

# THE TEACHING CAREER

EDITED BY  
**John I. Goodlad and Timothy J. McMannon**

*Foreword by Patricia A. Wasley*



Teachers College, Columbia University  
New York and London

## **“When I Get My Own Classroom”**

**ROGER SODER**

The conventional view of school teaching is of an adult standing in front of younger people seated in a classroom. This is the image many future teachers have in mind as well. In getting ready to teach, they worry about being able to manage a class and make it a place of learning.

This is a legitimate concern, to be sure. But at least classroom management is largely within one's control. There are, however, unpredictable circumstances arising out of the fact that schools and classrooms are microcosms of the larger community and society beyond. Not only does this social-political context come into the classroom with students, it significantly influences virtually everything that goes on there and in the school as a whole. With being smart in school ranking low on the popularity scale in high schools—far behind being an athlete or being regarded as good looking—teachers of English, for example, are sorely tried in seeking to have adolescents become avid readers of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Emily Dickinson, Sherman Alexie, or Alice Walker.

There are groups keeping an eye on what books teachers select, school boards worrying about whether enough time is spent on mathematics in the elementary schools, “education governors” with school mandates in mind, and federal commissions concluding that our schools are not doing enough to keep the nation at the forefront of the global economy. Are teachers to remain mute when the arts, recess, and physical education are cut out to provide more time to prepare pupils to take standardized tests?

How are teachers to respond to the familiar slogan, “It's all for the children,” when a good many regularities of school clearly are not? Are they to keep silent when the new superintendent decrees that one specified method of teaching reading in the primary grades will be mandatory after a certain date?

We have all heard the avuncular advice, probably many times: “To thine own self be true.” To have a long, satisfying career in teaching, one had better be clear about who thine own self is. Otherwise, the course of that career will be pushed this way and that by changing winds blowing in different directions. Some proposed school reforms are downright silly. Some are soon forgotten only to surface again in different dress. Some should simply be ignored. Teachers must have a guiding credo of educational belief that tells them when to give a little, when to embrace recommended changes wholeheartedly, and when to stand on moral principle.

*Nothing in teaching is more important, personal, and individual than the development of such a credo. Few matters are more difficult than standing by it when circumstances are threatening. What Roger Soder writes in this chapter should help teachers at all stages of their careers strengthen both their educational beliefs and their resolve to be active decisionmakers in regard to what goes on in their classrooms and schools.*

—The editors

"When I get my own classroom." This refrain—sometimes invoked as a mantra or a talisman to ward off the unpleasant or the unknown—is often heard when teacher education students are asked to identify that moment when they will shift from "would-be" teachers to "real" teachers.<sup>1</sup> We heard variations from hundreds of students during the course of interviews as part of our Study of the Education of Educators.<sup>2</sup> The refrain might be taken at face value, with students simply telling us of the moment in time when the change will be made. But we heard with great consistency sentiments behind it, sentiments suggesting that what the would-be teachers had in mind was the day when they would be free and independent professionals in charge of their own classrooms, and free, for the most part, of constraints getting in the way of their doing the best for their students. This refrain and the sentiments behind it were echoed by many university supervisors of student teachers. When would-be teachers return from their internship settings complaining that they were unable to teach as they wanted, university supervisors are heard to advise these students to hang on, just do as they are told for the nonce, and wait until they get their own classrooms (when, presumably, they will be able to proceed as they see appropriate).

In the course of hundreds of wide-ranging hour-long interviews, we heard much more about another related and strongly held belief. We tried to get from students their sense of the political and social context of teaching, the perceived pressures from the various parts of the community, the tensions between what one might want to teach and what one was directed to teach. We asked them to consider what they would do if asked to work in districts and schools where the prevailing schooling philosophies were counter to their own. If, for example, interviewees indicated strong opposition to tracking of youngsters, we would ask what they would do if their employing school district mandated tracking. The common response was, in effect, "I'd move to a district that was in keeping with my beliefs." Well and good, we would say. And if a new administration and a new school board in that district turned to tracking and it looked like you wouldn't be able to move districts for one reason or another,

what then? The common response brought us right back to the classroom: "I'd close the classroom door and do what I felt was in the best interests of the children."

In the course of visiting other institutions as well as talking to teacher education students in classes in my home institution, I have persisted with these root questions: When do you feel you will be a "real" teacher, and what will you do if district and school policies go counter to your fundamental beliefs? The responses vary little across time, across institutional type, and across the usual demographics. Despite all the talk about the school as the unit of change, about the isolation of the classroom teacher, about the ecology of schooling, about one's stewardship of the entire school, about the teacher as moral and political agent, and about the teacher as change agent, the responses are robust, healthy, and unchanging. For these would-be teachers, the classroom is the focal point; there they will act to the best of their ability as independent, autonomous professionals to deliver the best possible service to children.

These notions of independence and autonomy, of being answerable to oneself and one's clients, are not to be found solely among teachers. The struggling, independent artist comes to mind, the artist who will not "sell out" to pressures from patrons or the roiling mob. We can think here of Tosca with her famous pleading to the police chief, "Vissi d'arte"—I live for art, I don't want to have to get involved in anything else. And we can think of Mark Rothko arguing that the artist must be truly liberated: "Freed from a false sense of security and community, the artist can abandon his plastic bank-book," and only then "transcendental experiences become possible."<sup>3</sup>

The responses of those about to become teachers are consonant with widely held beliefs about what it means to be a member of a profession. A traditional key to being regarded as a professional is in effect a "license from society for autonomous professional status."<sup>4</sup> If the image of the independent practitioner marks the true professional, and if teachers want to be regarded as professionals rather than "semiprofessionals" or workers simply doing the bidding of administrators and school boards, then the "when I get my own classroom" view can be seen as rational and right on the mark.<sup>5</sup>

As for the notions of a teacher leaving an offending district and finding another district more in harmony with his or her beliefs, we are once more in familiar territory. Pulling up stakes is in the grand American tradition. Robert Wiebe tells us of the allure of open land during the early days of the Republic: "From the earliest days of settlement it invited those people who had differences to solve their problems by separation instead

of accommodation. Rather than adjust, they parted." Thus, for example, "where hostile Catholics and Protestants found themselves neighbors, as in Maryland, they fought only as long as it took their camps to disperse."<sup>6</sup> And lighting out for the territory, going anywhere but where society is going to do you in to your great discomfort—that, too, is in the grand tradition, with would-be teachers resonating well with Huckleberry Finn. He has been there before, and they have some idea, they think, of what Huck is talking about.

The difficulty with this good, earnest, brave talk about independence and autonomy and one's own classroom is that it is based on a fiction. Teachers are not independent agents. Teachers, at least public school teachers, are employees of school districts, and districts are state corporations. Teachers are state agents. Beyond that, teachers are enmeshed, inevitably and necessarily, in a web of complex and contradictory relationships that impinge directly and indirectly on their work as teachers. Given these relationships, it is not possible in any meaningful sense to "have your own classroom."<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the brave talk about lighting out for the territory with Huck simply will not get us anywhere because that territory does not exist: the relationships that impinge on the teachers' work are everywhere, in every school district.

This is not to say that teachers and would-be teachers are off to their own version of Newgate Prison, abandoning all hope. In what follows, I try to offer some hope, through a consideration of six relationships that everywhere appear to have teachers cribbed and cabined. I believe that an understanding of these relationships will help would-be teachers (and the rest of us) to see clearly the political and social circumstances of teachers. Seeing clearly is the first step toward the development of grounded strategies for teachers to engage the world that holds them in thrall and to use these strategies in supporting, opposing, engaging, and transcending that world as they see fit.

## SIX RELATIONSHIPS

### Teachers in Relation to the State

The states—and here I mean the fifty political units of the American republic—exercise control over the schooling establishment and those who teach within it. As we have noted, public school teachers are state agents, given their employment within state-mandated corporations we call school

districts, and their relationship with the state is complex. The following is a brief discussion of seven aspects of the teacher-state relationship.

### *The State as Source of Economic Support of Schools and Teachers*

Public schools receive most of their operating funds from state governments. Resources are always scarce: there is never enough, in any society, for everything. In one movie version of *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge celebrates his epiphany with a party at the Cratchit home. "Everything for everybody," Scrooge shouts with delight as he showers the children with presents. But only in Hollywood are resources so plentiful. In our world, there is always competition, and in the world of schooling, there is always competition with other state-funded programs. Roughly 80% of a given state's budget goes to K-12 schooling, higher education, and health and welfare. K-12 schools are in a highly competitive struggle merely to maintain current levels of expenditure. Given a general unwillingness to pay more taxes (indeed, given the popularity of state ballot initiatives to shrink tax revenues), and given economic doldrums, additional resources for K-12 schools, if they are to be made available at all, will most likely come about through holding the line or cutting programs for higher education and the poor. The teacher may have her own classroom, but the level of available resources directly affects the pupil-teacher ratio, availability of instructional materials, and kinds of classes that can be offered.

### *Curriculum and Pedagogy Dictates of the State*

A teacher might have her own classroom in the sense that her name is on the door. But as to what she is going to teach, and how she is going to teach it, the state has a great deal to say. There are learning objectives dictated by the state, and there are textbooks and curriculum guides to be followed. Some states have rules indicating how much time is to be spent on specified subjects; some dictate what special "teacher-proof" canned curriculum units are to be used. After the state has dictated the precise learning objectives, the precise curriculum, and the precise amount of time to be allotted, teachers find it small comfort (and more than a bit hypocritical) to be told that the state is merely providing standards, and it is up to the professional teacher in her supposed independence to determine how to have all of her children attain those standards. All told, as John Goodlad notes, "the volume and variety of state legislative activity has contributed to obfuscating the central education charge," and the most Goodlad can conclude is that the entire area of state mandates is a "conceptual swamp."<sup>8</sup>

### *Testing Dictates of the State*

Statewide testing has long been a part of the business of schooling. In recent years, such testing has become increasingly pervasive.<sup>9</sup> These tests take time, of course. They take time to administer, and they take even more time to prepare for. If statewide tests are administered in May, many teachers find that they are encouraged or directed to start preparing students for the tests no later than February. The teacher is in her own classroom. But what does owning the classroom mean when a significant portion of the year has to be devoted to test taking and cramming for tests?

Moreover, if the teacher wants to deal with matters that are not part of the statewide tests, there may well be problems. It is difficult to make a case for the importance of subjects or notions to be taught if those subjects and notions are not part of the tests. Recently, a former Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction called for statewide assessment of civic education, arguing that as long as the state tests emphasized only reading, writing, mathematics, and science, civic education will be "haphazardly taught."<sup>10</sup> However, given that statewide tests tend to be the fill-in-the-bubble variety, that which can be mass-tested is limited to the easily measured and, as it often happens, the trivial. Teachers are thus in a double bind. Only those subjects that are included on statewide tests will be given resources and time, but to include something in statewide tests is to invite trivialization.<sup>11</sup>

### *The State's Role Superseded by the Federal Government*

Although a major relationship is between the state and the teacher, the federal government has also established a relationship with the teacher, mediated through the state. Although the U.S. Constitution speaks not at all about schooling, the federal government has gradually increased its involvement (although not its share of resource provision) over the last forty years. Federal involvement began to increase significantly with the Supreme Court's ruling on school desegregation in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954. Four years later, the National Defense Education Act was passed in response to *Sputnik* and what appeared to be the successful challenge of the Soviet Union in the space race. Even with the pervasive Russians-are-coming mentality, there was considerable concern expressed about federal involvement in schooling. Political opposition was couched in the name of states' rights, although lurking not very far behind this resistance was in fact opposition to school desegregation. Both the court decision and the federal legislation had direct impacts on

teachers and the classroom, as did the mammoth Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965.

The most recent federal involvement is the 2002 reauthorization of the ESEA, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), passed with little opposition and with few of the thundering outcries against federal intrusion that would have been heard just several decades ago. The NCLB's extensive intrusion into state and local schooling matters appears to be taken as a matter of course, even though cost studies show that the many demands of the federal legislation will not be met with federal monies; rather, the states themselves will have to reallocate monies already scarce in order to meet the new regulations.<sup>12</sup> Reallocation of state monies will have a direct impact on what the teacher does in the classroom and school.

### *The State and Compulsory Attendance Laws*

Given state-mandated, compulsory attendance, teachers (public school teachers, at any rate) mediate a relationship between state and parent and child. If for no other reason than mediating this relationship, the teacher's behavior is under constraints. Children are required by the state to be surrendered to the state for the good of the state. Teachers are directly involved in the surrender, for it is they who will receive and take temporary custody of the children. Compulsory schooling thus means that "My own classroom" is the parent's classroom and the state's classroom as well.

### *Teacher Preparation and the State*

States license those who would be teachers, and states approve programs that prepare teachers. Every state has the authority to dictate appropriate curriculum, and that authority has often been exercised with federal enthusiasm, posing many challenges to those who are charged with the actual operation of programs.<sup>13</sup> An indication of the relative powerlessness of teacher preparation programs to deal with state intrusion is offered by legislation passed by the Texas legislature in the late 1980s mandating a maximum of eighteen semester hours for the so-called professional component of teacher preparation programs. Were the legislature in its wisdom to attempt to cap the number of hours in a medical school program or attempt to tell university medical schools what should be tested in, say, a gross anatomy course, the medical establishment would oppose with success any such attempts. Teaching and the preparation of teachers, by contrast, are relatively easy targets for regulation. Not



only does every legislator who has ever attended school consider himself or herself an education expert, but education as a field lacks the social status and political power necessary to ward off intrusions. Those would-be teachers waiting until they get their own classrooms might well observe their own preparation programs and the astonishing extent of state regulation and intrusion; such observation would provide clues to what future teachers can expect in the way of independence.

### *The Teacher, the State, and the Law*

As can be seen from the discussion above, the law is interwoven throughout all aspects of the teacher-state relationship. There is little in the teacher's professional life (and in some respects private life) that is not regulated by law. Laws have been enacted to tell teachers what to teach, what not to teach, when to use lesson plans, how to touch children, how to behave outside of school, how not to criticize superiors, what clothes to wear, and what language to use.<sup>14</sup> The detail of the regulation is considerable. For example, the portions of the published versions of the Revised Code of Washington and the Washington Administrative Code pertaining to the common schools run to some twelve hundred pages.

These many laws and rules and regulations may be all to the good in protecting children from bad teachers. But curtailment of the freedom to act limits teaching, in much the same way that de Tocqueville warned of the consequences of a "regulated, mild, and peaceful servitude" with "a network of small, complicated, painstaking, uniform rules through which the most original minds and the most vigorous souls cannot clear a way to surpass the crowd."<sup>15</sup>

### **Teachers in Relation to the School District**

The number of school districts in the United States has been drastically reduced from a high of just over 127,000 in the early 1930s to fewer than 15,000 today. With state salary schedules for teachers and with limits on what local districts can raise through levies, districts have lost much of their power for discretionary action with, as we have seen, the states and the federal government gaining control. However, the teacher-district relationship still exists, and teachers are still constrained in their actions by districts. There is the constraint of testing, with many districts going beyond state requirements in their sometimes self-imposed fixation on test scores. There are constraints on behavior, and although some of the more flagrant invasions of privacy have been eliminated (e.g., no marriages allowed for female teachers, no consumption of alcohol and tobacco, and

the like), districts have more than a little influence over what teachers can and cannot do in and out of the classroom.<sup>16</sup> There is, as with the state, competition for resources. Classroom teachers are involved in constant competition in what is close to a zero-sum game. There are only so many minutes of instructional time in the day and in the school year. To require some classes is to put other classes in the shade. Thus, for example, the Bellevue, Washington, district decided to make passage of Advanced Placement classes a requirement for all students; as a result, art is no longer a graduation requirement, and speech communication, once required in high school, is now to be relegated to a middle school course.<sup>17</sup>

School boards, either of their own accord or in response to parental and community pressure, approve, disapprove, or alter curricula and curricular materials. Boards can choose to ban books or allow banned books to be addressed in limited ways to limited student audiences. There may be fewer districts than formerly, but those that remain exercise considerable influence.

Who the teacher actually sees in the classroom is a matter of district policy. A district that engages in tracking and in developing programs for the "gifted" will have a significant impact on classroom composition. How districts respond to and augment state and federal policy regarding special education students will also have an impact on who the teacher sees in her or his classes. "When I get my own classroom" becomes, from the district's point of view, "when you step into our classroom."

### Teachers in Relation to Parents and Guardians

As John Goodlad put it in *A Place Called School*, "We want it all." Parents want schools to focus on academics as well as vocational preparation as well as social goals as well as personal goals.<sup>18</sup> Many parents are concerned about social mobility for their children. Many parents believe in the connection claimed in the old saying, "To get a good job, get a good education." Many parents want their children in "gifted" programs, not only for the supposed economic payoff down the line, but because some "gifted" programs seem to involve better teachers, lower pupil-teacher ratios, and more resources.

These different views of what schools are for emerge not only in our own time, but for all time. As Aristotle noted, people are

by no means agreed about the things to be taught, whether we look to virtue or the best life. Neither is it clear whether education is more concerned with intellectual or with moral virtue. The existing practice is perplexing; no one knows on what principle we should proceed—should the useful in life, or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge, be the aim

of our training; all three opinions have been entertained. Again, about the means there is no agreement; for different persons, starting with different ideas about the nature of virtue, naturally disagree about the practice of it.<sup>19</sup>

There are disagreements with regard to purposes and practices. Moreover, there is no particular agreement as to how these various purposes and practices are to be adjudicated. In dealing with what to teach and how to teach, the teacher must consider contradictory claims and views of her clients (and she must consider, too, just who is to be considered a "client"). The teacher will no doubt have her own views to consider, too, and if those views are contrary to those of her clients or the district, then further choices must be made. One changes one's views, one bends to authority or demand, or one holds to an internal set of standards. Or one holds the internal standards in temporary suspension and out of prudence exhibits superficial acceptance of the outside demands, with the hope that once the bad part is over, one can return to behaving in accordance with internal standards. No matter what the response or strategy, there are costs. For the teacher to accede to parental pressure while personally holding to contradictory views is to sell part of one's personal and professional soul. To hold true to one's beliefs can be admirable, as was the case when Socrates faced the crowd criticizing his teachings—admirable, but costly.

### **Teachers in Relation to the Community**

A school exists in a community. The community includes school boards, parents, and representatives of the state. As such, the teacher-community relationship overlaps with the other relationships discussed thus far. However, there are other parts of the community that bear on how teachers conduct themselves. In every community one can expect to find political groups attempting to persuade schools and school districts to teach and behave in certain ways. These groups may also act in concert on given issues. For example, in the late 1970s, a combination of the Seattle Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Church Council of Greater Seattle, and the Seattle Mayor's Office (and, ultimately, a host of some eighty other political and community groups) persuaded the Seattle School District Board to proceed with a districtwide plan to desegregate the schools. The plan involved significant changes in the structure of the school day, student enrollment patterns, and curriculum.<sup>20</sup> Focus was placed on human relations, group interaction, and multicultural education, with teachers expected to deal with a wide variety of issues related to the new plan. Under such circumstances, there was considerable community and district intrusion into "my own classroom."

In many communities, political interest groups routinely put pressure on school districts to alter a curriculum. The issues may change from year to year (evolution, creationism, sex education, peace education, patriotism, and so forth), but the principle of intrusion remains active. Political interest groups routinely demand removal of what are seen as dangerous or immoral books from required reading lists or from the school library. Again, the titles may change (the Harry Potter books are currently stirring some people to action against satanic influences, and thus Harry joins Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield and a whole host of other inspired characters condemned for depravity or worse), but intrusion—threatened or actual—is commonplace.

Many of these challenges are, thankfully, turned aside by wise school boards. But the point is that the challenges are made, the intrusion is there, and teachers once on the job learn very quickly that the selection of class texts is a community and political affair, not just a decision to be made in one's own classroom.

### **Teachers in Relation to Others in the Workplace**

Teachers do not work alone, even though talk about isolation in the classroom is a commonplace. Teachers negotiate goals with principals, department heads, and colleagues. The question of who is actually going to teach what to whom and when is open to negotiation. The desires and assignments of some teachers will affect what happens to other teachers. If a teacher with many years of seniority and some influence in the school wants to teach Advanced Placement and "gifted" programs, that teacher will most likely get what he or she wants, including smaller class sizes, leaving the newcomer with the larger enrollments in the basic or remedial courses.

### **Teachers in Relation to Their Occupation or "Profession"**

Even in their own separate classrooms, teachers act in relation to their collective image of their occupation. As with any occupation, the field of teaching has over time established sets of norms, standards for how one is to behave under given conditions. Moreover, teachers have long sought recognition and legitimation as a profession, and part of being considered professional is the establishment of a code of conduct.<sup>21</sup> Some of the norms of behavior are learned in a teacher preparation program; these norms, along with others, are reinforced in the school setting. Teacher behavior is constrained not only by internal norms common to us all, but also by the external norms of the would-be teaching profession and the norms of professional associations and labor unions.<sup>22</sup> These con-

straints militate against the notion of the independence of being "in my own classroom."

## THE RELATIONSHIPS CONSIDERED

Thus far we have outlined relationships between teachers and the state, the school district, parents/guardians, the community, the workplace, and the profession of teaching. Considered alone or in combination, these relationships ensure that today's teachers are far from being independent commanders of their own classrooms. Rather, teachers are constrained in numerous legal, moral, social, and political ways. Will these relationships and their resultant constraints necessarily continue in their current form? Or is it possible for teachers to alter them?

A brief consideration of the past gives us ways to respond to these questions. In one form or another, the basic elements of the relationships have been with us since the emergence of human society in its current form some several thousand years ago. By definition, in that human society there have always been elements of some sort of governing structure or state; there has always been a community; there have always been parents; there have always been tensions between state and community and parents over enculturation of youths, and at least for the last several thousand years, there has been some form of instruction of the young by those assigned the formal role of teacher.

From the beginning, teachers have had to deal with constraints emerging from these relationships. Consider one of the first teachers in history whose story is known to us. We all know what happened when Socrates continued to teach in the face of political opposition. In the *Gorgias*, Callicles warns Socrates that he will be dragged into court, perhaps by "some scoundrel of the vilest character." Socrates replies bluntly, "I should be a fool, Callicles, if I didn't realize that in this state anything may happen to anybody."<sup>23</sup>

In modern times in the United States, we find that the schools have always been controlled by one unit of the state or another, and teachers have always acted under constraints. One of the early battles over control of schools was between local communities, mostly in rural areas, and urbanized school bureaucracies.<sup>24</sup> But whether the local community retained control of schools or lost that control to a larger bureaucracy, teachers in the schools were employees of a system, a system over which the teachers themselves had little or no control. Over the years since the founding of the National Education Association in 1857, teachers have gained some control over their work. But the fundamental relationships have not altered: the state in one manifestation or another—federal gov-

ernment, state government, local government—dictates who is to come to school, what is to be taught, how it is to be taught, and how to assess and evaluate the entire business.

Barring an entirely new way of construing human society, it appears that the fundamental relationships between state and community and parents and teachers cannot be renounced. The state will exist, and the state will insist that schooling be regulated and supervised and held accountable, all in the interest of the state. Communities and parents will exist. But if relationships cannot be renounced, cannot they be altered in ways to at least reduce the constraints they impose?

The experiences of some occupational groups suggest that the constraints caused by these relationships are indeed mutable. For example, in the United States we can observe major changes in the power of the medical profession over the last two hundred years. Physicians, like all others, must work within a state and community context. Until the second decade of the 20th century, physicians had relatively little control over their work. But with the advent of "scientific" medicine coupled with cultural authority—what Paul Starr termed "legitimate complexity"—physicians and others in the medical business developed and institutionalized considerable control.<sup>25</sup> That control has diminished over the last two decades, with physicians ceding power to both the state and insurance companies. The relationship between physician and state and individual has not—and cannot—be renounced, but the constraints of that relationship on the conduct of the physician's work have been altered. In the struggle for control over their work, physicians were able to develop and wield a great deal of power because of their enhanced professional status and the high prestige they developed in the community.

If political power coupled with the cultural power of high status and legitimacy are critical factors in reducing constraints over one's work, then it is clear that teachers have never been in a good position in the struggle for control. Speaking two thousand years ago, Juvenal commented as follows on the earnings of teachers: "When the school year's ended, you'll get as much as a jockey makes from a single race."<sup>26</sup> Nothing much has changed. The literature since the time of the Romans suggests that teachers have had little political power and have suffered comparatively low status.

And what of the future? Might teachers be able to lessen the constraints in the decades to come? The example of American physicians does not provide much hope for teachers. If physicians, despite comparatively high prestige and considerable political power, are finding that their work is increasingly under the control of the state, we can hardly expect teachers to fare any better. There is nothing to suggest that teachers will be able to find other ways to increase their power and prestige.

Julien Benda suggests that any society has to decide whether it wants its teachers to be servants or guides.<sup>27</sup> It seems a reasonable bet that our society will continue to see our teachers as servants.

If the foregoing analysis is anywhere near the mark, are teachers left with anything besides pious or resentful acceptance? Is there nothing to be done? My response is that the first order of political business is to understand clearly what the situation is and where one stands in relation to that situation. By looking at the relationships and consequent constraints head-on, teachers can develop a realistic sense of who they are and what they can and cannot do. Moreover, they will shake free of the fiction of professional independence and the dream of inviolate classrooms. Teachers can proceed to construct a professional existence based on a grounded sense of who they are in relation to themselves and others.<sup>28</sup> With that grounded sense, teachers might be able to engage politicians and policymakers in struggles to lessen some of the constraints of the relationships, to make their work a bit more creative and less robotic. Perhaps, in the end, prudent acceptance of a limited public role while nonetheless maintaining a satisfying private role is the best that teachers can do. In the wise words of Loren Eiseley, "In the days of the frost, seek a minor sun."<sup>29</sup>

And yet, for all that, skeptical and perhaps wiser voices yearn to be heard. My analysis and advice might be cool, rational, shrewd. Even if not all that much can be done, I seem to be saying, at least we can agree that forewarned is forearmed. Some would-be teachers might imagine that they are hearing not a call to arms but a call to disperse, and they might well want to thank me for leading them away from the precipice.

But for most would-be teachers, my conclusions and advice might be deemed accurate but not acceptable. Most would-be teachers sense that teaching and deciding to teach involves something more than listening to a rational and shrewd Polonius holding forth on the dangers and pitfalls of the teaching world. They have some informed sense of the constraints and difficulties outlined in this chapter, to be sure. They are not innocents, going ahead where angels fear to tread. They know the odds are not particularly in their favor in the same way that mountain climbers know the odds of conquering Annapurna. But odds against is rarely a compelling argument.

I know that even for myself, my own analysis and advice will not dissuade me from a teaching career. My home institution, the University of Washington, always has budget shortfalls, there is always pressure from the outside, the state education bureaucratic apparatus has its own views of what should be done here, but none of these pressures and constraints dissuade me. I will teach no matter what. (This willingness to teach no matter what is part of the problem, perhaps. The persistence of the many

teachers who will teach despite the problems leads to a tendency to put those problems aside, and they continue by default. To paraphrase Tiresias talking to Oedipus, we ourselves are the enemy we seek—because of our willingness to accept the tradeoffs between teaching and the threats to teaching.)

Would-be teachers know the negative aspects of teaching. They know that teaching will not make them rich. They know that teaching will not give them high status in the community. But that is not why they turn to or are called by teaching. In talking with teachers and would-be teachers over the years, I remain convinced that most people go into teaching for solid, morally defensible reasons. They sense that to be a teacher is, well, to be a teacher, and teaching has its own moral grounding, its own demands, its own rewards. They sense, in effect, what we discussed in the first volume that emerged as part of our Study of the Education of Educators, *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*. The book was given positive reviews, with sales over a decade maintaining unusually high levels for a work of this kind. I suspect that the strong response stemmed from the resonance many teachers felt with the arguments in the book, and with the notion that teaching was surely more than implanting knowledge or securing high test scores or intoning the tenets of values clarification. Teachers and would-be teachers had a strong sense that they were indeed moral and political agents, morally responsible to and for those they chose to teach.

During the course of a recent road trip to Kansas and back to our home state of Washington, my wife and I were stopped by a construction worker on an isolated two-lane road near Devils Tower.

"It's a one-way road up ahead. You'll have to wait here maybe fifteen to twenty minutes for the pilot car to take you through," she told us.

No problem. We noticed her car by the side of the road, with the usual college sticker in the back window.

"You're at the University of Nebraska," my wife said.

"That's right," replied our traffic worker.

"And what are you studying there?" I asked.

"Elementary education." Without missing a beat and without any cues from us, she continued: "I know there are a lot of hassles, and I don't like all the tests we keep running kids through, because they waste a lot of time, and I already know where the kids are anyway, and I don't like the way the curriculum is dictated by the state education people, but—"

"But what?" I interrupted.

"I want to be a teacher. I'm going to be a good one. I can't wait."

We talked until the pilot car came along with the eastbound traffic. Our turn now. We waved. "Thanks, and good luck to you," we said. We were on our way. So was she.



## NOTES

1. A note here on how I am using the word "teacher." In a general sense, we are all teachers. All of us teach ourselves. And we teach others. I learn a lot in watching my young grandson, Matthew, teach his younger brother how to play trains. But there is another sense of "teacher," the formal sense that we need to be concerned with here, the formal role of teacher in a formal schooling system. It is the formal sense of teacher that I deal with in this chapter.
2. For a summary of Study findings regarding student perceptions of teaching and preparing to teach, see John I. Goodlad, *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), Chapter 5.
3. Quoted in Herschell B. Chipp, ed., *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 548.
4. Stephen J. Kunitz, "Professionalism and Social Control in the Progressive Era: The Case of the Flexner Report," *Social Problems* 22 (October 1974): 25. For additional discussions of professions and independence and autonomy, see Terence J. Johnson, *Professions and Power* (London: Macmillan, 1972); Eliot Freidson, *Professionalism: The Third Logic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); as well as Freidson, *Professional Powers: A Study of the Institutionalization of Formal Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
5. For a consideration of teachers' desires for professional status and strategies for obtaining that status, see Roger Soder, "The Rhetoric of Teacher Professionalization," in John I. Goodlad, Roger Soder, and Kenneth A. Sirotnik (eds.), *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990).
6. Robert H. Wiebe, *The Segmented Society: An Introduction to the Meaning of America* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 29.
7. It should be noted that teachers are not alone in having to deal with a web of relationships. Physicians—at one time the leading occupational group claiming professional status—have always had to deal with intrusive relationships, particularly in recent years with widespread changes in the economics of healthcare delivery systems. What with many physicians working on salary for HMOs, the demands of insurance companies, and the pressures of malpractice suits, the supposedly autonomous professional physician is rarely to be found.
8. John I. Goodlad, *A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984), p. 48.
9. See, for example, Kenneth A. Sirotnik, "Promoting Responsible Accountability in Schools and Education," *Phi Delta Kappan* 83 (May 2002): 662–673.
10. Judith Billings, "WASL Minus Civics = Sinking Schooling," *Seattle Times*, 28 February 2003, p. B7.
11. For a discussion of the double bind of not testing and losing resources versus testing and becoming trivialized within the context of civic education, see Roger Soder, *Learning to Be Good Citizens in a Democracy: Reflections on Assessment and Evaluation Practices in Civic Education*, Occasional Paper No. 2 (Seattle: Institute for the Study of Educational Policy, University of Washington, 2002).

12. For an outline of ten state-cost studies pertaining to NCLB requirements, see William J. Mathis, "No Child Left Behind: Costs and Benefits," *Phi Delta Kappan* 84 (May 2003): 679-686.

13. For a useful discussion of the regulatory context of teacher preparation programs, see Goodlad, *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools*, Chapter 4.

14. For useful summaries of laws and regulations, see David Ruben with Steven Greenhouse, *The Rights of Teachers: The Basic ACLU Guide to a Teacher's Constitutional Rights* (New York: Bantam, 1984); as well as Louis Fischer, David Schimmel, and Cynthia Kelly, *Teachers and the Law* (New York: Longman, 1999); and Howard K. Beale, *A History of Freedom of Teaching in American Schools* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941).

15. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. II, Part 4, Chapter 6, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 663. For an insightful discussion of the tensions among creativity, freedom, and autonomy and thick bureaucracies, see Robert Nisbet, *The Present Age: Progress and Anarchy in Modern America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), Chapter 2, "The New Absolutism."

16. See Beale, *A History of Freedom of Teaching in American Schools*.

17. See, for example, Cara Solomon, "Schools' 'High Standards' Resisted: Bellevue Residents Object to District's Emphasis on Advanced-Level Courses," *Seattle Times*, 3 June 2003, p. B1, available at [http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/education/134881989\\_riley03m.html](http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/education/134881989_riley03m.html).

18. Goodlad, *A Place Called School*, pp. 33-60.

19. Aristotle, *Politics* 1337a, b, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Richard McKeon, (ed.) (New York: Random House, 1941).

20. For details, see Ann LaGrelus Siqueland, *Without a Court Order: The Desegregation of Seattle's Schools* (Seattle: Madrona, 1981).

21. For a discussion of the professionalization of the teaching occupation, see Soder, "Rhetoric of Teacher Professionalization"; see also Alan R. Tom, *Teaching as a Moral Craft* (New York: Longman, 1984).

22. It is ironic that teachers and those who claim to support them place so much emphasis on the image of "profession" at a time when the external dictates of what teachers are to teach, how they are to teach it, and how everyone will know whether they are teaching it have never been greater. We are in a time not of professionalization but, rather, of deprofessionalization.

23. Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Walter Hamilton (New York: Penguin, 1971), p. 139.

24. For a useful discussion of this battle, see David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 13-77.

25. Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), p. 71. For an overview of the changing power of the medical profession, see Soder, "Rhetoric of Teacher Professionalization," pp. 56-63.

26. Juvenal, "Satire No. 7," in *The Sixteen Satires*, trans. Peter Green (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1970), pp. 335-336.

27. Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, trans. Richard Aldington (New York: Norton, 1969).
28. Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998). See also James March, "Yo sé quien soy," in Kenneth A. Sirotnik and Roger Soder (eds.), *The Beat of a Different Drummer: Essays on Educational Renewal in Honor of John I. Goodlad* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 275-283.
29. Loren Eiseley, *The Immense Journey* (New York: Random House, 1957), p. 178.