Professional Care and Vocation
Cultivating Ethical Sensibilities in Teaching

Timothy W. Wineberg
Professional Care and Vocation
Tim Wineberg is an extraordinarily gifted thinker and teacher. His book grapples with what it means for busy practitioners to see the privileged yet exacting work of teaching as a professional vocation. His thesis is that the extraordinary challenges of teaching in every teacher’s life require an ongoing cultivation of moral and spiritual sensibilities. However, with the exigencies of daily-ness, he argues that teachers tend to forget or lose sight of a person’s need for transcendence. That is, they shy away from considering themselves and their work with the reverent attentiveness that both deserve. He argues that the language and substance of vocation in teaching with its meanings and values can help teachers recover a sense of profundity and grandeur in the relationships and transformation that lie at the heart of teaching.

Wineberg brings a consistently insightful and critical lens to bear on these issues with an analysis that is conceptually rich and enlightening. In sum, he clarifies what it means to talk about teaching as a vocation, arguing that teaching is inherently a moral as well as intellectual undertaking, and that conceiving of teaching as a moral vocation offers teachers a powerful and compelling image of the importance of this long-standing human practice.

This work is very significant in that it provides a framework for understanding how busy teachers in today’s postmodern world may deal with all the work intensity, personal disequilibrium, and the political contestation that come their way.

Peter P. Grimmett
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Rationale:

This series purposely sets out to illustrate a range of approaches to Professional Learning and to highlight the importance of teachers and teacher educators taking the lead in reframing and responding to their practice, not just to illuminate the field but to foster genuine educational change.

Audience:

The series will be of interest to teachers, teacher educators and others in fields of professional practice as the context and practice of the pedagogue is the prime focus of such work. Professional Learning is closely aligned to much of the ideas associated with reflective practice, action research, practitioner inquiry and teacher as researcher.
Professional Learning

Volume 1
Understanding and Developing Science Teachers Pedagogical Content Knowledge
Amanda Berry, John Loughran, and Pamela Mulhall
Monash University, Clayton, Australia

Volume 2
Self-Study and Diversity
Deborah Tidwell and Linda Fitzgerald (eds.)
University of Northern Iowa, USA

Volume 3
Dimensions of Professional Learning
Professionalism, Practice and Identity
Amanda Berry, Allie Clemans and Alexander Kostogriz
Monash University, Clayton, Australia

Volume 4
Teachers Learning in Communities
International Perspectives
Michal Zellermayer and Elaine Munthe (eds.)
University of Stavanger and Levinsky College of Education

Volume 5
Professional Care and Vocation
Cultivating Ethical Sensibilities in Teaching
Timothy W. Wineberg
PROFESSIONAL CARE AND VOCATION

Cultivating Ethical Sensibilities in Teaching

Timothy W. Wineberg
For my wife, Eileen, whose life exemplifies caring, joyful service.
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SERIES EDITOR’S FOREWORD

This series in Professional Learning aims to create new possibilities for better documenting, articulating and portraying professional knowledge of practice. Each of the books in the series draws attention to different facets of professional learning.

The series was initiated in response to the growing interest of teachers, teacher educators and others in fields of professional practice that were concerned with the need to develop deeper understandings of the context, identity and practice of pedagogues. This volume by Timothy Wineberg adds a new dimension to the series as he aims to “assist practitioners to come to a more profound understanding of what professional care entails, and the vital importance of one’s own ethical formation or development in this work”.

Studies in professional learning need to demonstrate a strong commitment to assisting in the development of deeper understandings of the nature of professional practice and ways of developing and sharing that knowledge with others; there can be little doubt that Wineberg certainly does that in this text. He does so by carefully and thoughtfully developing an argument based on a consideration of teaching as an “intellectual and moral endeavour”.

Wineberg reconceptualizes the notion of professional obligation through an articulation of moral categories and metaphorical images. In the first chapter, *Ethics of sacrifice: The teacher as servant*, he illustrates the importance of cultivating a contemplative stance which enables an attentiveness and responsiveness to the particularities of “the persons and tasks around us with love and care”.

*Ethics of community: The teacher as moral friend* is grounded in the importance of mutuality in pedagogy, with students necessarily being viewed as co-participants. Clearly then, from this perspective “critical and honest insight into the nature of our personal relations” with students is crucial.

*Ethics of craft: The teacher as mentor* introduces mentoring and mentorship as an image of pedagogical relation. From this vantage point, pedagogical craft is viewed as being idiosyncratic. Therefore, mentoring, through its “language and sensibility of gift-exchange, inevitably values personal and relational dimensions”.

*Ethics of tradition: The teacher as covenantor* takes up the theme of gift-giving in pedagogical relations and places it in the framework of covenantal relations. Covenants involve commitments and therefore have a place in shaping the nature of identity. Through a covenantal ethic “mutual need, gift, and indebtedness” are explored leading to a view that “not only are professional codes and contracts subordinate to covenantal arrangements, they find their higher purpose and meaning within covenants”.

Wineberg closes his book with the *Ethics of moral imagination: The teacher as moral companion*. As he makes clear, the role of imagination is important for “broadening and reordering our moral landscape” and, it may well be that in so doing, it also offers insights into a journey of the “self” in the quest for self-transcendence”.

At the end of each chapter, Wineberg poses a number of “questions for further reflection” which illustrate again his desire to continually engage the reader with
the text. As will be quickly evident to you, this book has been very carefully
crafted and thoughtfully constructed. Wineberg’s attention to detail and critical
analysis is impressive and I have no doubt that the challenges and possibilities he
creates in the following pages will carry special meaning for you as a reader and
learner.

This is a book that you will no doubt read many times and, each time, find
something new.

John Loughran
Monash University, Australia
PREFACE

Vocation refers to work that serves the good of others and at the same time offers meaning, identity, and fulfilment for oneself. It is my conviction that the best professional work properly integrates this personal dimension – especially the work in the helping professions that is inherently relational. This book is directed to those serious-minded educators who are eager to have their work draw upon their best energies and the various facets of their personhood. It is directed to educators who wish to consider anew the pedagogical obligations and ethical sensibilities associated with practice – and so to be engaged, imaginative, and responsive in fulfilling its demands. Its aim is to assist practitioners to come to a more profound understanding of what professional care entails, and the vital importance of one’s own ethical formation or development in this work.

This volume is situated within the rich tradition of scholarship on teaching as an intellectual and moral endeavour. Notable in this tradition are Dwayne Huebner, P. W. Jackson, Thomas F. Green, Paulo Freire, Maxine Greene, Herbert Kohl, David Hansen, David Purpel, Hugh Sockey, Margret Buchmann, Max van Manen, Patricia Carini, and Hanan Alexander. It also draws upon a range of scholars who are not teacher educators – especially philosophers and theologians – as well as my own experiences as a public school teacher and a teacher educator. The result, I believe, is a book that explores professional ethics from a solid intellectual grounding, yet with practical implications in view.

My approach to professional ethics focuses not upon ethical theories or dilemmas, but rather upon the moral development of educators. This is vital because as we develop our sensibilities of perception and qualities of character, we can better interpret practice situations and respond fittingly. This approach also seeks to reconceptualise our professional obligation by viewing it through five fundamental moral categories and by embodying it in five substantial pedagogical images. When critically engaged and appropriated, these ethical images lend substance and depth to our commitments. They also provide greater clarity, order, and meaning to our perceptions, and they supply powerful imperatives for our own moral development.

I have sought to organize the text so that a sense of continuity and development is evident, yet each one of the five chapters may be considered separately. Educators may recognize in these pages parallels to their own experience, and they may wish to reflect further upon those experiences as they consider how to respond more adequately to the call of young people in their lives. This volume aims not at supplying information per se, but rather at prompting a deeper critical understanding of fundamental and enduring aspects of educational work. Such understanding and discernment can only emerge in wrestling with the text thoughtfully and patiently, and with an honest and humble spirit. It is my hope that this volume will serve to not only provoke new questions and insights, but also stimulate productive conversation and debate.