Self-Study Approaches and the Teacher-Inquirer

Instructional situations Case Analysis, Critical Autobiography, and Action Research

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This book examines self-study methodologies and their relevance to professional growth among teachers. The book puts forward the following arguments: Self-study as a research approach involves basic research skills, therefore constituting an important step for non-professional inquirers aspiring to more complex research. Self-study is a powerful tool in support of professional growth among teachers. Self-study comprises a set of approaches, among them instructional situations case analysis, critical autobiography, and action research.

The book offers some interesting perspectives on the following issues:
- The book focuses on the writer’s experience as a teacher educator who has elicited and motivated self-studies among student teachers and teachers.
- The book brings together three related self-study methodologies: instructional situations case analysis, critical autobiography, and action research.
- The book offers a new perspective on implementing and analyzing instructional situation cases through the “authentic case of teaching” and the “expected case of teaching,” a perspective developed by the writer and implemented in her classes.
- The book provides a fresh view of critical autobiography as a powerful tool teachers can use to examine their own practice and professional development.
- The book introduces critical discourse analysis as a useful tool for researchers. This tool enables teacher-inquirers to reveal their ‘sense of professional self’ and their professional identity as it emerges in teaching cases they provide.
- Teachers and researchers can easily apply the methodologies described in this book to their own teaching and research arenas.

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Foreword by Naama Sabar Ben-Yehoshua

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TEACHERS’ SELF STUDY, IDENTITY AND THE QUALITATIVE PARADIGM

In my capacity as an interpretive narrative researcher, I aspire to raise the level of professionalism among teachers through the rational and coherent use of qualitative research tools. Hence, I see a direct connection between qualitative interpretive research in education and self-study, the topic of this book written by Hanna Ezer, my former student and creative colleague.

The years I have spent engaged in qualitative research and in studying its impact on teacher education have underlined my belief that the qualitative research paradigm is an important tool in the hands of teacher-researchers and one that facilitates professional development among teachers. Self-study is situated in the interface between qualitative research as a tool in professional development among teachers and their search for a professional identity. As such, it enhances both professional development and professional identity. Indeed, self-study changes the way in which teachers think, for it leads them to move from intuitive and sometimes emotional thinking to systematic and rational thinking based on evidence. Hence, a teacher’s professional identity is significant, primarily because the very act of forming an identity leads to a refinement of personal perceptions of the profession. In turn, this refinement itself constitutes a first step in becoming a professional.

In The Jewish-Israeli voyage: Culture and identity (2006), Avi Sagi asserts that professional identity develops along a continuum of three layers. It begins with a layer of vague acquaintance with the professional self, continues through a layer of identification with the profession, and ultimately reaches a layer of knowledge, which involves conscious recognition of both the theoretical and the practical aspects of the profession. Sagi calls this recognition “connections of meaning.” In the domain of the professional identity of teachers, “connections of meaning” are the fields of knowledge that construct teachers’ professionalism, as, for example, education and values, pedagogy, knowledge of curriculum and expertise within the discipline. These stages of professional identity development are not necessarily sequential and can develop simultaneously.

In other words, the development of a professional identity is not a linear process. Indeed, professional development is dynamic and not static, and
the range of knowledge utilized by educators in their teaching practice is in effect multidisciplinary and difficult to compartmentalize. As such, the teaching profession is characterized by complex situations. Moreover, it is difficult to let go of existing practices and acquire new ones, especially since teaching practices are often personal and idiosyncratic. As a result, in order to examine the practices characteristic of the teaching profession, the teacher-researcher must adapt the research philosophy and its tools to the studied situation and the goals of the study.

In the ongoing debate over the use of different research paradigms—for instance, the quantitative and qualitative paradigms—it appears that qualitative methods have established themselves firmly in education research. Structured tools, as required by the positivist (quantitative) paradigm, force the research into an existing schema, an enclosed, encapsulated situation, resulting in compression and closure as opposed to openness. On the other hand, qualitative tools attempt to open and reveal, to discover and to continue to search. Furthermore, it is the qualitative paradigm with its various traditions that offers the teacher-researcher engaged in self-study a variety of tools that can be used according to the teacher’s own preferences and conditions. According to Bakhtin, for example, narrative research makes use of personal, internal discourse that speaks in a number of voices and brings to light misgivings and indecision. It is not authoritative, but rather examines, inquires, wonders and hesitates to some degree. As such, narrative research is appropriate for teachers curious to learn first of all about themselves and then about the background of their students and thus to find appropriate solutions to the problems. Such teachers can make use of the tradition of narrative research as self-study applied to their own teaching environment.

Ethnographic research, for its part, nurtures the skills of observation and attentiveness. It makes possible the cross-referencing of information and the sharpening of sensitivity, and it facilitates flexibility of thinking and openness to the unique qualities of the students. This sensitivity and openness allow for the development of teaching methods that are tailored to teaching situations based upon knowledge, caring and a sense of responsibility toward the students. In this research tradition, too, teacher-inquirers can adopt research skills such as observation and attentiveness to use in their own self-study.

Interpretive research, which seeks to examine and understand the perceptions and interpretations of the research subjects, provides the teacher with an appropriate tool for studying the school setting. In order to take the right action and to attain deeper and more useful understanding, it is therefore essential to utilize observation and attentiveness, and no less
important, to clarify meanings as they are understood by the research subjects, whether they are the teachers themselves or their students.

A research genre that allows the researcher to study change and simultaneously test ways to effect change is action research. This genre provides the teacher a tool to watch the class closely, systematically and in real time and to observe a complex situation in which there are many variables that can neither be isolated nor controlled. On the basis of these in-class observations, the teacher-researcher can suggest a new method of action and also test it.

Hence it appears that various qualitative research traditions offer the teacher-researcher tools that involve observation, paying attention to others and to the self as well, posing questions and gathering rational interpretations with regard to complex teaching-learning situations. All these tools enhance teacher professionalism and contribute to establishing professional identity.

Identity is not an entity that can always be delineated. In fact, the study of identity covers a range of identities, for the individual is always simultaneously engaged in examining more than one identity. Hence, the tools appropriate for developing a professional identity are process-driven and open-ended. Conceived and designed throughout the course of the research, these tools allow for modifying the research questions according to developments within the research scenario. Further, they permit the researcher to observe complex teaching practice situations. These situations are made up of different kinds of knowledge that are not easily broken down into separate factors. Due to the complexity of teaching situations, then, it is reasonable to encourage teachers to investigate teaching situations they themselves have experienced by means of sensitive research tools from the domain of qualitative research, tools which will facilitate in-depth observation of complex teaching situations and will generate new knowledge and significant insights for the practitioner.

Ironically, those same dimensions of the qualitative paradigm that positivist methodologists object to are what constitute the advantages of the qualitative paradigm and its research tools. That is to say, those very elements of the qualitative paradigm that are “soft,” less rigid and somewhat flexible constitute its strong points for the teacher-researcher. For when one seeks to construct an identity, which in the initial stages is unclear, searching, hesitant, difficult to describe precisely in terms of boundaries and contours, and which is cyclical and constantly changing as well, what is needed is a research tool that shares these same characteristics. These tools, then, are the research tools of the qualitative paradigm, tools that are built and take form during the course of the research and the picture emerging from it.
FOREWORD

Hanna Ezer’s book makes an important contribution to the literature in the field of defining and developing a professional identity. Most of the theoretical literature in this field discusses what the teacher should do. This book, in contrast, describes and analyzes what the teacher does.

*Naama Sabar Ben-Yehoshua*
Tel-Aviv University, 2008
I am privileged and honored to have been the teacher-educator guiding these attentive and scholarly teachers who went back to school and plunged into the deep water as novice researchers. Over my years of teaching, I have witnessed them grow professionally. I have watched them face the great challenge of becoming scholars and investigators as they acquired new teaching knowledge and insights. It is through their academic eyes and results that I have seen their professional growth. Indeed, I feel I have actually heard the clicks accompanying their growth.

It is their voices as teacher-inquirers that I sought to portray in this book. Through their research experiences as teacher-inquirers I have come to cherish self-study as a meaningful tool in the hands of the teacher. Hence, I have interwoven their voices into the rich descriptions of their studies. This book would not have been possible without their diligent, systematic, and attentive inquiries. Moreover, this book would not have been possible without their consent to share their studies with the world.

I admire their courage in exposing their work, for self-study by its very nature is personal. Without courage there would never have been any teacher research. Without courage other teachers and educators would not be able to learn about the power of self-study and its impact on teachers’ professional identity and growth.

For all this, I thank you: Idit Friedman, who knew right from the start that she would investigate her own story of becoming a teacher “in spite of and regardless of everything”; Galit Attal, who was intrigued by her early kibbutz upbringing and its impact on her adult life as a mother and educator; Mali Yizhak, who was willing to embark on an action research study in order to reveal the true relationship between herself and her instructor colleague; and Hagit Uzan and Michal Vertheimer, who methodically analyzed their authentic instructional situation and creatively proposed another expected instructional situation based on their new knowledge and insights. I also thank my other students who granted their permission to use their instructional situation case analyses (B and C), but wished to remain anonymous. Thank you all for your willingness to share your research data with me and with others. You are true scholar practitioners. Finally, I thank Donna Bossin for her contribution. A special gratitude is given to Levinsky College of Education for its financial support in the production of this book.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This book focuses on self-study and its role in the professional development of teachers. Three methodological approaches are used to describe the nature of self-study and its significance to teachers’ professional lives: instructional situations case analysis, critical autobiography and action research. Self-study is presented as a form of research that enables teachers to systematically and rationally examine their professional practice in teaching. Teacher-inquirers pursue self-inquiry by analyzing and processing their instructional situations, i.e., their teaching cases, or by reflectively examining critical events throughout their personal and professional lives. The cases examined by teacher-inquirers are an integral part of their professional experience and represent diverse domains of professional interest, including their work with their pupils in the classroom, interactions with parents, relations with colleagues in the teachers’ room, relations with the school principal, supervision of student teachers in their classrooms and other areas as well.

My experience as an instructor and advisor to numerous student teachers pursuing self-studies has led me to believe that every teacher has a case story or a professional life story to tell. Each such story or case is worthy of documentation and analysis and can offer its own insights. Such a case story is only one anecdote in a chain of events that have occurred and will continue to occur to teachers during their teaching career. All three of the approaches outlined above have been examined by students in my graduate level classes. These students are all experienced teachers who went back to school to obtain their M.Ed. degrees. Over the years I have come to value self-study as an important and significant tool in the hands of experienced teachers who, by using these approaches, have successfully integrated theory and practice. All the examples are therefore taken from the self-studies of these students.

The teachers whose instructional situations or cases are described in this book also all happen to be women. At the time, these teachers apparently believed these cases were important and meaningful and therefore chose to write them up so they could learn from them and restructure their practice. Each case described in the chapter on instructional situation analysis, for example, is likely only one of many. The chain of cases in a teacher’s professional life is what ultimately comprises the teacher’s professional
CHAPTER 1

autobiography, as in that described, for example, in the chapter on critical autobiography.

With the exception of the example on action research, all the cases in this book were drawn from memory and are not word-for-word documentation of events in real time. The action research example documents events in real time due to its nature as an action design whose goal is to improve the work of the educator in-action.

Chapter 2 sets the theoretical background for this book. It first describes the current status of research in education in general, and then discusses self-study as a particular research genre. The chapter concludes by examining teacher identity and its relation to self-study as well as considering the role of discourse analysis in revealing a teacher’s sense of professional self.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 express the voices of the teacher-inquirers. Chapter 3 describes the instructional situations case analysis approach, outlines the steps for implementing such analysis and offers three cases written and analyzed by teachers. Instructional situation A comprises the authentic and expected stories written by Hagit Uzan and Michal Vertheimer to describe a case they encountered. Instructional situations B and C represent cases provided by teachers who wished to remain anonymous.

The instructional situations case analysis approach is considered a basic research methodology. In my view, case analysis serves as a first step for teacher practitioners, who are also novice teacher-inquirers, toward more profound understanding and meaningful insight with respect to their teaching practice. Indeed, the approach provides them a means for reconstructing and restructuring their work.

The basic inquiry skills required of a teacher-inquirer include the ability to methodically examine each case, to derive its major themes and to relate these themes to theoretical perspectives. The instructional situations approach was developed during a college course called Instructional Situations Analysis as part of a graduate program on Learning and Instruction.

Chapter 4 describes the critical autobiography approach and exemplifies it with two critical autobiographies originally written by Idit Friedman and Galit Attal. While critical autobiography can also encompass a collection of teaching cases, it is unique in its focus on the teacher’s broad professional narrative over time. Critically examining the professional life of the teacher-inquirer and relating the events of this professional life to theoretical considerations can transform this examination into a form of critical research. In this form of autobiography, the teacher-inquirer clarifies and interprets the critical events of life, at the time of analysis as well as within the sociopolitical context in which they occurred, based upon personal and professional insights and knowledge.
Chapter 5 focuses on action research and provides an example of a study conducted by a teacher-instructor. In general, action research is built upon a case or cases of teaching, and can make use of inquiry skills acquired while analyzing the instructional situations. The design of this research can make use of any research paradigm. That is, action research can be based upon a qualitative research paradigm, a quantitative research paradigm, or a paradigm combining the two. In addition to being a form of self-study, action research takes advantage of the cyclical nature of this type of research: investigative examination, generation of new research questions, structuring a plan of action, further investigative examination, and so forth. In this book, action research is exemplified by Mali Yizhak’s study. Because so much has already been written on action research in the classroom environment, I chose to use one study only to exemplify this approach. This is a somewhat different “story” of self-study conducted by a teacher-instructor who examined the relationship between herself and her instructor colleague with the aim of improving an integrative school program.

At the end of each chapter, the teacher’s identity is further examined through discourse analysis to reveal the teacher-inquirer’s sense of professional self. Through critical discourse analysis, I as an external researcher can expose a teacher’s professional identity and thus illustrate how self-study contributes to the evolving professional self of that particular teacher. At the same time, such analysis can show how a teacher’s identity can change, depending on the context in which the study was implemented. Even when teachers report on research that provided them with new insights and generated new knowledge, they still are unable to recognize their professional identity. This is where critical discourse analysis steps in. It enables us, researchers and educators, to become acquainted with the teacher-inquirers involved in a self-study. It also enables us to understand their sense of professional self in a given situation and helps us realize how this sense of self might change under different circumstances. For teachers, in effect, their newly understood sense of professional self complements the additional knowledge and insights they derive from their study. Indeed, the very act of self-study is what enables teacher-inquirers to gather new knowledge and gain in-depth insights that pave their way to new practices. On the other hand, discourse analysis is analogous to putting a mirror in front of the teachers by letting them and the entire educational world know about their sense of professional self. This newly acquired knowledge and self-awareness complete the picture of teacher-inquirers as scholarly practitioners. I believe that self-study enables teachers to assume their own true identity as teachers. Discourse analysis of their narratives helps reveal
what lies beneath the surface for every teacher: a well-defined sense of professional self.

The concluding chapter ties the three approaches together and discusses some of the main points discussed in the previous chapters.

The three approaches presented in this book share a number of attributes. All focus on the professional practice of teacher-inquirers, all interpret situations from the teacher-inquirer’s perspective, all provide systematic investigative methods directed toward the professional development of the teacher-inquirer, and all involve structuring new courses of action based on research insights.

The different approaches to self-study described in this book were developed based upon the scholarship of teaching. According to this perspective, the academic involvement of teachers in their own teaching forms the foundation for their professional development over time (Zeichner, 1999). It has always been the case that the most obvious source from which teachers can learn is other teachers. Today, many voices among researchers and educators claim that in practice teachers are the most important decision-makers in education systems, and they should make such decisions consciously and deliberately, based upon their own practice (McLaughlin, Black-Hawkins, McIntyre, & Townsend, 2008). Therefore, a self-study approach may be a powerful tool in refining the practice of teaching.

The instructional situations approach, for example, derives its essence in part from the case analysis perspective in teaching, introduced in Israel by Silberstein (2002) in his book *Mentoring and Teaching Events: Pedagogy of Case Literature in Teacher Education*. In the two chapters I wrote for the Silberstein book, I focused on case-based work in teaching, and for the most part on cases of others analyzed by an outside researcher (see Ezer, 2002a, 2002b). The current book, in contrast, shows how teacher-inquirers themselves develop a case-based research approach. The analyses are retrospective rather than from the immediate perspective of the teaching event. Moreover, the approach put forward in the book involves developing interpretive strategies and processing future insights based upon interpretation.

The self-study approaches discussed in this book are intended to reinforce teachers’ perception of themselves as “teacher-inquirers” throughout their professional lives. Furthermore, they reflect the notion that research is crucial to professional development in that it provides teacher-inquirers a meaningful tool that can be implemented in the teaching space between theory and practice. It also provides other teachers and educators an emic and rich view of the teaching profession and brings to light the transformative perspective of teacher-inquirers based on their self-studies. I began by saying that teachers learn from the experiences of other teachers. I will end by saying that teachers also learn from their own self-studied experiences.
CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH IN EDUCATION, SELF-STUDY AND TEACHER IDENTITY

This chapter provides a current perspective on research in education in general and considers how self-study evolved as an independent research genre. First, I establish the position of research within the educational context. Next, I examine self-study as a research genre within the context of practitioner research and scholarship of teaching. Finally, I discuss the accumulated body of knowledge describing teacher identity and the role of discourse analysis in revealing a teacher’s sense of professional self.

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

In educational research today, diverse research genres have become the focus of much research attention (Kennedy, 2005). Research genres vary greatly. At one end of the spectrum are positive (objective) and primarily post-positive studies that take a broad view of the educational system, teacher education institutes and teacher education in general. At the other end is qualitative research covering numerous research traditions, such as biography/narrative studies, ethnography, case studies, grounded theory, phenomenological study and combinations of all of these (Creswell, 1998; Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2001). This type of research is marked by a profound understanding of the subject under investigation using research tools such as interviews, observations and document analysis (Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 1990; Shkedi, 2004). Creswell (1998) views qualitative research as the process of examining understanding, based on distinct investigative methodologies that expose social or human problems. The researcher constructs a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports the detailed points of view of the research subjects and carries out the research in a natural environment. Mixed method research, marked by the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, has also gained considerable standing in the design of educational research studies (Bryman, 2006; Onwuegbuzie, Withcer, Collins, Filer, Wiedmaier, & Moore, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008).

The range of research studies available to educational researchers is particularly extensive. Within the context of research genres in education,
there are those who advocate experimental studies and those who support the numerous qualitative research traditions. Because teachers are at the center of professional achievement in the educational system, they are expected to have more authoritative knowledge (for example, in experimental studies), more dynamic knowledge about educational figures who expose different truths (in narrative studies, for instance, when teachers get a chance to share contrasting stories) or more detailed knowledge (as in that emerging from ethnographic research) (Kennedy, 1999). Whatever the case, it seems that research is guided by the perspectives or beliefs of the researchers and by “paradigms of research that are imitated within any given field” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008, p. 8). Tashakkori and Teddlie define paradigms as “the worldviews or belief systems that guide researchers” (p. 7). The positivist paradigm provides the basis for quantitative methods, while qualitative methods are based upon the constructivist paradigm (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008).

Borko, Whitcomb, and Byrnes (2008) discuss four research genres in teacher education: a) The genre known “effects of teacher education” research refers to a body of scholarship concerned with understanding the relationships between teacher education experiences and student learning. Its roots can be found in the scientific method of the natural sciences; b) “Interpretive research” is a search for local meanings and encompasses research traditions such as ethnography, narrative, phenomenology, and discourse analysis; c) “Practitioner research” of those who “actually do the work of teacher education” (p.1029) includes action research, participatory research, self-study, and teacher research; d) “Design research” involves a systematic design and study of instructional strategies and tools, characterized by an intimate relationship between the improvement of practice and the development of theory.

The struggle over research methods is potentially healthy. Yet according to researchers such as Kennedy (2005), when it comes to “the paradigm wars” this struggle leaves something to be desired. It compels dichotomous thinking according to which one side or the other must be in control, without leaving room for healthy dispute. Those who advocate a clear separation between the two paradigms base their thinking on the incompatibility thesis, according to which researchers who integrate the two paradigms in their work are doomed to failure due to the inherent philosophical differences between the two (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). According to Kennedy (2005), the view that researchers must engage in rigorous research was prevalent from the 1940s through the 1960s, a period marked by the use of statistical methods in complex experimental research. The need to be in control was one of the reasons that researchers felt they
must carry out their research under laboratory conditions. The 1960s and 1970s saw a shift to field studies and quasi-experimental research (Borko et al., 2008). This type of research began to run into complications due to the problem of defining the effects in the field of the various parties involved (i.e. principals, teachers, parents). Although field studies were clearly important, it soon became apparent that they were difficult to carry out. Concurrently, researchers began to realize that educational events are not controlled by universal laws of cause and effect but rather by the individual intentions of those participating in the event and by the simultaneous effects of interactions. Moreover, it gradually became evident that significance would emerge only in context, thus necessitating detailed and prolific descriptions. These concepts gained momentum in case studies and ethnographic studies of the 1980s. Today many consider narrative analysis to be the preferred research genre in education (Kennedy, 2005). This view is in line with postmodern claims with respect to the structuring of culture and multiculturalism and the relative nature of knowledge.

Theoreticians such as Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008) and Denzin (2008) advocate pragmatism and the compatibility thesis, according to which the two paradigms, the qualitative and the quantitative, can complement each other by means of different combinations. In fact, Denzin (2008), following Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003), talks about “the third moment” and the new paradigm dialogs to describe an epistemological position that evolved out the discussions and controversies associated with the 1980’s paradigm wars. “The third moment mediates quantitative and qualitative disputes by finding a third, or middle ground” (p. 317), he claims. In this context, Hostetler (2005) has proposed the multimethods approach, which is meant to provide data useful to theoreticians and participants as well. Nevertheless, Hostetler believes that good research is not only a matter of adequate processes. It also involves objectives and results that contribute to the different participants, a view that naturally supports applied research in education. Borko et al. (2008) recommend integrating different research genres in accordance with the research question and for the sake of promoting achievements in education based upon research evidence.

Research in the field of education is embroiled in another struggle as well—the struggle for its own legitimacy. Indeed, Loewenberg-Ball and Forzani (2007) maintain that there are those who actually denounce educational research by claiming it is ineffective and demands limited intellectual requirements of its researchers. Those who denounce research in education also assert that educational researchers in teacher education and in the school system are not on a very high level. Evans (2002) sees
this as an attack on educational research and claims that it is important to address the issue of criticism of educational research.

Nevertheless, a large and extensive group of researchers acknowledge the quality of educational research, refer to the need for applied research in the educational field, and encourage teachers to investigate their own work as part of their professional development (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003). Supporters of research in the field of education argue that research and politics go hand in hand (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). They claim that educational research is essential to create a form of disciplined knowledge that can contribute directly to solving the pressing problems in education, both among those participating in teaching practice, i.e. the teachers, and among those who set the policies and make the decisions (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2007). Furthermore, Loewenberg Ball and Forzani (2007) maintain that the central goal of teacher training must be to develop a professional teacher-education program focusing on research with the goal of training the next generation of academics who are themselves researchers. Such training must help beginning education researchers to a) understand the environments and problems that are the focus of education research; b) develop questions for study that are central to education; c) learn to design and choose appropriate methods for education research. In this sense, research becomes a practical work tool for teachers and an integral part of their practice as teachers. Teachers are seen as central figures in the educational research arena for they are part of the reciprocal teacher-pupil-school relationship.

Based on the above, multiple interpretations of the same event are considered significant in educational research today. Kincheloe and Tobin (2006), for example, maintain that different observers will have different interpretations of the same event. Diverse values, ideologies and positions will lead individuals to interpret events differently. Researchers today understand that those who generate the knowledge—teachers and students—perceive the world from their individual perspectives. They position themselves in the center and are shaped by the cultural and social context in which they operate. Moreover, researchers frame their research in a language that encompasses the teacher-inquirers’ latent perceptions. Therefore, teacher research is frequently advocated as a form of professional development, a way for teachers to learn to examine their own contexts and their own practices more critically (Kennedy, 1999). This kind of research is, in fact, an integral part of the new professionalism that has emerged as a recognized feature of the teaching profession (Evans, 2002).

Over the past two decades, then, teacher education has begun to shift its attention toward a systematic examination of teachers’ professional
experiences. This shift reflects a clear understanding that nurturing teachers as inquirers will help schools develop and improve, based on the assumption that it is the teacher who makes decisions in the classroom. Hence, teachers are seen as researchers (Zeichner & Conklin, 2005) who can collect data on their work by means of diaries, video recordings, autobiographical writings and other research formats.

**SELF-STUDY, THE TEACHER-INQUIRER AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY**

Self-study takes its place among existing research genres and within the interpretive view of educational research as an applied research approach available to practitioners, who in our case are educators as well. In this type of research, the development of the “self” is examined within the teaching context, under the assumption that professionals are examining themselves (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004). This type of research can be quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of both. Indeed, in this type of research as well, a “war” is being waged. Bullough and Pinnegar (2004) identify one of the difficulties in education research as the struggle between the educational disciplines involved in teacher training on the one hand and the teacher educators and teachers themselves on the other. Psychologists, for example, have been claiming for some time now that research on teaching and learning is their territory. In contrast, Bullough and Pinnegar (2004) maintain that the history of teaching and learning research has shown that when researchers began to investigate how teachers understand knowledge, they inevitably began respecting teachers more. For them to understand how beliefs and knowledge were related to practice, they had to get closer to the teachers. As a result, new practices in teacher education developed, paving the way for teachers to investigate their own work.

Therefore, the higher education system has recently become more open to self-study in the colleges and universities, particularly within the teacher education community. Self-study is not homogeneous in nature, and is characterized by a number of traditions or trends. It comprises, for example, action research and critical autobiography, as well as basic tools for self-inquiry in professional practice, such as reflection, an essential skill in self-study. Critical autobiography demands superior investigative skills and more complex research tools compared to those used in reflection. These tools can include interviews and even questionnaires.

The analysis of instructional situations or cases also is a form of self-study especially appropriate to the professional atmosphere in education. This is a basic and initial means available to teacher-inquirers. It enables them to acquire methodical tools for systematic observation of the teaching
cases in which they are involved. These tools can also be applied to other forms of self-study they wish to undertake in their professional workspace. As mentioned, many of these basic skills involve reflection, but also participatory observation capabilities and interpretation based upon the theoretical literature, as outlined in the next section.

In the following section, I review the developments in self-study research in education and teacher education and then discuss the relation between this research and the development of a professional identity. At the end of the chapter I also discuss the role of meta-analysis in examining teacher research for the purpose of revealing a teacher’s sense of professional self.

**Self-Study in Teacher Education**

Zeichner (1999) perceives self-study as “research about teacher education [that] is being conducted by those who actually do the work of teacher education” (p. 8). He claims that “the birth of the self study in teacher education movement around 1990 has been probably the single most significant development ever in the field of teacher education research” (p. 8). In fact, instead of research on teaching and teacher education by an outside party, it is research by teachers and teacher educators about their practice (Borko et al., 2008).

In general, what makes self-study unique in education is that it enables the voices of teachers to be heard and helps nurture their professional development in its working space between theory and practice (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; 2004). Self-study is situated within the genre of practitioner research (Borko et al., 2008), and sometimes referred to as teacher research, or reflective practice (Evans, 2002).

Cole and Knowles (2000) broaden the emphasis in teacher inquiry, claiming that “teaching is researching” (p. 1). That is, they see theory as embedded in practice rather than as a way to implement practice. In their view, teachers develop over a continuum that begins long before they undertake any formal teacher training programs and continues throughout their formal education and their first years of teaching up through their retirement, at which time they have gained rich and abundant experience. Cole and Knowles (2000) believe that by means of systematic reflection and analysis of practice, teachers become responsible for their own professional development. They refer to this process as reflexive inquiry, indicating that a teacher’s teaching and development “are rooted in the ‘personal’” (p. 2). That is, teaching reflects teachers as individuals, their values and beliefs, their perspectives and experiences as they develop.
throughout their lives. These researchers believe that for teachers to understand their professional lives and work and develop professionally, they must understand the formative stage as well as their ongoing experiences and the influences shaping their perspectives and practices.

In addition to the notion of reflexive inquiry, Cole and Knowles also introduce the concept of *reflective inquiry*. This concept involves an ongoing process of examining and refining practice by focusing on various work contexts: personal, pedagogical, curricular, intellectual, social and ethical. All this is based upon the notion that the assumptions of practice are subject to ongoing questioning. According to Kubler LaBoskey (2005), reflection is a personal process of thinking, refining, redefining and developing actions that continues throughout self-study. In fact, reflection requires directed, conscious and intentional thinking about past actions with a view toward future improvement and progress (Margolin, Ezer, & Silberstein, 2001; Silberstein, 1998). Reflection, in essence, involves “looking backwards” or “projecting one’s vision backward onto an action, an event or an incident” (Silberstein, 1998, p. 16). Nevertheless, even if necessary for self-study, this process is not sufficient for undertaking the research.

In contrast, Cole and Knowles (2000) believe that *reflexive inquiry* is “reflective inquiry situated within the context of personal histories in order to make connections between personal lives and professional careers, and to understand personal (including early) influences on professional practice” (p. 2). In other words, *reflexive inquiry* takes into account personal history that is based upon contextual elements of understanding. It stresses the basic role of experience in shaping practice in a way that *reflective inquiry* cannot do. *Reflexive inquiry* is based upon a critical perspective that encompasses examining the status quo and norms of practice, particularly with respect to issues of power and control. *Reflexive inquiry* can also be understood through a metaphor of mirrors and prisms. Being reflexive is like seeing practice through mirrors and transparent prisms in which the various components are refracted, perhaps enlarged or broken down into the different colors of the spectrum. *Reflexive inquiry* considers different elements throughout life, in school and out, and examines their colors, features and implications for professional life. Another feature of *reflexive inquiry* is “that, unlike traditional research, it is not a linear, sequential process; it is more spiral or cyclical. Thus the research process requires ongoing reflection, analysis, and responsiveness” (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p. 104).

Bullough and Pinnegar (2004) claim that self-study and reflective practice are not one and the same, for reflection is always embedded within
the individual, while self-study derives from communication with others and is in essence for the sake of others and together with others. Nonetheless, they agree that the “self” is understood as reflective with respect to the individual, institution or plan examining itself in-action with the goal of examining the relation between belief (or knowledge) and practice. It is these ideas that define the “self.” Hence, self-study is used for teaching and examining experience in order to better understand the “self,” that is, teaching, learning and developing related knowledge. Indeed, we can say that reflection is one of the tools at the disposal of self-inquirers, but it is not the only one. Teacher-inquirers can use a variety of tools to carry out their self-study, from the quantitative as well as the qualitative paradigm.

Self-study in teacher education is part of the transformation in teacher training research during the last quarter of the 20th century (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Loughran, 2007). It has also become more and more common in other disciplines, among them anthropology, linguistics and economics. According to Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), self-study developed out of and was influenced by at least four different fields of research in education. The first is the emergence of naturalistic and qualitative research and the redefinition of validity and accuracy. Despite the controversies surrounding this matter, a new understanding of the relations between researcher and subject has emerged. There are those who claim that researchers no longer have at their disposal objects that are external to the research and to time, whether expected or static (i.e., unable to be changed). Many researchers have now accepted the fact that they are highly involved in their own research, even personally. The stage was set fifty years ago by Ross Mooney, who discussed the personal nature of research. Mooney’s perception is quoted by Ketelle (2004, pp. 452–453):

…a personal venture which, quite aside from its social benefits, is worth doing for its direct contribution to one’s own self-realization. It can be taken as a way of meeting life with maximum of stops open to get out of the experience its most poignant significance, its most full-throated song (Mooney, 1957, p. 155).

Hence, the identity of the researcher is central to research work.

The second inspiration for self-study, according to Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), came from the reconceptualist movement in curriculum studies. This approach is based upon the belief that one always teaches the self. A teacher is described as someone setting out on a quest to seek the roots of self-understanding in order to nurture that understanding in education. Even though this approach has been embroiled in controversy,
the movement attracted a generation of young people, now middle-aged academics, that helped make self-study a central practice in education.

The third factor that has served to promote self-study is related to the growing involvement of researchers worldwide in teacher training. These researchers bring along with them diverse intellectual traditions based in the humanities and not necessarily in the social sciences. Van Manen (1980), for example, raised interest in phenomenology and the nature of experience that had developed in Holland. Similarly, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) heightened awareness of the narrative nature of knowing and the place of stories in teachers’ development and understanding of practice.

Action research constitutes the fourth influential factor on self-study. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) developed models for investigating teachers that make it possible to preserve researcher/practitioner distinctions. All research in this field requires redefining the roles and relationships of the practitioner.

As mentioned, self-study is a form of inquiry in which teachers examine their beliefs and actions in the context of their work as educators for the purpose of raising pedagogical questions (Whitehead, 1993). The objective of those engaged in self-study in education is to understand teaching from the inside out rather than from the outside in, and at the same time to implement in practice what was discovered from the research (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004). Self-study offers a methodology appropriate for improving the quality of teacher training and for creating knowledge about teaching and learning.

According to Bullough and Pinnegar (2004) the definition of self-study is hard to pin down, and is considered anew each time researchers in the field gather together. Yet those engaged in this field share the common assumption that self-study involves recognizing that teachers are caught between two worlds: that of practice and that of scientific research in education. This assumption is based upon the notion that our knowledge about teaching/learning derives from contextual information created by the knower in a particular situation (Bass, Anderson-Patton, & Allender, 2002). This field of research challenges teacher-educators to adopt a powerful research tool as an integral part of their professional work context to serve a number of objectives in teaching and in teacher training programs (Dinkelman, 2003; Mitchell & Weber, 2005; Mueller, 2003). In so doing, teachers are able to learn from their own experience as well as explain their investigation of their practice more accurately. Dinkelman (2003) asserts that self-study in teacher training is both a means and an end in the advancement of the teaching profession. When teacher educators adopt the
concept of self-study as an integral part of their practice, the course of
teacher training is likely to undergo change. In effect, as Bullough and
Pinnegar (2001) claim, the researcher engaged in self-study stands at the
crossroads between biography and history. The questions posed by this
researcher emerge from the interaction between the self as an educator, in
context and over time, and others who are committed to nurturing young
learners, as well as from the impact of this interaction on the self and on
others. In their view, “ultimately, the aim of self-study research is moral, to
gain understanding necessary to make that interaction increasingly
educative” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15).

Berry (2004) reviews four leading reasons for teacher educators to
engage in self-study: 1) the need to examine the degree of congruence and
consistency between their beliefs and their practice; 2) the need to study a
particular aspect of teaching practice in-depth; 3) the desire to develop a
model of critical reflection with respect to teachers’ work; 4) the desire to
create meaningful alternatives for institutional evaluation.

What, then, makes self-study worth reading or deserving of the title
“research”? Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) attempt to answer this question
by setting criteria for determining research quality. Because teachers
engaged in self-study often examine their own biographies, Bullough and
Pinnegar claim that the teacher-inquirer’s history and personal biography
must be balanced against the broader context in which he or she operates.
This balance should be expressed not only in the data gathered (from self
and others) and written up, but also in the methods used to analyze the data
and to present the results orally and in writing. These researchers believe
the following:

. . . although the final story of being or becoming a teacher educator
never will be told, . . . more powerful narrative self-studies will follow
careful attention to the guidelines we have identified: A self-study is a
good read, attends to the “nodal moments” of teaching and being a
teacher educator and thereby enables reader insight or understanding
into self, reveals a lively conscience and balanced sense of self-
importance, tells a recognizable teacher or teacher educator story,
portrays character development in the face of serious issues within a
complex setting, gives place to the dynamic struggle of living life
whole, and offers new perspective (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p.
19).

Further, according to Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), the self-study
researcher must edit the text, yet must not offer interpretations that are
contradictory to the data. This is a matter of conscience, credibility and
sincerity, obliging the researcher to view the data properly and without distortions. The second issue is that the text must be interesting at the very least, if not provocative. Hence there is value in the alternative perspectives offered by the teacher-inquirer. Bullough and Pinnegar (2004) note that self-study, like any good form of research, must be systematic, make use of sufficient, stable and empirical data, and be totally transparent.

Self-study research is not destined to remain the sole property of the researcher. Therefore it must be considered not only within the context of clarification and reflection as stable and meaningful work tools for teachers, but also as a means of nurturing communities of learning and inquiring teachers. Self-study offers many such opportunities. Therefore it can enlighten the practice both of schoolteachers and of teacher-educators and can enrich the knowledge of members of both these groups. As teacher-educators discuss issues of teacher training, learning and self-study more and more, the community of learners among teacher-educators will grow, leading to significant changes in the field of teacher education.

Russell (2006) notes that self-study research relies upon the interaction between close colleagues actively and constructively listening to one another. Indeed, the ideas and interpretations emerging from the teaching experience of professional educators, when systematically presented and based upon findings, create a reflective community and promote change in the broad field of teacher education. Goodnough (2005) emphasizes that self-study, whether individual or cooperative, is extremely valuable in improving individual practice. At the same time, it has the potential to advance other fields of interest such as the science of education, by developing abundant professional knowledge based upon teaching/learning.

One of the problems in self-study revolves around the relation between the “self” researcher and the research subjects. Zellermayer and Keiny (2006), for example, refer to action research and note that in qualitative research this matter is considered an ethical issue, raising numerous questions: What is the place of the “self” in action research? What is the relationship between the researcher and the research subjects? What research methodology can be derived from this? Can action research refer to an individual, whether researcher or research subject? How can the researcher’s reflections on the processes he or she is undergoing be integrated into the research description? How can other participants as well as the readers be included? Finally, how can a reciprocal relationship be created between the data collected by the researcher and those gathered by the other participants? In fact, the growing numbers of teachers involved in self-studies in schools are less formally grounded either in research methods or in ethical safeguards (Zeni, 2001). Zellermayer and Keiny
(2006) claim these questions have motivated some researchers to attempt to construct professional research/learning communities in the organizations where they work. These researchers seek to examine their role and status through self-study and their individual ability to construct a research community. At the same time they must try to define a research space for themselves that will not hinder their efforts to build the community but rather support this work. In this way the role of the “self” in individual action research can be determined, whether the individual is the researcher or the research subject. Indeed, the individual can be seen as part of the human-social setting: the self as part of the community, the self as part of the interpersonal discourse, and the post-modern perception of the self developing the individual’s unique nature, personal freedom and freedom of choice.

Feldman (2003) raises the question of how researchers can know they have actually changed their ways and how they can convince others not only that a change has taken place but also that this change is beneficial and substantive. This is one of the reasons why self-study researchers prefer to use such research methodologies as autobiographical research and narrative research. These investigators not only seek to examine educational practices. They also seek to improve them, based upon their critical autobiography or narrative research, in a particular way that will have an impact on what is happening in the teacher education colleges, universities and schools. Consequently, self-study raises the question of ethical responsibility not only in evaluating the merit or quality of the research but also in assessing its validity. Indeed, the practical applications for teachers’ work are the most important and meaningful. Self-study incorporates the pragmatic component in the personal work of every teacher and educator. Hence, it must be solidly grounded, sound and able to provide the required results. In order to increase the validity of self-study, researchers should make validity their essential focus by openly explaining their understanding of the research. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. One is by providing a clear and detailed description of the data collection method and by explicitly clarifying the data source, either within the text or as an appendix. Researchers should also provide details about their research methods, supply evidence of the value of changes in teaching and training methods, suggest creative ways of understanding the raw data and turning it into findings, and expand the triangulation beyond the data sources to include diverse methods in their studies. These steps and others as well can help researchers convince their readers of the validity of their research. In fact, there will be those who define self-study as ethical and political activity (Feldman, 2003; Zeni, 2001). Whether it is called self-study, action research, teacher research or
practitioner research, this approach confronts ethical dilemmas and requires systematic and rigorous research methodology. If this type of research ultimately is to produce results and generate change in how researchers conduct themselves as teachers, educators, and teacher-educators, there must be evidence of its value. The research report, in addition to outlining the research focus, importance and method, must also show what was discovered in “seeing beyond the self” and how the research was developed and implemented. Hence, the research must be presented from a number of perspectives (Loughran, 2007).

Self-study, then, is conducted by means of a systematic methodology. There is no single or most correct way to carry out the research. What is important and meaningful is that the study be carried out in a systematic fashion, including collecting data from a number of sources, analyzing them methodically and reporting on them in a way that others can learn from them in order to develop knowledge regarding practice in education (Loughran, 2007; Pinnegar, 1998).

Scholarship of Teaching

Self-study using case literature or instructional situations analysis developed within a broader approach that stresses the importance of the teacher’s academic knowledge, as derived from investigating the teacher’s work and from the work itself as part of the teacher’s professional development. This approach to researching teacher education throughout the teacher’s professional life is known as the scholarship of teaching (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999). This approach considers the teacher-inquirer who examines his or her own teaching processes through a series of self-studies, including action research (Zeichner, 2005). The scholarship of teaching is based upon the assumption that the teacher must take an active role in creating knowledge, and not only in processing and transmitting knowledge (Cole & Knowles, 2000). This active role requires meta-skills, that is, observing and examining the very act of teaching. For example, collecting case stories can involve different types of cases, among them narratives, vignettes, episodes and autobiographies. These genres call for different types of research, such as narrative research, action research and self-study in the form of critical autobiography. External investigators collecting cases about teachers will likely use narrative research or qualitative grounded theory research. Teachers, on the other hand, in collecting their own cases and analyzing them critically, will use critical autobiography or reflective analysis of instructional cases. This can be part of the teacher’s action research if it continues over time and produces insights regarding the teacher’s work. All
of these methods that examine the thinking, teaching and practical knowledge of teachers point to the value of narratives, stories and cases in putting forth what teachers know (Hashweh, 2004; Lyons & Kubler LaBoskey, 2005).

Over the past two decades, the emphasis in teacher education seems to have shifted from science, with its focus on rules, variables and proofs, to literature, in which events and narratives play a prominent role. The role of the story or narrative in teacher education developed in the early 1990s and quickly gained momentum. A story is essentially composed of incidents, characters and context, and is organized around a sequence of events occurring at a particular time and place. It offers information about how things work, and its incidents are meaningful. A story is interesting, alive and authentic, and it enables the voices of the narrator and the characters to be heard. Cases in the form of stories also suggest meanings that cannot be gleaned otherwise (Carter, 1999). According to Carter (1999), stories are at the center of teachers’ lives. They provide a way to capture the wealth of a particular event or experience, a means of knowing, thinking and reaching a rich understanding of practice. Indeed, this is the knowledge emerging from the very act of teaching. Carter stresses that to know teaching is to know its stories. Stories are the knowledge base in teaching and the core of the teacher training curriculum. These stories also have a narrative whose meaning differs slightly from that of an ordinary story. This approach refers to biography and autobiography, and emphasizes the notion that we live “narrative lives.”

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have worked with teachers over time, observing lessons, writing diaries, holding discussions, documenting and structuring stories, all in order to understand how teachers create meaning from their practice. They focus on narrative research, which is common today in teacher education and is usually carried out by external researchers. In such cases, the teachers are the research object, and their stories are the raw material from which external researchers learn about the teaching act. On the other hand, when teachers use narrative self-studies, their case stories and critical autobiographies constitute raw material for the teachers themselves. They can use this raw material to learn about their own practice and to reach new insights they ordinarily would not be able to attain in the hectic daily routine of their work. Some consider narrative self-study as a way of life for teachers (Kubler LaBoskey, 2005), particularly by means of critical reflection on their work.

In conclusion, self-study in the field of teacher education is only in its infancy. Its continuation as a movement is dependent upon the reliability and significance of its findings. Self-study critically examines the themes
arising from the data and attempts to answer the questions “so what.” Self-study seeks to arouse, challenge and enlighten, though not necessarily explain what is already known. In the form of autobiography or documenting and analyzing instructional situations, self-study confronts the writer with special requirements. The text must be readable, proven, and transparent (for example, the relationship between autobiography and history). The issues must be central to the field of education, and sufficient information should be provided so the reader can acknowledge the text’s academic authority, not just its authenticity (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001).

Self-study is carried out by the researcher, who also writes the research reports. These results are usually narratives that can be used to reveal the teacher-inquirer’s professional identity by means of critical discourse analysis. In the following section, I therefore discuss the notion of a teacher’s professional identity, or sense of professional self. I also elaborate on discourse analysis as a tool for revealing attributes related to the professional identity of the teacher who has written the research report.

TEACHERS’ PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Over the past twenty years, many researchers have considered the issue of teacher identity. Nias (1989) was one of the first to examine the complex identities of teachers constructed in and through discourse. These various identities swirl around teacher education programs, schools and the classroom environment, as well as around teachers’ personal lives. Nias (1989) breaks down the term “teachers’ professional identity” into two definitions. One is a freer and looser definition of a teacher’s professional “sense of self” and identity, while the other refers to a teacher’s fixed, unchanging and stable “substantive self.” By working with notions of multiple professional identities, a teacher can work in different contexts and with different people and accommodate to various interpretations of the teaching profession (Bloom & Munro, 1995). In general, theorists today have called upon teachers to become aware of their identities and the political, historical, and social forces shaping these identities. Yet it still remains unclear how the concepts of identity and self are exactly related (Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

Rodgers and Scott (2008) claim that contemporary conceptions of identity share four basic assumptions (p. 733): (1) Identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple contexts that bring social, cultural, political, and historical forces into play; (2) Identity is formed in relationships with others and involves emotions; (3) Identity is shifting, unstable, and multiple; (4)
Identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time.

Following upon Maclure (1993) and Feiman-Nemser (2001), Flores and Day (2006) understand identity as an ongoing and dynamic process that entails making sense of and reinterpreting one’s own values and experiences. Becoming a teacher involves, in essence, a transformation of the teacher’s identity. This transformation is possible through a process in which “teachers use, justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate” (Maclure, 1993, p. 312).

Researchers believe it is important to study how teachers perceive themselves, since their identities strongly influence their judgments and behavior (Nias, 1989; Beijaard et al., 2000). The impact of the workplace (positive or negative) and perceptions of school culture and leadership have played a key role in (re)shaping teachers’ understanding of teaching, facilitating or hindering their professional development and (re)constructing their professional identities. These researchers believe that a sense of professional identity can contribute to teachers’ self-efficacy, motivation, commitment and job satisfaction. This identity is therefore a key factor in their becoming and continuing to be effective teachers in the future. Moreover, teachers should strive to become aware of their own identity and the contexts, relationships, and emotions shaping this identity. Indeed, they should reclaim the authority of their own voice (Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

A study by Beijaard (1995) defines teacher identity on the basis of three distinctive categories: the subject taught by the teacher, the teacher’s relationship with the students, and the teacher’s role or role conception. For each category, teachers were asked to clarify their actual perceptions and prior knowledge. In a later study, Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt (2000) found that teachers’ professional identity emerges from how they see themselves as subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, and didactical experts.

Some researchers (e.g., Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005; Goodson, 1992) emphasize the personal dimension in teaching and are particularly interested in how teachers’ past personal life experiences interact with their professional lives. This kind of research on teacher biographies and autobiographies focuses on critical incidents and events assumed to shape their professional image. The teachers are given an opportunity to see themselves as learners through incidents at work, together with other dramatic occurrences in their personal lives. Roberts-Holmes (2003) presents a similar perspective by examining how the professional identities of primary teachers in Gambia have been shaped by the hegemonic discourses of Gambian nationalism and
Islam, according to which these teachers are taught to see teaching as a “noble profession.” Roberts-Holmes found that their working lives were based upon histories, religions and cultures, and in this context they described their emotional and political commitment to the “noble profession” of teaching. This commitment was based upon the hegemonic discourses of nationalism and Islam.

Doecke (2004) argues that in order to capture the complexities of her work as a teacher-educator and view her identity as a teacher-educator in the college where she works, she must tell another story, a counter narrative that can continually question the beliefs and values at the core of her professional life. This counter narrative helped her realize that her professional identity as a teacher educator puts her at odds with the official curriculum and policy context in which she is obliged to operate. Her study, a self-study, helped her focus on the professional learning she experienced by interacting with her students in the classroom or during school visits. These interactions enabled her to perceive her professional identity as conflicting with existing policy, including managerial attempts to define acceptable educational “outcomes” and other global pressures to adopt a uniform worldview. In other words, she was able to theorize the relationship between her professional practice and the world in which she operates.

Robinson and McMillan (2006) claim that understanding the identities teacher-educators construct for themselves is central to effecting innovation within a changing policy environment. Thus, identity plays a significant role in educational change. They believe that by accessing people’s perspectives, values, motivations, attitudes and views prior to implementing change, change agents are able to tap into existing strands of identity, thereby facilitating a weaving together of old and new roles and responsibilities. A teacher-educator’s identity is, therefore, most likely to succeed when the values of the “new” identity build directly upon those of the “old” identity.

Since the definition of the self is somewhat elusive, I have chosen to adopt Rodgers and Scott’s attitude towards the self. They believe the self subsumes teacher identities and is “an evolving, yet coherent being that consciously and unconsciously constructs and is constructed, reconstructs and is reconstructed in interaction with cultural contexts, institutions, and people with which the self lives, learns, and functions” (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 751). Rodgers and Scott assume that for teachers to become aware of their own selves, they must know themselves and their own frames of reference, values and biases. Teachers should take a critical look at themselves and the privileges and inequities of their own lives and those of their students. Teachers should explore their own social perspectives.
CHAPTER 2

Teachers should reflect upon their educational experiences as children, and recognize how these experiences impact how they think about teaching. Teachers should be exposed to perspectives different from their own.

The studies described in this book offer some relevant insights into the similarities and differences of how teachers perceive their professional identity, including changes in identity and relevant learning experiences throughout their careers. The teacher-inquirers’ self-studies are analyzed by me in my capacity as an external investigator, in order to provide some insights into the sense of professional self of these teachers. For this purpose, I use critical discourse analysis to enhance the investigation of teachers’ professional identity. I further argue that discourse analysis unveils teachers’ hidden, covert sense of professional self. Since critical discourse analysis is a useful tool in revealing professional identity among teachers, I discuss this method in detail in the next section.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis focuses on social and political issues related to texts and text production. It also systematically examines the subject matter of discourse and the social relations, assumptions and ideological complexes informing it (Georgakopolou & Goutsos, 1999). In general, critical discourse analysis studies how social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context (Van Dijk, 2001). This interdisciplinary approach to language study adopts a critical point of view in order to study language behavior in natural speech situations of social relevance. It focuses on how social relations, identity, knowledge and power are constructed through written and spoken texts in communities, schools and classrooms (Gee, 1999; Luke, 1994; Van Dijk, 2001).

The terms “discourse” and “discourse analysis” have different meanings to scholars in different fields. Linguists talk about anything beyond the study of language use. Critical theorists and others talk about the “discourse of power” and the “discourse of racism,” with the term referring to linguistic and nonlinguistic social practices and ideological assumptions that construct power or racism (Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2001).

Since critical discourse analysis does not constitute a specific research direction, it does not have a unified theoretical framework. It has been applied to research on gender inequality, media discourse, political discourse, ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism, nationalism, and racism (Van Dijk, 2001). The typical vocabulary of many scholars features notions of power, dominance, hegemony, ideology, class, gender, race, discrimination, interest,
reproduction, institutional social structure and social order. Power is a central notion in most critical work on discourse and more specifically the social power of groups or institutions. Social power can be defined in terms of control. The power of dominant groups may be integrated in laws, rules, norms, habits, and even in a quite general consensus, thus taking the form of hegemony.

Within discourse, narrative analysis has become one of the major areas of research (Linde, 2001). Critical discourse analysis employs interdisciplinary techniques of text analysis to examine how texts construct representations of the world, social identities, and social relationships (Luke, 2004). Analyses of stories include line-by-line analyses of the narrative structure. Others have examined how the structure of stories reflects that of the social actions found in the stories. Still others analyze the linguistic features of this discourse genre. Some researchers are interested in how people use stories to portray sociolinguistic identities, and how narrative distributes social power and creates and perpetuates social relations.

Today increasing attention is being directed toward the political effects of narrative. Storytelling is seen not only as a way of creating community but as a resource for dominating others and for expressing solidarity, resistance and conflict. More and more, narrative is becoming a way of constructing “events” and giving them meaning. Through telling, we construct ourselves and our experiential worlds (Johnstone, 2001).

In the current study, I refer to written cases and critical autobiography as discourse units composed in a given situation by the teacher-inquirer. I regard the self-narrative genre as an opportunity for extracting meaning through language and revealing the teacher-inquirer’s identity. My assumption is that language reflects social and political meanings. Hence, I rely upon Gee’s (1992; 1999) definition of discourse and his view that meaning is found in actual contexts of use.

A Model for Critical Discourse Analysis

In this book I use three categories of analysis to reveal teachers’ sense of professional self. Those categories were developed in a previous study (Ezer & Mevorach, 2008), in which we analyzed teacher-educators’ narratives and revealed their professional identities. The three categories of analysis are as follows:

− **Positioning**: how the teacher-inquirers position themselves within the professional landscape. Positioning refers to how the narrators place themselves in the story vis-à-vis others (Kupferberg & Gilat, 2002) and
with respect to their professional self. Occasionally positioning is particularly apparent in the figurative language used in the discourse.  

- **Evaluation:** how the teacher-inquirers reflect upon their narratives, or, to use Labov’s terminology (1972), how they evaluate episodes through the use of evaluation devices. I call these devices meta-statements (Ezer, Millet & Patkin, 2005). In these meta-statements the narrators say something “about” what is going on, as if they have been observing their lives and what happened in their lives from the outside.  

- **Language use:** how the teacher-inquirers used language, or in other words, what style and common semantic fields were used.  

**CONCLUSION**  

Among the various types of self-study, this book focuses on three in particular, which echo and reverberate off one another: instructional situations case analysis, critical autobiography and action research. Each takes the form of a narrative, though every narrative has a different structure and emphasis, as will become clear. The following three chapters describe these three types of self-study. Each chapter surveys the relevant theoretical background, outlines the research strategy, and offers representative narratives from studies carried out by teacher-inquirers. These narratives are analyzed using the tools of critical discourse analysis to reveal the teacher’s sense of professional self emerging from the text. Furthermore, the examples are used to substantiate the approach put forth in this book, that is, that self-study serves teacher-inquirers as a tool for professional development.