then learning and teaching can grow as a natural way of living.

Imagining the Past: Part 6

I suppose that I could keep going for quite a while with my search for evidence about the nature of education and learning in 2009, but I feel now that I have some idea of how things worked then. Rather, I have some clues that revealed to me some of the attitudes and factors that were prevalent around that time. Perhaps all that I have discovered is that there are more questions than answers, and yet education and learning continue to be mysterious in 2109.

I can see that there may not be unquestionable, fixed realities to be grasped. At times, the instinctive form of learning that is a natural vestige of human evolution is mixed in with the political form of learning that involved institutions and roles. Lifelong learning can be something that you do, but also it could be someone that you are. Motives, incentives, advocates, opponents, champions, dissenters, products, services – all of these are part of the array of forces that affect lifelong learning at those higher levels.

One thing does appear to be just as true back in 2009 as it does now. The nature of education and learning, with respect to the systems and roles and opportunities and institutions and individuals, provides a commentary about the whole culture. The values, attitudes, ways of thinking, and behaviors of the people are reflected in all of the artifacts of learning and education of the time. Even so, perhaps it is possible to think of these elements as more than just consequences of a culture; maybe we can more actively create and shape the elements such that we inspire people to imagine learning in truly unique and powerful ways...

EPILOGUE

When I was first applying to the Critical and Creative Thinking graduate program at UMass-Boston, included the following anecdote on my written statement as an expression of my expectations and wishes:

A master conductor attended a piano recital in which a young child, an apparent musical prodigy, raced through a complicated piece with great precision. Afterwards, the child looked to the conductor, beaming with pride. The conductor told the child, "How wonderfully you play the notes; perhaps someday you'll be able to play the music."

I do not exactly believe that I can now, easily and intentionally, take the "notes" that I now know about the Teaching Mind and play a symphony. What I am more conscious about is the need to *listen* for the music that I hear from myself and others when I did not expect to hear it. Just as many instruments, tones, and tunings are used to create music, I believe that those engaged in the Teaching Mind cannot truly understand how their own experience and expression is valuable until it becomes combined with other Lifelong Learners in various ways.

I ask myself, "What if the idea of the Teaching Mind cannot find its way?" "What if it becomes transformed and skewed and twisted into other ideas, even some that I believe are contrary to the Core Principles or unsupportive of collaborative learning?" I suppose that these questions point to the way that I am able to maintain my own orientation in my life's work. At the very core of all of my history with school, teaching, learning, and education is the growth of desire to work with those who do not have the encouragement to access the Teaching Mind. In the end, this focus is really about making lifelong learning not just a marketing term, not just a feel-good notion of continued involvement in learning, but also an insistence that the most

fundamental possibility that what is “known” can be seen in some other way, through some other lens, in a way that opens a door to greater happiness and power that draws upon those most harmonious parts of human culture.

The Critical and Creative Thinking Experience: A Counterintuitive Personal Aspiration

Through the course of the Critical and Creative Program, I have considered many times what it meant to earn a Master’s Degree in Critical and Creative Thinking, what this achievement tells others about me, and what it leaves still to be explained. It occurred to me that many potential employers may not be specifically looking for job candidates with this particular credential. I was left with the faith that such an endeavor has a way of rising above job titles and comparisons between individuals, and now I see more than ever how true that is. What I have discovered is a much more sublime meaning about “what to do” with my experience and learning.

While I was learning about critical and creative thinking, reflective practice, and social, workplace and personal change, I found that there was a notable level of *support* that surrounded the activities that made this learning most effective. My peers, professors, family, friends, and I together formed a supportive network that enabled the most crucial prerequisites for deep learning. These prerequisites include freedom, forgiveness, tolerance, enthusiasm, conviction, and persuasion, and I have prospered by receiving each at various times.

A counterintuitive discovery has seized my attention. While I was spending all of this time with my own ideas, thinking about how to get others to engage with me, thinking about how to follow through with my own intentions, drawing others in to new perspectives based on my interests, and translating my own plans into action, sometimes even on behalf of others who I

expected to follow along, I found that my learning journey was preparing me to do something else even more than doing these activities. I have discovered that there is an outstanding opportunity that comes from the ability to put my own agenda aside sometimes and give my support to others. Rather than spend all of my effort developing my ideas, I can seek out ways to help others develop their ideas. Rather than waiting to be convinced that events, workshops, projects, and initiatives developed by others obviously connect to my interests, I can attend anyway and be willing to find where my own interest fits in. Rather than identify myself through describing my needs and wants, I can identify myself according to the way that I will be available as a resource to others.

Critical and creative thinking requires this kind of flexibility and courage. Living truthfully as a reflective practitioner requires being highly aware of keeping my exchanges with others in a state of equilibrium, and having personal strength means to be able to sustain the work of providing to others more than I take from them. Through the course of meeting this challenge, lifelong learning for me and others becomes enriched with the greatest of rewards.

APPENDIX A: NOTES AND REFLECTIONS ABOUT A PILOT EXPERIENCE WITH THE TIMOTHY SMITH NETWORK

Example Meeting Notes: November 2008

Current Status:

- 3 discussions with TSN director completed, discussion of planning for initial meeting
- decision to make meeting a “brown bag” lunch
- (working) title for meetings is actually “Instructor Dialogues”

Concerns:

- how can we outwardly maintain inclusivity, since the meeting is a single 90-minute period once per month?
- how can I encourage participations to “drive” the development of meetings between ourselves, rather than returning to our habit of waiting for/allowing Susan to take the lead/make decisions?
- how can we shape the meetings so that they project a tone of professional development (as requested) for instructors, not just “talking”?

Challenges:

- get enough people to come to the first meeting to start building some momentum
- make space for humor, play, and fun in the meeting
- be explicit about asking for volunteers to host the meeting in future months

Tasks:

- initial meeting agenda formed
- initial meeting time and location identified (December 10, 2008)
- initial meeting email invitation composed and sent to all TS Center instructors by Jeremy

Example Meeting Notes: December 2008

Current Status:

- first instructor meeting held on Thursday, December 10 with 8 attendees
- meeting was mostly open discussion covering immediate, short-term issues affecting individual instructors and decisions about how to run future meetings
- meeting notes taken and distributed to participants by Jeremy a few days later
- through open discussion, it was observed (by Jeremy) that four main categories emerged from participant comments: tips for creating activities/curriculum/lesson plans, current challenges faced by individual instructors, resources (technologies, organizations, people, other media) to be shared with others, and issues for future exploration
- instructor meetings publicized at Timothy Smith Network annual meeting (attended by

Concerns:

- need expressed that meetings should have time and space to focus on broadly-applicable

goal-driven issues to be considered by the whole group (focused discussion) as well as more social, open-ended free-flowing talk (free discussion)

- will TS center instructors be supported to attend/participate from their own supervisors?

Challenges:

- consider changing the name of the meetings from Instructor Dialogues to something more attractive
- develop some ideas for using online collaboration systems to include those who cannot often actually attend the meetings

Tasks:

- create wiki page to store meeting notes and info
- develop prototype of social network site for TS center instructors

Reflections and Key Learnings So Far: April 2009

moments of insights / “a-ha” have occurred particularly in the following situations:

- when instructors have been sharing their ideas and discover that they have been experiencing very similar challenges
- when instructors are engaged in group discussion, they may speak in order to “go along” with the consensus of the group as a show of harmony, but they are more likely to expose questions and concerns in one-to-one conversations
- productive discussions occur when one person poses a challenge that has been experienced personally and then asks for open-ended feedback; it is easier to brainstorm ideas for someone else’s challenge than to discuss possible solutions to one’s own sometimes
- it can be difficult to identify the scale of a topic of discussion sometimes; are we trying to talk about an issue as an isolated concept, or are we examining all issues of a certain type, or are we trying to figure out if an overall teaching philosophy can put some perspective on the issue?
- sometimes it needs to be realized that groups do not really have opinions – the individuals in the group have opinions, and it may not be feasible to assign the opinion of the group to be the “average” of the opinions of the individuals
- teachers are not really just dealing with learning, they are dealing with people who have needs and wants, complicated lives, and all kinds of motivations and intentions

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES THAT CORRESPOND TO THE LEVELS OF INTERACTIVITY

Levels of Interactivity in Teaching Mind Group Learning

0. lecture
 - standard presentation
 - product or materials demonstration
 - speech
 - monologue
1. open-ended discussion
 - informal discussion with no or limited facilitation
 - casual brainstorming
 - reflective questioning and answering
2. facilitated discussion
 - discussion with expected participation and well-defined facilitation
 - full brainstorming
 - interviewing
3. structured discussion
 - discussion with well-defined ground rules and established structure for how participation takes place, logistical concerns, and materials used
 - Dialogue Process (Isaacs)
4. multi-modal activity (reading, writing, speaking)
 - paired sharing (two-person discussion)
 - journal writing and sharing
 - reviewing text and responding
5. physical activity and bodily movement
 - stretching and loosening up the body
 - walking around
 - examining objects or props to examine form and function
 - creating a communal timeline
6. interactive activity (interpersonal exchanges happen along with physical activity)
 - name toss warm-up exercise
 - acting out a fictional or re-enacting an observed scenario
 - Yes Game (Pollack, 381)
7. role-play (personal identification gets redefined)
 - developing a scene using characters and dialogue
 - forum theater

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE AGENDA FOR A TEACHING MIND EXPERIENCE “DEMO”

The following agenda serves as an example of how a Teaching Mind Exploration Group session might be demonstrated for potential participants. For example, a community of librarians may wish to initiate a monthly Teaching Mind Exploration Group of their own, so they employ a small team of people that have experience with such a group in some other setting to provide a “demo session”, meaning that they get a chance to observe and participate gently to get a sense of how the group works without any administrative responsibility.

6:00-6:05pm Welcome and announcements

6:05-6:10pm Explanation of roles

Demo team reviews roles that have been established for this session, such as a timekeeper, note taker, activity facilitator, session reviewer, and others.

6:10-6:15pm Brief Overview of Today’s Topic: Evaluating Learning

one group member is responsible for having prepared a brief definition of the topic that reflects conventional meaning of evaluation and also provides one example.

6:15-6:40pm Reflecting:

Think-share-pair activity where participants spend 5 minutes writing about their experiences or opinions about the use of letter grades in schools, and then these are shared verbally within pairs of participants for 10 minutes. The final 10 minutes are spent having a loosely-facilitated group discussion about use of letter grades as a type of student evaluation.

6:40-7:00pm Engaging:

Within small groups, participants develop a rubric for assessing how well library patrons distinguish between the purpose of various kinds of reference materials, such as research indices, almanacs, and encyclopedias.

7:00-7:20pm Imagining:

Individual participants brainstorm silently for 5 minutes about one possible way to establish improved understanding of reference materials within their own libraries/departments, and then a whole-group discussion takes place to build a larger list of ideas; participants then create a vision of how much time and effort would be needed to realistically implement the ideas.

7:20-7:30pm Session Review

The person with the role of session evaluator provides a brief summary of successes and challenges of this particular session, mentioning what questions arose, areas where clarity is needed, opportunities for participation, and even observations regarding the setup of the room, external noises that created distractions, or others; questions would also be asked of the demo team and explanations would be given as needed.

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE OUTLINE FOR A TEACHING MIND EXPERIENCE WORKSHOP

The following items outline the kinds of activities that might be used in a series of six, 1.5-hour weekly sessions of a Teaching Mind Exploration Group. This particular number of sessions reflects the typical length of a course that might be offered in a single season through a community education center and therefore fit within the normal time frame of a “semester” that might be in use at a sponsoring organization. This kind of workshop addresses a highly diverse group of participants who are novices at Teaching Mind exploration but are knowledgeable about some area and are hoping to eventually teach a course in community education or otherwise connect with institutions, businesses, schools, or communities who need more of that kind of knowledge.

This sample outline assumes that the workshop uses the “Regular Session Basic Agenda” defined in Chapter 5. While some items such as the general announcements and session review are standardized, the specific topics and activities are the variables involved within this scenario, so these in particular are described. It is expected that questions such as “how well did we model the practices that we say we would use in our future teaching?” will be used to review each session. Assuming that the participants are mostly beginner teachers, some additional attention is spent on more *practical* matters of putting together a course, which might be preferred when participants are looking to enter into a specific teaching situation and when sponsoring organizations need a precise understanding of expected outcomes and how learning is transferred to practice. Of course, many points in the past chapters stressed that this focus on the more recognizable conventions of teaching is not necessary to explore the Teaching Mind in favor of the processes used, but these points do not prevent this exploration from happening in more familiar and even formal educational environments as well, where the spirit of the Teaching Mind might be equally desirable.

Week 1:

Topic: **Identifying Areas of Personal Expertise**

Reflect:

using freewriting to describe personal experience and areas of knowledge, remembering early experiences related to this topic and telling stories of this, identifying reasons for feeling connected to the topic, open discussion about expectations

Engage:

name-learning activity among all participants, Dialogue Process, creating a group timeline of learning milestones related to their topics

Imagine:

identifying what the participants think they will know about their topic in a few years, writing a list and then discussing some key points about their topic area that they wish would have been explained to them when they were a beginner

Week 2:

Topic: **Identifying Potential Audiences for Teaching My Topic**

Reflect:

recall institutions, industries, and environments where participant knowledge of

their topic has been relevant

Engage:

in pairs or small groups, participants will develop a fictional character that encapsulates an identity and personality (by defining the character's name, personality, and other characteristics), and then small-group discussion will occur to think about why and how this fictional person might learn about each participant's topic

Imagine:

use the engagement activity to discuss as a large group how participants can understand the needs of the learners when they are teaching and how different factors would affect their teaching

Week 3:

Topic: **Designing a Course**

Reflect:

individual brainstorming about possible ways to break down the knowledge of their topic into smaller pieces; reviewing written publications about that topic to understand how others have defined the subtopics; recall school subjects that were most rewarding and memorable and reasons for this

Engage:

small group activity to help each other review subtopics and put them into a sequence, connecting one to the next

Imagine:

role-play in which some participants act as "students" in the course of others and are allowed to ask questions of the "teachers"; the teachers respond as if they were teaching the course, and the interaction is reviewed by the whole group

Week 4:

Topic: **Finding Teaching Resources and Materials**

Reflect:

Recall ways in which topic has been learned outside of formal learning situations such as schools, and create a list of mediums for learning and resources that are known already: books/magazines/other publications, Internet resources, television shows and videos, community workshops or demonstrations, radio programs, etc.

Engage:

In pairs, participants can work with a partner to create a one-page outline of the *general types* of handouts that a teacher might provide during a course and then start to create the content of some of these ("reference guide", "glossary", "who's who", etc.)

Imagine:

in small groups, participants use open discussion, reflective writing, or formal dialogue to examine various materials, props, or other objects and explain why they might or might not use such an item in their own teaching

Week 5:

Topic: **Developing Engaging Activities for Learners**

Reflect:

recall experiences in learning where participants most greatly enjoyed learning, had fun, experienced humor, or were able to play in learning; discussion or Dialogue Process about purpose/experience of play as adults

Engage:

Series of sample activities that represent the range of the eight levels of interaction, where each is facilitated/led by a different participant

Imagine:

Brief reflective writing about engaging activities followed by group discussion about what kinds of situations might arise in the future teaching of their own topics that influence how people feel included or involved

Week 6:

Topic: **Writing a Course Proposal (to a Continuing Ed. Center or community group)**

Reflect:

participants write brief stories about past experiences trying to explain their knowledge to others and then discuss in pairs

Engage:

whole-group strongly-facilitated brainstorming on writing a course proposal, using the topic and expectations of one of the participants; group produces one paragraph that would be used to communicate the proposal to a manager or sponsor, and one paragraph that will serve as a course description

Imagine:

participants will use a role-play in pairs, where one person is the hopeful teacher and the other is the education manager considering adding the course to their group; the “manager” interviews the teacher about the course, and then the participants switch roles

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE OUTLINE FOR A TEACHING MIND EXPLORATION SEMINAR

In contrast to the ideas presented in Appendix D related to a fixed-term workshop for novice teachers, the following outline presents a different example of how the Teaching Mind Exploration Group sessions might be structured if they were part of an ongoing series. In this case, it is assumed that participants will be composed of some individuals who have already served as informal teachers and have sought new opportunities for growth, as well as other individuals who have not yet had the experience of recognizing their teaching behavior but have more recently expressed curiosity about how to be more active lifelong learners through exploring how to teach.

The topics chosen for the examples represent a wide range of ideas that fit well under the informal education label and reflect the kinds of teaching that may interest those who have specialized knowledge and seek ways to share it with others. Individuals might be highly experienced in more specific areas within these topics but would benefit from an organized way to understand how to share it with others. Of course, these topics might be covered in formal schools or within informal adult education settings, but the conditions of the Teaching Mind Exploration Group are flexible such that the participants who do not have access to those settings can be involved anyway and gain insight through the processes used even if not strongly connected to the subject matter of the topics themselves. Such individuals may even have completely unique ideas about their future teaching forums or simply want to explore their own potential to teach more generally. The activities described below represent one out of many that could be utilized to explore the particular topic and simply serve as examples of how a single session might reflect exploration of the Teaching Mind.

Topic: **Teaching Others to Understand Highly Technical or Scientific Concepts**

Reflect:

recall contrasts between theoretical discussion of technical concepts and hands-on experiences with equipment, objects, or materials; reflective writing about the shifts and key surprises when moving from theoretical to practical understanding

Engage:

group brainstorming on relationship between memorized facts and using them within the understanding of technical subjects; small group exploration of artifact, product, or object and developing a number of ideas about alternate uses or analogies to other objects

Imagine:

in pairs, participants practice teaching each other about the complexities of everyday objects, where the person acting as the teacher is a complete expert at the object, and the person acting as the learner is assumed to be a complete beginner

Topic: **Teaching Others to Develop Modern Workplace Skills**

Reflect:

write short stories from personal experience where “on-the-job” learning happened or when a workplace situation showed some lack of success

Engage:

in small groups, review published lists of “21st century workplace skills” or something

similar, and relate stories from personal experience to explain why they did or did not demonstrate the skills

Imagine:

in pairs or small groups, imagine a scenario in which the events from the stories of the participants are repeated in a future situation; participants imagine themselves as trainers of those involved in the story and responsible for teaching them one of the workplace skills that was missing originally

Topic: Teaching About Civic Engagement Issues

Reflect:

recall earlier instances when participants have been asked to take part in civic issues in various ways through petitions, voting, or other kinds of activities; write reflections about why participation did or did not happen

Engage:

small group work to develop 30-second “elevator speeches” about issues of personal interest as they relate to local or global citizenship that might be used to introduce themselves to others as teachers of those topics

Imagine:

activity involving use of simplified forum theater to bring out alternative scenarios in future teaching situations and experiment with actions and consequences

Topic: Teaching Others to Support Learning Within the Family

Reflect:

small group sharing of personal stories from family life and demonstrations of learning from parents, siblings, or others

Engage:

participants serve as a mock board of education of a school and must develop a budget for learning resources; participants work in pairs to develop ideas about how to use household objects for creating learning experiences for children and youth of various ages

Imagine:

activity involving use of simplified forum theater to bring out alternative scenarios in family life and relate to how

Topic: Teaching Others to Help Them Grow Artistically

Reflect:

recollections of particular expressions of art that have been inspiring to participants and freewriting about connections between arts, inspiration, and learning

Engage:

whole-group discussion and brainstorming about how ways of helping artists to promote their works; develop writing activities to help artists reflect on goals

Imagine:

each participant develops and act out a 1-minute pantomime of how one would teach beginner-level introduction to their particular art form

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE PUBLICITY MATERIALS FOR A TEACHING MIND EXPLORATION GROUP

Text for a Flyer for a New Community-Based Dialogue Group

We're All Teachers!

Not all of us work as professional teachers in schools, but we all have chances in life to teach others what we know. We do this within our families, our workplaces, and communities. Give yourself a chance to learn about what it means to teach others and explore your love of learning at the same time!

Please join us for our next series of weekly "We're All Teachers" dialogues.. Each time, we explore one topic related to teaching that helps us to think about ourselves as potential teachers as we recognize the value of our own knowledge and the power to be able to share it with others.

All our welcome. The dialogues will occur on Tuesdays from 4:00pm – 6:00pm. Focus will be on introducing key ideas about teaching, so complete beginners are welcome and encouraged to attend. Topics covered over the next session will be the following:

Session 1: Finding Your Personal Inspirations for Lifelong Learning

Session 2: Developing Your Identity as a Teacher

Session 3: Getting to Know Students and Their Needs

Session 4: Understanding Diversity in Learning

Session 5: Interactive Ways of Learning

Session 6: Different Kinds of Learning Styles

Session 7: Creating the Conditions that Help Family Learning

Session 8: Reaching Out to Others to Support Community Learning

Session 9: Evaluating What Has Been Learned

Session 10: Giving Interesting Presentations and Demonstrations

Session 11: Learning in the Real World

Session 12: Teaching Challenging and Sensitive Topics

Session 13: Using Technology to Assist Learning

Session 14: The Meaning of Lifelong Learning

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Proposal to a Potential Sponsor of a Teaching Mind Exploration Group

Dear Dr. Whitmer,

I am following up to our recent discussion about developing a way for the staff in your organization to share knowledge through teaching what they know best. It was interesting to hear about the ways in which your staff members have individual areas of focus and expertise but have limited opportunities to learn about what others do across the organization. I would like to propose holding a ten-week series of workshops for your staff where they get a chance to

experiment with teaching by developing some practical skills and thinking about their own work by preparing to teach what they do to others. Through this process, we will not only discuss some of the elements of teaching but also involve the staff in several hands-on activities that give them practice teaching and end with a “class” taught by each person.

We will work in collaborative ways to help each person develop a plan for teaching the core ideas of their own jobs to the others. This will involve written reflection, discussion, experimenting with various on-the-job scenarios and stories, and brainstorming, along with each person creating some basic resources for the training that they will give, such as a one-page reference guide about key parts of the job, a brief outline of what will they will be teaching, a story that reflects important lessons learned from their job experience, a checklist or rubric for measuring the success of their teaching, and an activity that each will use to engage the others in the learning. At the end of the workshops, each person will actually present their “class” to the others and perform a self-evaluation.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to discussing further logistics with you.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Szteiter

APPENDIX G: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Formal Education

system of learning that mainly includes formal primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools that are organized in formal institutions, including both more conventional and more flexible or progressive versions of schools

Formal Learning

learning decisions about the “what and how” are not made by the learner (Mocker, 2)

Gallery

an abstract shared space in a group learning experience that holds all of the ideas being discussed and offered; the Gallery grants permission for individuals to share their thoughts without feeling the need to convince others immediately of their positions, and it uses the metaphor of a traditional gallery to suggest that ideas are being placed into public view and open to interpretation by others with respect to their own views and perceptions

Informal Education

contextualized, participatory learning situations that involve almost all groups of adults across many types of settings, including casual, incidental learning that happens during daily life

Informal Learning

learner decides the “how” but not the “what”, as in being directed to become competent in an area of knowledge by a workplace supervisor or certification board (Mocker, 2)

Interactive Arc

the three main phases of engagement in a group learning experience related to the Teaching Mind:

- 1) reflect upon past experiences and existing understanding of teaching and learning,
- 2) engage in activities together in order to examine and interpret the reflections more closely and create new insights
- 3) imagine how these new insights might influence future teaching opportunities in the context of future real-world situations that the learners might encounter relative to their own lives

Non-formal Education

formally, structured education that happens outside of formal schools; within this discussion, non-formal education is a subset of informal education

Non-formal Learning

learner decides the “what” but not the “how”, as in choosing to attend a community workshop (Mocker, 2)

Self-Directed Learning

learner decides both the “what” and “how” – learner has ultimate control over the learning process (Mocker, 2)

Sieve

a mental tool for processing what is being stated and implied during a group learning experience; it refers to the fact that each individual in the group has prerogative to attend to and consider only those statements/ideas that are high in priority to that individual at that point in time – all statements and ideas cannot be fully understood all the time, so the Sieve grants permission to consider some ideas now that have personal relevance and leave other ideas to be considered later **Teaching Mind**

a state of mind which includes one's self-awareness as a potential teacher and ways of thinking about personal knowledge as a valuable asset which can be shared with others; this state of mind is reached through the process of developing personal *dispositions, knowledge, and skills* that contribute to one's readiness for guiding the learning of others as well as self

Teaching Mind Exploration Group

a learning group where individuals are sharing the experience, struggles, and rewards of seeking the Teaching Mind through face-to-face engagement; activities that might be used include a wide range of kinds of interaction

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