



# Actors and act-ers: Enhancing inclusion and diversity in teaching and teacher education through the validation of quiet teaching<sup>☆</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

We find that Teacher Education attracts, in addition to those outgoing students who are at ease in front of a group of people, a number of student teachers who are often quiet, reserved, shy, or not at all comfortable being the center of attention. Many times these aspiring teachers have gifts and talents that are not readily apparent, yet comparable to their more outgoing peers. Often, they are caring, passionate, and reflective.

We will attempt to clarify the elusive concept of personality within the context of teaching and challenge commonly held assumptions of a “quiet” or introverted person. We will explore ways for teacher educators to validate the abilities of student teachers who seem quiet.

Toward these goals we will examine the pertinent literature to provide a perspective in which we can frame our revision of the conception of the “introverted” student teacher and the responsibilities of Teacher Education to them. Complexity Thinking<sup>1</sup> will serve as a lens to assist our understanding in this area. We will gain insights from those with “quiet voices”, that is, the student teachers, teachers, administrators, and teacher educators themselves who have addressed their own issues of quietness within the context of teaching.

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In learning to become a teacher, the practicum experience is central to the growth of the student teacher and a significant determining factor of success in the Teacher Education Program. It can be an intense period of introspection, self-discovery, and often involves a dramatic transformation in one's own assumptions regarding the core essence of how one characterizes one's self. How one relates to children in the classroom and to peers and instructors at the university may challenge a student teacher's habitual patterns of interacting with others. This metamorphosis of sorts, can be a significant challenge for student teachers who have a quiet nature, trying to become the focus of attention in a classroom of energetic, curious learners. The following discussion is directed toward university instructors, faculty advisors, school advisors, and others who are interested in optimizing their counsel to all of their

student teachers, including those with a quieter nature. It is for those hoping to find ways for all students to optimize their strengths in teaching even if those strengths are not expected in a stereotypical vision of teaching.

## 1. The structure of this paper

This discussion is largely written around the stories of recent teacher education graduates. Vignettes were created to summarize these experiences and responses to questions. They appear in italics throughout the paper to emphasize certain points or to transition from theme to theme. They are not generally cited because, firstly, they are intended to be anonymous to protect the privacy of our contributors and the people involved in the situations they describe, and, secondly, because the vignettes are often synthesized from the narratives of multiple speakers making similar points.

We begin our discussion with a situation where two quiet approaches to practicum are contrasted. There are differing responses from advisors and contrasting practicum outcomes. That sets up a critical questioning of accepted notions of personality which is then complexified, hopefully helping the readers to question a dichotomous conception of introversion and extraversion.

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<sup>1</sup> Complexity Thinking is a recent evolution of terms used to describe what is variously referred to as Complexity Science, Complexity Theory, Systems Theory, and others.

Further vignettes guide the reader through concepts that provide acceptance for the idea of quiet teaching:

1. The idea of actor and act-ers is introduced.
2. What constitutes good teaching and the value of a quieter approach is examined.
3. The importance of teaching with one's strengths is discussed.
4. We present the idea that all student teachers can gain entry into a paradigm of good teaching by moving from being actors to utilizing their strengths and becoming authentic act-ers, immersed in the needs of the moment.

## 2. Method

This paper is based on the narratives of 13 recent graduates who recounted their experiences during their year of teacher education.

Stories and narrative, whether personal or fictional, provide meaning and belonging in our lives. They attach us to others, and to our own histories by providing a tapestry rich with threads of time, place, character, and even advice on what we might do with our lives. The story fabric offers us images, myths, and metaphors that are morally resonant and contribute both to our knowing and our being known. (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 1)

These narratives were generated from interviews which were conducted in one-to-one meetings and small groups. These conversations took place in person, via email, or by telephone. These new teachers, some of who had already begun their professional practice, were diverse in their approaches to teaching and in their beliefs as to what qualities make a good teacher. Our interest was largely on “quiet teaching”. Therefore we ensured that graduates and teachers of a quiet nature, and who had identified their quietness as a significant issue during their teacher education, were among those who were interviewed. The significance of narration and its explanatory power is consistent with Ted Aoki's comment. “I also came to recognize that teachers' knowledge is narrative-based (Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I wanted to try ... [to] set teachers free from the cast of paradigmatic expression of knowledge” (p. 152). These narratives and responses were melded into vignettes that we believe capture the commonality of various experiences, emergent beliefs about teaching, and the lessons learned.

The vignettes emerge from a collective thought but also inform our thinking in a recursive way. That is, the experiences created stories which shaped our thinking, which generated further analysis, which created more stories. It is a form of action research. “Praxis is the notion that through action, theory is developed; that theory is in turn modified through further action” (Houser, 1990, p. 59). Complexity thinking, which will be elaborated on later, is a main tenet of our philosophical approach to this methodology and is well suited to assist us with the recursive nature of this method. The process was dynamic and responsive, and it creatively expanded our understandings in ways that we often could not predict.

### 2.1. An opening vignette

The following is a faculty advisor's recounting of two such student teachers whose “introversion” played a key role in their practicum experiences.

*The two student teachers were both twenty-two year old women with a minimum of experience in a work environment, particularly*

*with children. Both did their 13 week practicum at the same time in the same school, along with five other peers. Both were bright, creative, and hardworking and both exhibited a quiet, thoughtful, respectful demeanor in nearly all of their interactions.*

*The first, who we will refer to as Sara, was assigned to a challenging classroom of 6 and 7 year olds. There were several children who were impulsive in their actions and disruptive with their behavior. The supervising teacher had already established a positive and consistent routine to manage this behavior. Her first responsibility was to her own students. By the time practicum started, she had implemented a specific program and methodology to promote the best learning opportunities in a very challenging classroom. Having a student teacher would only be productive in this situation if they followed the same specific program and methods. Thus by default, Sara's goal was to adopt this routine and to address classroom issues in the same manner as the classroom teacher had established. The second student teacher, who we will refer to as Karen, was assigned an active intermediate class of 9 and 10 year olds. The supervising teacher encouraged Karen to experiment and find the approach to teaching that worked best for her.*

*Both student teachers struggled with classroom management and tried to be firm, fair, and consistent. In Sara's case, she tried to be animated, used positive reinforcement, logical consequences, and even extrinsic rewards. The children responded gradually. However, the process was much too gradual and the situation began to take its toll on Sara, her supervisor, and the students. Furthermore, the animated, chatty style that Sara's faculty advisor and supervisor had encouraged her to develop never seemed natural for her and she was not comfortable adopting that persona.*

*On the other hand, Karen adopted the strategies being used by her school advisor, but eventually began to try out her own techniques. She never became particularly animated or talkative like her supervising teacher and no one insisted that she did. She tended toward brief introductions to student-directed activities, extensive group and individual work, spending much of her time one-to-one or in small groups, and developing close relationships with each child. She attended to how each of them learned best, including those with special needs.*

*As the midpoint of the practicum approached, Sara's progress plateaued. The lessons became more about managing behavior than about teaching. This made the lessons ineffective and caused her level of stress to increase. Among discussions with many colleagues, desperately seeking advice, the faculty advisor consulted with a school vice-principal, who asked a critical question: “Is she able to be herself?” The faculty advisor had to admit that that was exactly what she was not being allowed to be. At last, after enduring several painful weeks of late-night planning and struggles with management during the day, in consultation with her faculty advisor, Sara decided to withdraw from the practicum.*

*The following week was eventful for the faculty advisor whose remaining group of six teacher candidates at the school began to lose confidence, comparing their own performance and abilities to Sara's, whom they all respected and admired. Several of them reached crises points in which they had to re-examine their own strengths and weaknesses. Some even struggled with the same decision to withdraw from practicum. Karen was not an exception. Overwhelmed by the departure of one of her close peers and the stresses from practicum and outside of school, she broke down. Since Karen was a quiet person, it was difficult for her faculty advisor to get her to verbalize the issues she was experiencing. Finally, after a cursory list of troubles, she found the words to define the issue that troubled her the most: “There aren't any quiet teachers!”*

*Karen entered the classroom the next day with a renewed determination. Surprisingly, she remained a quiet teacher. When*

addressing the class, she spoke in a normal respectful tone and the children, with whom she had established productive relationships based on respect, knew it was time to listen. After a short introduction, she had students work in small groups and she circulated around to each student, addressing their individual needs, and eventually completed a very successful practicum.

In both cases, these student teachers demonstrated what most refer to as introverted behaviors. In the end it became clear that it was not quietness or thoughtfulness or respect that presented obstacles to their completion of the program. Rather, Karen was encouraged to experiment, establish personal relationships, and to become her emerging self as a teacher. Due to the situation in her practicum classroom, Sara never had those opportunities.

## 2.2. Personality

The terms introversion and extraversion were coined by famed personality psychologist Carl Jung. The two words became popularized and in the process became generalized to characterize individuals in a dualistic manner. A person is either introverted or extraverted. Jung and Barnes (1921) purported that the two differ in the manner in which energy is gained. Extraverts refer to the outside world through interacting with others or the environment, whereas introverts do so through internal events, such as reflection and being alone (Kise, 2007; O'Connor, 1985). The contrast in direction of energy flow naturally leads to the assumption that the two are different and ultimately opposing personality traits (O'Connor, 1985). In fact, Hall and Lindzey (1979), argued that such polarity is present everywhere in one's personality. It is evident in Jung's works that such dualism was not his original intention (Proffoff, 1953). Jung suggests that both mechanisms are present in each individual (O'Connor, 1985), but people have a predisposition to focus on one of the two (Proffoff, 1953). Therefore personality type pivots on a relative predominance of one over the other (O'Connor, 1985). Jung believed that personality components need not be at odds with each other. Instead, the psychologist's work suggests that the ultimate goal is to "unit[e] the opposing trends in personality and [work] toward the goal of wholeness" to synthesize an integrated personality (Hall & Lindzey, 1979).

Using Jung's conceptual framework, Myers and Briggs (Myers, 1975; Myers & McCaulley, 1985) developed a Personality Type Table of sixteen interrelated categories. While potentially better than a dualistic introverted/extraverted characterization, Arnau, Thompson, and Rosen (1999) noted that the Myers–Briggs measure, although popular:

1. Yield[s] dichotomized types rather than continuous scores (see Cowan, 1989; Garden, 1991; Girelli & Stake, 1993; Loomis & Singer, 1980);
2. Does not acknowledg[e] that some people may have relatively neutral or undifferentiated preferences on some dimensions (Meisgeier & Murphy, 1987, p. 9); and
3. Invok[es] a forced-choice, ipsative response format, which inherently yields spurious negative correlations among items (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 463).

These limitations of Myers–Briggs' conceptual framework are representative of the misinterpretations that Jung's work often suffers from and calls for a way of thinking that moves away from the reduction of personality to discrete types.

Further, other studies (such as Briggs, 1998; Briggs and Smith, 1986; Cheek and Briggs, 1990; Cheek and Kransnoperova, 1999) postulate various components related to the concept of shyness (as cited in Crozier and Alden, 2001). They claim that each of the

components are important elements of shyness but they conclude that not all components need to be present and there is variation in individuals who perceive themselves as introverts.

We will use Complexity Thinking to support a very different view of personality and to combat the misapplication of terms such as *introversion*, which can result in the stigmatization of certain individuals. A Complexity point of view challenges the reduced or categorized notion of personality, focusing on the wholeness of the personality and the interconnected relationships among various behaviors. It accepts the fact that a person is influenced by associations with others and that there is a tendency to adopt a group perspective. Personality, through a Complexity lens, is indeed fluid and dynamic.

For the purposes of this paper, we will refer to the concept of the *introvert* as an arbitrary assignment of terminology to a changeable group of attributes, inextricably linked to the *extravert* in a holistic rather than dualistic manner. While some personality theorists contend that individuals can be neatly categorized into personality types (Myers, 1975), we believe that a person's behavior depends greatly upon the situation, and may change within a given situation, making it difficult to classify. Scott (2007), for example, contends that 'shyness' is socially constructed and the *introvert* is a role that "we learn to inhabit, and one that involves socially shaped processes of identity work" (p. 9). Furthermore, in agreement with Jung's initial premise, everyone may exhibit a variety of both 'introverted' and 'extraverted' behaviors, at times simultaneously.

*Reiko is an outgoing, social, well-liked teacher education student. Near the start of her Social Studies Teaching Methods course, students signed up for specific topics that they were interested in and groups were formed accordingly. A week prior to Reiko's group presentation, her group met to plan. They shared ideas. Reiko brought a newspaper clipping to add to the presentation and the group agreed it was a good contribution. This kind of planning offered her the security and confidence to be an active participant, verbally and otherwise. On the day of the presentation, the group got together in the morning to review and fine tune the assignment. Two of the group members came up with a new plan for the presentation, which did not include Reiko's newspaper article. For Reiko and one of her quieter classmates, Angus, nervousness set in, and so did shock and anger. Throughout the presentation Reiko and Angus said absolutely nothing for the half hour and felt very embarrassed. Reiko later explained that if she had been more assertive, she would have questioned her classmates and "clearly established everyone's roles and contributions," but that side of her does not express itself when she is surrounded by dominant people. By contrast, Reiko's discomfort in front of adults did not exist when she was in front of children during the practicum. "Children are not judgmental. Their innocence means that their comments are never intended to be hurtful".*

We believe a holistic perspective allows us to better understand such a complex, nebulous, even vague concept like personality. Classifying people in a binary way by labeling them as extraverted and introverted is much too simplistic to be all that useful. The implication of a holistic way of thinking is that everyone has both tendencies. This means that a consideration of introverted tendencies as well as extravertedness in teacher education is important in our interactions with *all* student teachers. Rather than discouraging quietness, deference, and self-reflection, we need to examine the values and strengths that these offer to teaching, and address the corresponding obstacles that are placed in the way of the success of a quieter approach to teaching.

Out of ignorance...we divide the perceived world into separate objects that we see as firm and permanent, but which are really transient and ever-changing. Trying to cling to our rigid categories



instead of realizing the fluidity of life, we are bound to experience frustration after frustration.... To cling to this idea of self leads to the same pain and suffering...as the adherence to any other fixed category of thought (Capra, 1996, p. 294–295).

In fact, fluidity and change are the very essence of learning (Davis & Simmt, 2003, p. 138). Therefore uncritically assigning the label of introvert (or extravert), inhibits our envisioning of the changeable, learning person.

### 3. Complexity

We live in a complex world. In the last two or three hundred years, human beings have become better at understanding complex entities such as living systems. The tendency is to break these entities down into smaller pieces, focusing on parts instead of the whole, and/or creating arbitrary categorizations to study independently from the distracting, confusing, complex whole. We have made amazing scientific gains by using reductionist methods. We have also made tragic mistakes by not recognizing the interconnectedness of systems as we concentrate only on the constituent components. We have examined pieces but missed patterns.

The recent sharp increase in grain prices has wreaked havoc in the world's grain markets, and world hunger is now on the rise again after a long steady decline. In addition, increased fuel consumption accelerates global warming, which results in crop losses in heat waves that make crops wither, and from the loss of glaciers that feed rivers essential to irrigation. When we think systemically and understand how all these processes are inter-related, we realize that the vehicles we drive, and other consumer choices we make, have a major impact on the food supply to large populations in Asia and Africa. (Capra, 2008, p. 3)

Many teacher education programs focus on the tangible, concrete, measurable components of teacher preparation. Too often, there is a focus on standards and checklists more than the qualities of teaching, such as care, compassion, and intuition. There is value in reductionist measures, but they are not enough on their own when engaging with complex systems. Personality tests, for example, are great conversation starters, but remain highly contested (Arnau et al., 1999). We argue that personality is a property of a complex system that cannot be fully understood using reductionist means. We must attend to the many interconnections that constitute the identity of ourselves and, in teacher education, the students that we work with. This attention will enable us to optimize their teacher preparation at the university and in the practicum setting.

Davis and Sumara (2005) identify five characteristics of a complex system. Identifying these characteristics gives us an assurance that the phenomena under study is indeed a complex system. These characteristics are networks, disequilibrium, feedback loops, self-organization, and self-similarity (or nestedness). Complexity Thinking does, indeed, invite us to regard personality as a complex system (Clarke & Collins, 2007).

Personality emerges from a network of interactions that include emotion, environment, actions, conversations, and biology. We argue that personality is continually adapting based on the constant interplay that a person encounters, socially and in their environment, and the need to adjust one's presentation of themselves appropriately to each situation.

As such, in keeping with the ideas offered by Complexity Thinking, personality can be regarded as a dynamic system, continually developing and adapting to various situations. It is not static but in a state of *disequilibrium*. Though there may often be repeated responses in a variety of situations, we are always learning

and that means our personality is always changing in some respects.

Personality is in a state of disequilibrium but that does not mean it is unstable. It means, as in all complex systems, that they are in a continual state of change, but adaptation is the normal state. This is an important assurance because we require some predictability in dealing with people, so long as we realize that all of us are in a fluctuating state of *self-organization*. This organization results in stability which allows us to cope coherently with the world around us.

Our personalities self-organize in response to the *feedback loops* generated through both internal and external interactions. This is the recursive quality of emergent personalities as tangentially alluded to earlier. Changes in the environment outside of us makes changes to our internal feelings and thoughts that adjust our interaction strategies in particular situations. That means that we may change the external environment, which changes other factors, which in turn feeds back to our internal adjustments.

Personality can be thought to exist at *self-similar* levels. That is, it can be regarded as both an individual and a collective phenomenon. We can identify a group personality whenever there is a collective and we do tend to 'become who we are with.'

Clearly personality changes because it adapts in light of changing environments, situations, and social expectations.

For example, Murray, Rushton, and Paunonen (cited in Polk, 2006, p. 26) found that students' ratings of their teacher's personality were different depending on which class was being taught. In other words, a class can shape the personality of its teacher. Good teachers accommodate the needs of their students. One of our contributors describes how her personality changed in response to a new situation.

*Reiko's teacher education program allowed students the opportunity during practicum to experience what it is like to be a Teacher-On-Call (TOC) by switching classrooms with one of their peers in another school. Reiko's "TOC class" was entirely different from her regular eight and nine year old students, who were calm, well-behaved, and eager to learn. This new class was made up of ten to twelve year olds who were excited about having a new teacher. At the start, they were a bit mischievous in order to test this TOC and were generally much more independent than what Reiko was used to. In addition, no day plan had been left for her. She got to know the students as they entered the classroom. She instinctively changed her tone for the older students. She found that she did not have to be as directive in regard to behavior. She spontaneously decided to take a risk in playing a math game to explore her new relationships with the students. She was able to teach as competently in this new situation as in her regular class. Later she told her Faculty Advisor, who had seen her teach primary children many times, that in this situation he would have seen a different kind of teacher with a different style and a different kind of delivery. She had adapted her approach to teaching in response to what she was learning 'on the fly' in a new setting.*

### 4. Actors and act-ers

The previous vignette is an example that highlights the contrast between what we call "Actors and Act-ers". Many teachers, particularly new teachers, approach a lesson as actors. They act the way that they think a teacher must act in that situation. They "play the role" of teacher. However, when they are immersed in the lesson, responding to student interactions, assessing, creating, thinking on their feet, relating, caring, these teachers engage in reflecting in action. "The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds

uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation” (Schön, 1983, p. 68). These teachers act authentically because they are completely connecting to what has to be done in the moment, rather than following a script like actors. They become “act-ers”.

By thinking in this way, recognizing the fluidity of personality and our inherent ability to learn to be the best “me” for various situations, we can free ourselves of the limitations of categories and dualisms and engage with the uniqueness of individuals and situations, searching for ways to value the understated strengths that everyone has. Since personality is always in process, not static, there is much hope for learning and adapting to the challenges provided by teacher education.

#### 4.1. The qualities of a good teacher

We cannot will maturity in our children. We must wait, listen and act exquisitely, i.e., act in response to what is called for, not just because we can act. To make our actions “exquisite”, we must clear away the rattle and hum of unnecessary, uncalled-for action and noisy announcements, so that the need to act can begin to stand out. We must begin to believe that silence may be our most articulate response. Silence must become possible again. In the midst of silence, a word, a gesture, a cry, can finally mean something, because we can finally hear, finally listen. (Jardine, 1990, p. 230)

Many authors have identified characteristics of the “good teacher”. For example, Murphy, Delli, and Edwards (2004) studied the perspectives of practicing teachers, student teachers, and elementary school children. They found that there was agreement that good teachers are “caring, patient, not boring, and polite” (p. 87). Good teaching is characterized by student-centered instruction where the teacher was active, which promoted active learning on the part of students. Similarly, Farr-Darling, Erickson, and Clarke (2007) states, “curiosity, humility, initiative, and empathy are among the qualities teachers should possess” (p. 9). Polk (2006, p. 26) cites ambition, intelligence, sense of humor, and enthusiasm. It should be evident that none of these characteristics of the good teacher are outside the range of qualities that could be possessed by a quiet approach, nor does moderate quietness mitigate against these perspectives of good teaching.

#### 4.2. The teaching strengths of the quiet act-er

Using Complexity to expand the concept of personality in teaching makes our discussion of classroom teachers more inclusive. These ideas around quiet teaching apply to all of our student teachers. It also removes a stigmatized way of thinking about quiet teachers. However, it may make our recommendations less tangible and less specific. To mitigate this concern, we believe it is essential to discuss teaching strategies not solely from the point of view of personality weaknesses, but rather in terms of individual strengths.

*Sara believed that not being animated and chatty was a weakness. It seemed so natural and worked so well for her supervising teacher. She just needed to ‘buck up’ and work on those skills. The development of these characteristics became of paramount importance and soon Sara began to devalue her own strengths. She worked hard at being animated and chatty but it was incredibly tiring. She had to become “a very hyper version” of herself, but it wasn’t working.*

*Samantha had an abundance of experience with day camps and was able to create rapport with children almost immediately. It was obvious that students adored this friendly, energetic teacher. She had a charisma that drew others toward her. In spite of a slow start to practicum, where she, like Sara, tried to emulate her supervising teacher, she began to realize that her rapport with children was her strength. She began to build her classroom management around the strong relationships that she could have with children. This transformed her practicum, energized her interactions in the classroom, and instilled in her a love for teaching.*

These two vignettes depict what seem to be a failure and a success of student teachers in focusing on their strengths. Traditionally, the term *strength* has been used to depict areas in which we excel. However, among these traits, some of our strengths often leave us exhausted and de-motivated. This should not be the case—working with strengths should energize. Linley and Harrington (2006) have provided a useful definition: “A strength is a natural capacity for behaving, thinking, or feeling in a way that allows optimal functioning and performance in the pursuit of valued outcomes” (p. 41). Working with our strengths energizes us. Based on the above definition, it makes sense that one should endeavor to achieve success through one’s authentic strengths. Studies have shown that “playing to our strengths enhances well-being because what comes naturally generates feelings of autonomy, competence, confidence, and self-esteem” (p. 41). Strengths also enhance performance because “we can go with our own flow, rather than struggling upriver” (p. 42) as in the cases of Samantha and Sara.

Encouraging individual student teachers to identify their strengths and to reflect on how these can best be incorporated into their teaching will lead to an optimal and effective teaching style. The other aspect of a strength-oriented perspective is that it tells us, as teacher educators, that it is not useful for all student teachers to approach teaching through a highly verbal method, especially if that is not a preferred approach and, therefore, likely not their strength.

*Waiting outside class for Social Studies Methods one day, Angus’s instructor took him aside and asked him to speak more in class that day. The Instructor was genuinely concerned and hoped to maximize Angus’s learning experience, as well as have the latter share his intelligent insights with others in the class. The Instructor wanted him to participate more in general. The result was unexpected. Although Angus tried, he was upset by his instructor’s inability to understand him better and became even less able to participate than usual. He simply shut down.*

#### 4.3. Acting on one’s strengths

Every teacher has strengths. Each has skills or abilities that energize them and allow them to be successful. Identifying these strengths is not difficult. If teachers (and student teachers alike) can find ways to apply their strengths in teaching, it provides them with a positive situation that maximizes both classroom learning and enjoyment in interacting with students. It may be challenging to switch one’s perception of one’s own teaching from being an actor to an act-er. The strengths that some student teachers bring to teaching may not be centered on the verbal skills that are traditionally associated with teaching. In fact, verbal skills may not be strong at all. Our argument then, is that new teachers should focus on their areas of strength rather than engaging in the unlikely task of developing their weaknesses into strengths. Certainly teachers must address the class verbally, but that does not have to be the center of their practice. For example, many teachers rely on

graphical communication, the use of media, one-to-one or small group interactions, or written presentation.

But being an 'actor' may serve well as a place to get started. They may act how they believe a teacher should be, often having a traditional model of that in mind. In this case the student teacher's focus would be on him or herself, as if viewed from an external vantage. That is, they will evaluate their own performance using expectations formed from traditional, often verbal, ways of teaching. However, the student teacher can be encouraged to make a transformation to the act-er approach. This is a shift from the external, evaluative view, to an internal view of their actions with the students. They begin to respond to what is needed in an instinctive way that utilizes their strengths. Then, they are no longer acting, thinking about themselves and their performance. They are in action, thinking about their students. They are immersed in the required interactions of the moment and exercising their unique competencies as they have learned to do in every other area of their lives in which they are successful. As advisors, instructors, and mentors, we must encourage them to do so.

#### 4.4. A concluding vignette

*Sara, who had withdrawn from her first practicum, met with the Coordinator of the Teacher Education Program at the university. He knew Sara had huge potential. He also knew that people learn in different ways and at different rates. He made recommendations for her to take a classroom management course, join Toastmasters, participate in drama workshops, and made a counselor available. Sara received lots of encouragement and advice from teacher friends during the summer courses following practicum and benefited greatly from the support of her cohort. She was "fed up" with her lack of assertiveness and was intent on making the next practicum experience an enjoyable and successful one. In the period leading up to the second attempt, she tried out new activities, including Taekwondo lessons. Sara also spent time volunteering in various classrooms and completed a course in classroom management. These diverse and sometimes challenging activities helped Sara maintain sight of her ultimate goal.*

*The Coordinator found a new practicum site, which he felt would match Sara's strengths and needs. Sara loved her new practicum class in an all day kindergarten. She was encouraged to use her creativity, hard work, organizational abilities, and her sense of care. She was enabled in experimenting and in finding what worked best for her. In the process, she rediscovered all the reasons why she had wanted to pursue a career in education. Sara successfully completed what the Coordinator referred to as "an outstanding practicum". After a total of 24 weeks of practicum and an unshakable determination to become a teacher, Sara was hired as a Teacher on Call in a Metro Vancouver school district and is well on her way to becoming an exceptional teacher.*

## 5. Conclusion

We believe that the distinction between actors and act-ers in learning to teach provides a way of reconceptualizing traditional assumptions about personality in teachers. We do not call for the dismissal of one paradigm to replace another. Rather, from a Complexity Thinking sensibility, we argue that many approaches have a role to play in learning to teach. We believe that good teaching ultimately depends on authentic action taken by act-ers regardless of whether teaching strengths lie in the verbal or non-verbal realm. Rather than insisting on a contrived status quo, it is

important for advisors to foster authentic action within the domain of their student teachers' strengths. Therefore, an important value for teacher education is to encourage student teachers to become act-ers as their practicum unfolds.

In this way, teacher educators can maximize the potential in their student teachers by focusing on and developing their strengths rather than risking frustration and discouragement by over stressing areas of weakness. They can entertain the idea of quiet teaching and validate it for their students when appropriate. They can highlight the strength in quietness. Beginning with acting like what they think a teacher is as a starting place, as Sara did, student teachers can begin their self-discovery and then explore their teaching strengths to "become themselves" as teachers through authentic action.

While we have not encountered the notion of quiet teaching in the teacher education literature, we hope that the analysis and discussion presented in this paper provides a stimulus for further critical exploration of the role of personality in teaching in the hope of extending inclusion and supporting diversity of future educators.

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