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Bildung as an essential disposition in becoming a reflective practitioner: practical application of philosophical hermeneutics to second language teacher education

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ABSTRACT

For a few decades, reflective practice has been employed in second language teacher education (SLTE) as a means by which practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their performance, an awareness that creates opportunities for professional growth and development. Dewey, who initiated the concept of reflective thinking in teacher education, emphasized one’s attitudes toward engagement in reflective process. One such disposition is open-mindedness, ‘a willingness to entertain different perspectives… and acknowledgement of the limitations of one’s own perspectives’. Regarding this concept of open-mindedness, Gadamer, who established philosophical hermeneutics, provided profound insights by using the German word Bildung, which is often translated as education, culture, or self-cultivation. Through this concept, Gadamer emphasized not only one’s open and introspective disposition toward new experience but also one’s mode of being. This paper explores this notion of Bildung and examines its possible practical application to SLTE in combination with reflective practice. Referring to Grondin’s notion that education is to raise true questions, I will argue for the importance of nurturing Bildung of preservice second language teachers and of second language teacher educators.

Introduction

Rooted in John Dewey’s concept of reflective thinking and introduced by Donald Schön as a pragmatic human development method, reflective practice has been employed widely in the curriculum of second language teacher education (SLTE). This experiential learning practice has been implemented in SLTE in the core curriculum due to its compatibility with the growing interest in a constructivist approach in SLTE since the mid 1980s (Crandall, 2000; Wright, 2010). Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) defined reflective practice as ‘a means by which practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their performance, an awareness that creates opportunities for professional growth and development’ (p. 2). In SLTE, where it is generally recognized that individual preservice teachers already possess an idea of second language teaching shaped by their own past...
second language learning experience (Johnson, 1994; Kennedy & Kennedy, 1996; Legutke & Schocker-v. Ditfurth, 2009), it is believed that their reflective process plays a significant role in developing teachers' awareness about their teaching practice through critical assessment of their actions and the results of these actions (Farrell, 2016; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Rogers, 2002; Tedick, 2013). In this regard, reflective practice in SLTE is regarded as teachers' conscious and continuous meaning-making process of a recently experienced teaching moment for the purpose of gaining new insights about teaching.

Regarding such reflective process, Dewey (1933) emphasized that individuals need to have certain attitudes as a prerequisite to the kind of refection that enhance their potential of learning. One of the essential attitudes that Dewey stressed was open-mindedness. For Dewey, open-mindedness refers to ‘a willingness to entertain different perspectives … and acknowledgement of the limitations of one’s own perspectives’ (Rogers, 2002, p. 861). This does not mean uncritical acceptance of others’ perspectives and replacement of one’s own perspective with theirs. It means putting both perspectives in play in relation to the current context that one is situated in and recognizing both the strengths and weaknesses of one’s own perspective (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Considering that a primary goal of reflective practice in SLTE is to transform the educational and pedagogical beliefs that preservice teachers possess through critical and introspective examination of a lived experience of teaching, the concept of open-mindedness seems to play a crucial role in their reflective process and should be nurtured in order to make their reflective process more effective. However, what does it mean to have open-mindedness, and how is it possible for second language teacher educators to help their students develop it? As a second language teacher educator, who engages in SLTE and who believes in the power of reflective practice, I believe it is worth exploring this concept and seeking a way to nurture individual preservice teachers’ open-mindedness in SLTE.

While Dewey himself has offered insights regarding this concept of open-mindedness, I find that the German concept of Bildung, which is often translated into English as education, culture, formation, or self-cultivation, can contribute to expanding our understanding about open-mindedness. Among German philosophers such as Wilhelm Hegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Hans-Georg Gadamer, Bildung refers to one’s introspective disposition toward self-formation or self-cultivation with openness to otherness (Mathias Simão, 2005). In his work Truth and Method, Gadamer (1989/2004) also emphasized that Bildung describes the result of the process of self-formation or of becoming. Connecting this concept to the process of reflection, van Manen (1990) stressed, ‘In bringing to reflective awareness the nature of the events experienced in our natural attitude, we are able to transform or remake ourselves in the true sense of Bildung (education)’ (p. 7), in which ‘natural attitude’ means our uncritical, everyday perception. In this sense, reflective practice and Bildung seem to be closely related to each other.

Furthermore, it is interesting that both Dewey and Gadamer, regardless of their quite different historical and philosophical backgrounds, shared a very similar view on the purpose of education. Dewey considered the goal of education as ‘the growth and enrichment of experienced meaning’ (Hildebrand, 2016, p. 76), and for Gadamer, education is about formation and transformation of self through new experience (Davey, 2006; Grondin, 2011). In other words, they would both agree that self-construction through experience is essential in education. Therefore, exploring Gadamer’s notion of Bildung could offer insights regarding open-mindedness in reflective practice and provide implications for how to nurture it in
In this paper, I will explore open-mindedness referring to the concept of *Bildung* in the context of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics and attempt to examine its possible practical application to reflective practice in SLTE.

**Gadamer and philosophical hermeneutics**

Gadamer established philosophical hermeneutics as an interpretive theory of human understanding. In this philosophy, Gadamer brought together aspects of hermeneutics and phenomenology as a way to emphasize the experiential nature of learning and understanding. According to Moules (2002), the hermeneutic aspect is derived from the line of 19th-century hermeneutics, especially that of Friederich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey. Schleiermacher’s contribution to later hermeneutics is his emphasis on the creativity in interpretation, the importance of language in interpretation, and the concept of the hermeneutic circle, ‘the movement between part and whole in the process of interpretation’ (Moules, 2002, p.5). Also, what Gadamer inherited from Dilthey is the notion of understanding as a significant and fundamental constituent in our being-in-the-world (Grondin, 1994; Moules, 2002).

Regarding the phenomenological roots of hermeneutics, Gadamer was directly influenced by Martin Heidegger’s phenomenology, which brought a so-called ontological turn in the history of western philosophy and challenged philosophy’s emphasis on a detached human subject looking standing apart from an objective world (Laverty, 2003). According to Heidegger (1962), human beings are always in a world where language, culture, and a structure of life already exist, and, as such, are inevitably conditioned by their historical situatedness. In other words, Heidegger asserted that it is impossible to be entirely objective because we are continuously influenced by the historicality of our own prior life experience and the world around us. Therefore, he insisted that we need to focus on interpretation of our own facticity, which refers to *Dasein*, ‘the human condition of being-in-the-world temporarily and historically’ (Freeman, 2011, p. 544).

Heidegger (1962) also claimed that interpretation is critical to understanding as every lived experience comes to understanding through interpretation. In the emergence of one’s understanding, both Heidegger and Gadamer agreed that language and understanding are inseparable. According to Gadamer (1989/2004, 2000, 2006), understanding is universally mediated through language, and thus language is a fundamental medium of understanding and interpretation. As Freeman and Vagle (2013) explain in their argument of application of hermeneutics to human science research, ‘using language is not just about our verbalness; it is about the way we structure our thinking about the world’ (p. 725). In sum, it is language that enables interpretation and makes understanding possible.

Inheriting such lines of thought from hermeneutics and phenomenology, Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics focuses on how understanding occurs (Grondin, 1994; Moules, McCaffrey, Field, & Laing, 2015). Like Heidegger, Gadamer (1989/2004) asserted that our traditions and situatedness play a fundamental role in the construction of our interpretation and understanding of the world, and that in this sense we cannot detach our subjectivity from our interpretation and understanding. Gadamer (1989/2004) emphasized that it is important to recognize our own prejudices constructed through our traditions and situatedness as a preconception to understanding. In other words, he suggested that we need to ‘understand understanding’ (Freeman, 2014, p. 832). Having prejudice does not necessarily
hold a negative connotation. Indeed, for Gadamer, there is no better or worse binary in prejudice: ‘prejudice does not necessarily mean a false judgment, but part of the idea is it can have either a positive or a negative value’ (Gadamer, 1989/2004; p.283). In fact, prejudice is essential in the process of understanding, and without it we are not even able to identify any phenomena (Pascoe, 1996). Therefore, prejudice is all of our preconceptions, and it is a necessary condition for us to interpret the world.

For Gadamer, understanding is mediated through interpretation, and interpretation is to obtain a new or different perspective by fusing one’s way of thinking with others’, which he called a fusion of horizons. Here, ‘others’ refers to people, texts, environment, and experience. Gadamer (1989/2004) insisted that we do not recognize the limits of our horizon while we stay captive in it, and that it is when we are exposed to others’ horizons through dialogue that we become aware of our limits. When we experience something, we attempt to interpret the lived experience with our own prejudice informed by our tradition and situatedness. However, we often encounter an experience in which different ways of thinking exist, which Gadamer (1989/2004) called ‘the negativity of experience’ (p. 362). Such an encounter is an opportunity in which we are able to become aware of our own horizon and reach a new understanding. Gadamer (2000) explained, ‘the interpreter and the text each possess his, her, or its own horizon and every moment of understanding represents a fusion of these horizons’ (p. 45). Therefore, it is our encounter with others’ ways of understanding that enables us to be aware of the limits of our own horizon and for our prejudice to be put into play. Thus, understanding, for Gadamer, is a dialogic process between individuals and the world around them.

In this process, philosophical hermeneutics asserts that it is also important that dialogue contains a certain quality. Gadamer (1989/2004, 2000, 2006) offered the concept of genuine dialogue as the ideal quality of dialectic dialogue. He noted,

[A] conversation is not possible if one of the partners believes himself or herself to be in a clearly superior position in comparison with the other person, and assumes that he or she possesses a prior knowledge of the erroneous prejudgments in which the other is entangled. But if one does this, one actually locks oneself into the circle of one’s own prejudices. Reaching an understanding dialogically is impossible if in principle one of the partners in a dialogue does not allow himself or herself to enter into a real conversation. (Gadamer, 2006, pp. 51–52)

To ensure such genuine dialogue, Gadamer (1989/2004) emphasized the importance of the structure of questions and answers in dialogue because questioning helps us engage with others’ horizons, and it enhances the possibilities of meaning that a certain experience brings out (Trede, Higgs, & Rothwell, 2009). By receiving answers to questions from others, our prejudice is negotiated and reconstructed. As a result, a new possibility of interpretation and understanding of the world comes into our horizon. In this way, the structure of question and answer creates a dialectical cycle that renews and keeps transforming our horizons. In sum, Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics describes how human understanding occurs in one’s encounter with an experience where one’s horizon is challenged and transformed by others’ horizons through genuine conversation involving the structure of questions and answers.

In his argument of the event of understanding explained above, in which a fusion of horizons is achieved through genuine dialogue, Gadamer emphasized the concept of Bildung, our sensitive and open dispositions to other perspectives, as a core human essence in achieving understanding. In Gadamer’s (1989/2004) notion, Bildung refers to a person’s
awareness and attitude for self-cultivation and self-development in which s/he attempts to reach new understanding by being open to dialogue with others. In the following section, I will explore this concept and attempt to explain why *Bildung* should be applied to the current reflective practice in SLTE.

**Concept of Bildung**

Tracing the etymology of *Bildung*, Gadamer (1989/2004) explained that the word initially referred to external appearances and the way shapes formed naturally, but he also noted that it has grown to signify nuances such as ‘image,’ ‘copy,’ and ‘model,’ which ancient man associated with the image of God, ‘after whom he is fashioned, and which man must cultivate in himself’ (p. 10). While the concept of *Bildung* was initially introduced by Immanuel Kant in his use of the word ‘culture,’ it was Wilhelm Hegel who started employing the word *Bildung* to imply the notion of self-formation as a part of the dialectical movement, and Wilhelm von Humboldt adapted and implemented the concept in German education (Mathias Simão, 2005). Appreciating Hegel and Humboldt’s contribution to the development of the concept, Gadamer (1989/2004) admired *Bildung* as the greatest idea generated in the eighteenth century. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer refers to von Humboldt’s definition of *Bildung*: ‘when in our language we say *Bildung*, we mean something both higher and inward, namely the disposition of mind which, from the knowledge and the feeling of the total intellectual and moral endeavor, flows harmoniously into sensibility and character’ (von Humboldt, cited in Gadamer, 1989/2004; p. 10). As mentioned above, *Bildung* involves different essences such as education, culture, formation, and self-cultivation. Davey (2006) states, *Bildung* is not a distinct concept but an indistinct idea … *Bildung* entails a sense of the other and different, of history and tradition, of ethical dependence, of the transcendent within both language and cultural formation as well as an acute experiential awareness of the finitude of one’s hermeneutic horizons (p. 38).

This connection to self-cultivation and formation is one reason I believe this concept is crucial to teacher education and reflective practice.

**Bildung as openness to others’ perspectives**

The first aspect of *Bildung* that I would like to discuss in relation to reflective practice is indeed quite similar to what Dewey meant by open-mindedness, and Gadamer (1989/2004) attributed this aspect of *Bildung* to Hegel’s argument about dialectics. Although Gadamer did not agree with Hegel’s claim that *Bildung* is the way to absolute truth or absolute knowledge, Gadamer (1989/2004) acknowledged that he followed Hegel for what he generally meant by *Bildung*. Gadamer explained that the general characteristic of *Bildung* is ‘keeping oneself open to what is other- to other, more universal points of view’ (p. 16). Universal points of view here do not mean Hegel’s sense of absolute truth or absolute knowledge. Rather, they are the possible perspectives that the others may possess regarding a certain aspect of the world one is encountering, and hence they do not have an end point. Our understanding of the world is continuously reconstructed through our encounter with new experience, and this process of reconstruction is never-ending. Therefore, we have to have openness in our hermeneutic encounter with new experience, which may further broaden our horizons. *Bildung*, in this sense, emphasizes our openness to otherness with no absolute conclusion.
It is also true, however, that openness to others does not merely mean to respect and accept others’ perspectives but also involves assessment of our own perspectives as well as those of others. Mathias Simão (2005) explains that seeking universal points of view with openness is an event of self-formation, and describes it as ‘a process of rupture and reconstruction’ (p. 561), in which we need to acknowledge our limits so that we overcome ourselves. In order to overcome our limits, Gadamer argued, we have to bring our horizon and prejudices that construct our understanding of the world and to put them into play. Davey (2006) describes that this aspect of Bildung is ‘both a formative and transformative (dialogical) process implicit within the dynamics of hermeneutical encounter’ (p. 41). It is transformative in that two parties engaging in dialogue reach a shared, albeit different, understanding as a result of the encounter. It is formative in that this dialogue brings a new understanding that forms their beings. When we encounter others’ perspectives with openness, what happens is not that others’ perspectives are replacing our perspectives. Instead, we engage in dialogue with them to reach new understanding, and this dialogue also entails our recognition of our current perspectives and to critically assess their validity in contrast to others’ perspectives. Regarding this dialogic process Bohlin (2013) states,

>Bildung can be conceived as a process of (i) realizing alternatives to one’s habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting, thereby (ii) becoming able to identify the presuppositions or assumptions underlying those ways of thinking, etc. which in turn leads to (iii) critical assessment of these presuppositions—and, we may add here, (iv) critical assessment of the alternatives. Entering into dialogue with others who think differently, we question the premises of our ordinary ways of thinking, feeling and acting, and our meaning perspectives change in response to the encounters with their alternatives. But obviously, the alternatives cannot be uncritically taken for granted either. Pulling ourselves by our own boot-straps, we must think critically and self-critically at the same time. (p. 398)

Therefore, Bildung as openness to others’ perspectives involves our recognition of others’ perspectives and our own perspectives and engagement in critical thinking with both of them. In emphasizing Bildung, Gadamer stressed the dialogic interaction between one’s own perspective and new perspectives that others’ bring in our encounter to new experience, and he noted that this process of rising to a more universal understanding is not something to be learned but a task for humans.

In SLTE, for example, a preservice teacher may have preference in his/her teaching method based on his/her own experience of learning a second language. But, when the method is implemented in a lesson that s/he teaches, it may not be as effective and productive as it was supposed to be. Then, the teacher may attribute the ineffectiveness of the method simply to students’ lack of motivation, energy or knowledge, or to the differences between his/her teaching style and the mentor teacher’s style that the students are more used to, some or all of which may be true. But, here, it is important also to face and assess what s/he presupposed in the first interpretation of this hermeneutic encounter. The teacher might have presupposed that the students would think the same way about the method as s/he does, and neglected to see the lesson from the perspective of the students’ perspectives. If the teacher engages in dialogue with this experience with openness, s/he may realize both new understandings and his/her limitations about the choice of a teaching method in the teaching context. Through such dialogue, the teacher may still find his/her own opinion the most convincing in the immediate context. But, processing the negativity of experience by bringing his/her past experience to conscious awareness can give him/her new insights that could contribute to the future action. As Gadamer (1989/2004) mentioned, ‘[In Bildung, what
is absorbed is not like a means that has lost its function. Rather, in acquired Bildung nothing disappears, but everything is preserved’ (p. 11). Rising to more universal points of view is to keep acquiring others’ perspectives and to assimilate them into one’s way of being. It is an endless process of intellectual growth.

**Bildung as the element within which Gebildet moves**

For Gadamer, Bildung is not just the process of self-formation involving openness, and critical and self-critical thinking. It also refers to one’s mode of being. Gadamer (1989/2004) stressed, ‘Bildung is not to be understood only as the process of historically raising the mind to the universal; it is at the same time the element within which the educated man (Gebildet) moves’ (p. 14). Like the indistinctness of the concept of Bildung, Gebildet, too, is often described in multiple English expressions such as cultured man, educated man, and experienced man. In his argument of aesthetic experience (Erfahrung), Gadamer (1989/2004) mentioned,

> [E]xperience is experience of human finitude. The truly experienced person is one who has taken this to heart, who knows that he is master neither of time nor the future. The experienced man knows that all foresight is limited and all plans uncertain. In him is realized the truth value of experience. If it is characteristic of every phase of the process of experience that the experienced person acquires a new openness to new experiences, this is certainly true of the idea of being perfectly experienced. (p. 365)

What we achieve through the self-formation process with Bildung is not only to reach shared understanding with others through openness but also to become Gebildet, who possesses awareness about the finitude of one’s own knowledge and who is constantly and continually prepared to rise to more universal points of view in forthcoming hermeneutical encounters. In this regard, Bildung is not only what we should possess but also a state we should be in.

Gadamer (1989/2004) employed the word ‘tact’ to explain hermeneutically trained consciousness or mind that Gebildet possesses toward new experience: ‘[b]y tact we understand a special sensitivity and sensitiveness to situations and how to behave in them, for which knowledge from general principles does not suffice’ (p. 15). One always has to have this tact in order to be sensitive to otherness in the encountering experience. In hermeneutic encounters, being in Bildung enables such otherness to show itself, and puts us in-between our horizon and other’s horizon, in which our prejudices are assessed, questioned, examined, and transformed through dialogue with otherness. Nurturing this consciousness of putting oneself in the space in-between is to be becoming Gebildet (Davey, 2006), which is a never-ending process. Thus, Bildung is always an ongoing practice to become Gebildet: as Nicholson (2011) describes, ‘the continuing … Bildung is a Sich-bilden, a reflexive self-education that is likely to be life-long’ (p. 67). To live in Bildung is ‘a “moving,” very human “way” of being’ (Davey, 2011, p. 51).

This aspect of Bildung can contribute to the development of reflective practice in SLTE in terms of adding more emphasis on teachers’ disposition that promotes their reflective process. While Dewey acknowledged that open-mindedness is a prerequisite attitude for a successful and effective reflective process (Rogers, 2002), Gadamer’s idea about Bildung as a process of becoming Gebildet also implies one’s continuous endeavor to keep reflective and critical awareness as s/he encounters new experiences. Nicholson (2011) described Bildung as ‘an education in thinking’ (p. 62). In this sense, Bildung may inform and deepen teachers’ mode of engaging in ongoing reflective practice.
The idea of becoming Gebildet aligns with the initial and ultimate goal of SLTE for employing reflective practice, which is ‘educating the reflective practitioner’ (Adler, 1990, p. 4). This slogan does not imply mere employment of reflective practice in SLTE as a means to promote teachers’ reflection within the domain of teacher education. It is about cultivating teachers’ independence as reflective practitioners. Experiencing reflective practice does not automatically make one a reflective practitioner. If teachers engage in reflective practice merely as a set of required course assignments without Bildung or being in Bildung, they may not actually be engaging in reflective practice but rather simply going through a process of reflection. Unless reflective practice is established as a sustainable, practical, and autonomous practice in individual teachers, the ultimate goal of reflective practice will not be achieved. Therefore, in the employment of reflective practice, it is critically important for us, second language teacher educators, to explore how we can nurture preservice teachers’ Bildung in SLTE.

**Nurturing Bildung in SLTE**

The question is whether or not Bildung can be nurtured through the curriculum of SLTE. If so, how is it possible? Indeed, as seen in von Humboldt’s application to the 19th-century German education policy, Bildung has been implemented in public education. However, some previous studies have reported challenges in applying the concept to the actual school and teaching contexts. For example, referring to a report from Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, Bohlin (2013) pointed out that, while Bildung is conceptually employed as an academic goal in higher education, it is hardly adapted to professors’ instructional practice due to the numerous meanings Bildung possesses and the ambiguity of those meanings. Also, according to Davey (2011), ‘Bildung is not achieved by means of technical instruction but grows out of engagement with a set of concerns’ (p. 46). Obviously, Bildung is not a kind of transmittable knowledge with a clear definition that can be taught through direct instruction. It is a kind of moral knowledge that preservice teachers need to cultivate through the experience of continuous encounters and exposure to otherness, in which their own horizon is challenged and they engage in dialogue with otherness to acquire a new horizon. Then, the key to nurturing teachers’ Bildung lies in their encounters and exposure to otherness. As previously mentioned, philosophical hermeneutics asserts that genuine dialogue consists of the structure of questions and answers, and this aspect may offer a practical implication to the current reflective practice in SLTE, which encourages preservice teachers to dialogically make meaning of the negativity of experience.

Referring to Gadamer’s argument of genuine dialogue consisting of the structure of questions and answers, Grondin (2011) emphasized that education and Bildung share the idea of one’s capacity to question his/her knowledge to broaden horizons. For Gadamer, Grondin states, to acquire a new horizon is to learn to raise true questions, ‘to which one does not know the answer’ (p. 14). This is how, I believe, philosophical hermeneutics and Bildung can make a practical contribution to SLTE in combination with the current employment of reflective practice. Developing Bildung through learning to raise true questions has the potential to make reflective practice in SLTE more effective and meaningful and to promote teachers to remain reflective practitioners. Dewey (1934) asserted that the reflective process begins when one encounters a challenge or conflict and tries to overcome it. In other words, encountering a true question is always the starting point of the reflective process. Philosophical
hermeneutics and the concept of Bildung could help reflective practice in SLTE by strengthening teachers’ sense or tact of noticing the negativity of experience that leads them to the reflective process.

Encountering and being exposed to true questions give teachers opportunities to engage in thinking, as Nicholson (2011) states,

This is an effect of the teacher’s self-education: bumping again and again against the border between what is known and what is unknown. It is not merely that self-education will expand the teacher’s body of knowledge. Thinking is the activity in which we can discourse both what we know and about what we do not know, that is, the activity of questioning. (p. 71)

Without a doubt, it is important that, through such encounters and exposure to the dialogic activity of questioning, teachers are able to acquire many different horizons regarding second language teaching and learning, which may transform their beliefs and, eventually, their practice. However, more importantly, such engagement in the activity of questioning offers them opportunities to go through the reflective process: recognizing the negativity of experience that challenges their own prejudices, engaging in dialogue with openness to other perspectives, and realizing the finitude of their experience, all of which contribute to the promotion of their Bildung. And continuous encounters with and exposure to such activities are essential for them to remain in Bildung, to become Gebildet, and to become a reflective practitioner.

This suggests that it is another task for us, those who work with preservices teachers in SLTE, to make sure to create an environment in which preservice teachers are encouraged to engage in thinking with true questions. In order to lead and expose preservice teachers to this activity of dialogue, we need to provide true questions that do not possess either an expected or absolute answer. Through exposing preservice teachers to critical and reflective engagement with such questions, we should draw them into a dialogue with their own historical horizons and others’ By doing so, their horizons of teaching and learning a second language can be broadened and transformed, and, more importantly, they can realize and be aware of the finitude of their experience and knowledge.

Furthermore, we need to keep it in mind that those of us who are teacher educators also need to demonstrate our own Bildung in our interaction with the preservice teachers we work with. In the process of our students’ intellectual and professional development, our role should not be limited to being a mere provider of knowledge but should also include being a participant in the dialogic activity of questioning. Reflective practice has been regarded as ‘a social practice’ rather than individual teacher’s private activity (Zeichner, 1993). In this sense, teacher educators are also collaborators in their students’ reflective process, who seek a new understanding about the focal subject matter. Therefore, teacher educators need to take risks to ask questions to which they themselves do not know the answer (Nicholson, 2011). It is our task to possess Bildung and remain in Bildung in our interaction with preservice teachers by acknowledging the limits of our knowledge and by expressing openness to individual teachers’ perspectives. Grondin (2011) stressed, ‘Self-education … starts with the pupil that we never cease to be’ (p. 18). In this sense, teacher educators equally need to be pupils who aspire self-education (Bildung) in their dialogue with their students and to be aware that their own Bildung is also promoted through their dialogue with individual teachers. That is, preservice teachers’ Bildung can be nurtured with teacher educators’ demonstration of their own Bildung while both participants help each other promote their individual self-education through engaging in dialogue together.
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