

# Unauthorized Methods

## STRATEGIES FOR CRITICAL TEACHING

EDITED BY

Joe L. Kincheloe  
Shirley R. Steinberg

# UNAUTHORIZED METHODS



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# UNAUTHORIZED METHODS: STRATEGIES FOR CRITICAL TEACHING

*Joe L. Kincheloe and Shirley R. Steinberg,*  
*Editors*

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*Dedication to Nita Freire  
with love and thanks for ten beloved years,  
looking towards the future.*

*Dedicación a Nita Freire  
con amor y agradecimiento por los diez años muy queridos,  
que se extienden en el futuro.*

*Dedicação a Nita Freire  
com amor e agradecimento pelos dez anos muito queridos,  
que se prolongam no futuro.*



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## SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

*James W. Fraser*

In *Unauthorized Methods: Strategies for Critical Teaching*, Joe L. Kincheloe and Shirley R. Steinberg have brought together a series of materials which make one simple point: that democracy, empowerment, and academic rigor can be realities in the curriculum of today's schools, but only if we make a fundamental shift in our ways of viewing both our students and the curriculum.

To some extent this volume provides teachers of the 1990s ways of making real what turn of the twentieth-century progressive educators called a "student-centered pedagogy." By moving the focus of energy from "covering the curriculum" or "raising the test scores" to the far more important issues of engaging the students' curiosity and enlisting them as cocreators of the knowledge that will be included in the school, the authors in this volume have provided the basis for a similar philosophy for the twenty-first century. By nurturing the imagination of their students and then inviting them to become fellow learners with the teachers, the authors of this volume move from a view of teaching that looks at discrete fragments of information that a student must master in order to make learning an important and lifelong process.

At the same time, these authors also transcend the limitations of what was "student-centered pedagogy," for they are talking about more than learning. They are ultimately talking about social change. As Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg note in their opening chapter, "When a critical teacher who doesn't share the culture, language, race or socioeconomic backgrounds of students enters the classroom, he or she becomes not an information provider but an explorer who works with students to create mutually understood texts." These new texts are much more than the content of the curriculum. Ultimately the texts Kincheloe and Steinberg and their collaborators are talking about are the models of new knowledge and a new society which may yet be multicultural and democratic and freedom loving. No wonder such pedagogies are "unauthorized methods." They challenge the status quo to its very foundations. And in doing this they offer the beginnings of a future which is better for all citizens.

I am grateful to each of the authors included in this volume for taking on the task of making these “unauthorized methods” so clear and so available to us. By engaging topics which cover the range of the curriculum of the schools—by including special education, bilingual education, literature and the arts, and also science and mathematics, and the use of technology—this volume casts its net widely and opens all parts of the curriculum to the possibility of being transformative. In doing this, these authors also add an important volume to Routledge’s *Transforming Teaching* Series.

The *Transforming Teaching* Series is committed to including the voices of teachers, scholars, and others in the service of a rich, equitable, and inclusive schooling for all students. Rigorous theory must always be informed by practice, and indeed it is in the dialogue of theory and practice that both are refined. We will doom ourselves to anti-intellectual mediocrity if we fail to ask the most rigorous and critical theoretical questions about both current practices and the current society, and the kind of schooling which is ultimately needed for the development of an inclusive, multicultural democracy. But we will not build that new society if teachers do not have the practical tools in hand to do their work. Volumes like *Unauthorized Methods: Strategies for Critical Teaching* make an important contribution to meeting this need.

*James W. Fraser*  
*Transforming Teaching Series Editor*  
*Director, Center for Innovation in Urban*  
*Education, Northeastern University*

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# I

## LESSON PLANS FROM THE OUTER LIMITS: UNAUTHORIZED METHODS

*Joe L. Kincheloe and Shirley R. Steinberg*

Teachers have a difficult job. Faced with pressures from a variety of angles, teachers must struggle to maintain their motivation and their self-esteem. The fact that so many do is a miracle of sorts, testimony to their dedication and to their drive. We consider such dedicated and adept teachers heroic figures and do everything possible to show our appreciation and our respect for them when they teach our children or when they appear in our graduate classes. Having said this, however we, like generations of analysts before us, believe that teachers suffer because of problems in their professional training not only at colleges of education but at colleges of liberal arts and sciences as well. When teachers emerge from higher education—through no fault of their own—they are frequently unprepared to teach at a level commensurate with their potential. Colleges of liberal arts and sciences too often teach broad survey courses that encourage memorization of isolated facts, not systematic analysis of the field.

Such systematic analysis might involve studies of the genesis of the field, of the field as a discourse with examination of the tacit rules that shape it and determine its future, of the various schools of thought within the field and the etymologies of their disagreements, and of the ways that knowledge has been produced in the field including the strengths and weaknesses of research strategies. These explorations constitute only a few of the ways potential teachers might transcend the memorization ritual; throughout this book we will present many more. In our effort to get beyond traditional methods of teaching and educating teachers, we will present lesson “plans” that refuse to discount the intelligence of teachers. We assume that teachers should be scholars, that they should possess the freedom to make their own plans and that they should honor the responsibility to be knowledge producers who are capable of comfortably perform-

ing both secondary and primary research. Indeed, we call for a new rigor in teacher education and in elementary and secondary education. This book serves as a set of introductory, nontraditional ideas on how to provide teachers with ways of thinking, researching, and instructing that empower them to implement this new rigor.

While *Unauthorized Methods: Strategies for Critical Teaching* will provide teaching methods and lesson plans, please note that throughout our careers as teachers we have been uncomfortable with these terms. Often methods and lesson plans have implied specific blueprints for teachers that give a step-by-step checklist of what to do and how to do it. Many methods and lesson plan books delineate a particular path, a “right way” for teachers who are assumed to have little research ability or subject matter knowledge. Not only does such material insult teachers by “dumbing down” expectations (or as Donaldo Macedo would call it, “stupidification”), but they rarely take the effects of the social, economic, and political context into account. The concepts of oppression and power inequalities are missing, as racism, gender bias, and class bias become forbidden topics. Yet the new rigorous paradigm of teaching and teacher education that we imagine foregrounds the *interaction* among context, power, method, and subject matter. This vision is practical, achievable, and desirable in a democratic society. We will first discuss impediments to its achievement and then imagine the implications of this vision. Our vision is indeed unauthorized in its notions of critical teaching without prescribed, teacher-proof methods.

## PARADIGMATIC RUMBLING

Major changes have occurred in academia over the last two decades. New ways of seeing and making sense of reality have emerged that challenge comfortable academic protocols, that set up the possibility of new ways of producing knowledge. We have written extensively about these changes elsewhere and will not recite the philosophical/theoretical aspects of them here (for such information see Kincheloe 1991, 1993, 1995; Kincheloe and Steinberg 1993, 1997). Succinctly put, a paradigmatic change of major proportions has taken place. A paradigm is a constellation of concepts, values, and techniques used by a scientific community or by a dominant culture to make sense of themselves and their world. As frameworks of understanding, paradigms guide the ways knowledge is produced. Until Thomas Kuhn described his notion of paradigmatic change in 1962, most scholars believed that scientific knowledge accumulated gradually

becoming more and more sophisticated and accurate. Kuhn and others undermined this view, maintaining that major conceptual change never comes as a result of a steady and orderly series of discoveries; on the contrary, conceptual change is abrupt, disconcerting, and traumatic. Einstein's early twentieth-century challenge to the dominant paradigm in physics exemplifies traumatic paradigmatic change. The universality of Newtonian physics collapsed as theories of relativity and quantum mechanics portrayed a far more complex physical universe. The world could never again be viewed in the same way.

Traditional methods of understanding the world no longer seem appropriate to many of us. The culture of modernist positivism that has tacitly shaped teaching and teacher education throughout most of the twentieth century no longer answers the compelling questions of our time. When we use the term *modernism* we are referring to the era of Western history beginning with the rise of science in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Unable to cure the Black Plague that killed one-fourth of Europe's population in the fourteenth century, Europeans sought new ways of making sense of the world. This impulse would lay the foundation of Western modernism and would express itself in the scientific method of René Descartes, Isaac Newton, and Francis Bacon. This scientific mode of reasoning, often termed *reductionism*, asserted that all aspects of complex phenomena can best be appreciated by reducing them to their constituent parts and then piecing these elements together according to causal laws (Mahoney and Lyddon 1988). A key aspect of modernist science has asserted that the same methods used to study the physical world should be used to study the social, psychological, and educational world. Serious problems emerge from such an assertion, as modernist researchers assume that students (like quartz crystals) are *objects* that will remain constant. Therefore, long-term generalizations can be made about children that disregard the ever-changing context in which they operate.

The label *positivism* was popularized by Auguste Comte, the nineteenth-century French philosopher, who argued that human thought had evolved through three stages: the theological stage (where truth was based on God's revelation); the metaphysical stage (where truth was based on abstract reasoning and argument); and the positivistic stage (where truth was based on scientifically produced knowledge). Comte sought to discredit the legitimacy of nonscientific thinking that did not take sense knowledge (knowledge obtained through the senses—empirical) into account (Kneller 1984; Smith 1983). He saw no difference between the ways knowledge should be produced in the



physical sciences and in the human sciences. From Comte's perspective we should study sociology the same way we study biology. Society, he argued, is nothing more than a body of neutral facts governed by immutable laws. Like biology, society is governed by natural laws. Accordingly, social actions would proceed with law-like predictability (Held 1980). In this context, education is also governed by unchanging laws; the role of the educator is to uncover them and then to act in accordance with them. For example, educational laws would include pronouncements on how students learn and how students should be taught. To the positivist educator there is only one *correct* way to teach and one *correct* body of subject matter. The context in which education takes place is irrelevant and the role of the teacher involves merely passing the correct subject matter to students using the correct pedagogical method.

The editors and authors of this book are united in their attempt to define counter-positivist instruction. Our lesson plans and methods are theoretically grounded on five differences from the old "authorized" paradigm:

1) Modernist positivism focuses on the parts (test scores, seating arrangements, different administrative strategies) in order to eventually understand the whole. *In the new paradigm this relationship is reversed*—the parts can only be understood in the context of the whole (the need to focus on our larger purposes as we learn methods of teaching);

2) Modernist positivism focuses on the identification of never-changing structures (knowledge as timeless truth, social laws, and a fixed core curriculum). *The new paradigm sees every structure as dynamic, constantly interacting with changing processes* (curriculum not as a fixed course of study but as a context-specific process changing with the evolving needs of society and individuals—the walk itself is just as important as the destination);

3) Modernist positivism claims that it produces an objective science untainted by human values (the curriculum is value-free, disinterested, merely the delineation of knowledge we have discovered). *The new paradigm makes no claim for objectivity*, as it celebrates human ways of knowing that are logical but also intuitive, emotional, and empathetic. Such an approach to knowledge production (epistemology) is often referred to as constructivism in that the world is "constructed" or brought forth in the process of knowing (learning becomes not as much an act of memorizing previously discovered information but an act of creating knowledge, of ordering our own experiences);

4) Modernist positivism uses the architectural metaphor of a building to talk about knowledge—scientific information is characterized as the basic building block of matter (positivist science educators speak of DNA as the foundation that determines the structure of life, not just one of many aspects of living systems). *The new paradigm uses the concept of a network where all aspects are interconnected* (the science curriculum is never taught in isolation but in relation to networks of philosophical, political, economic, and theological knowledge—it is merely one part that influences and is influenced by the larger network of the universe);

5) Modernist positivism regards what it produces as the truth (the theory of evolution is true, the law of supply and demand in economics is true). *In the new paradigm no “fact” exists in a vacuum.* The characteristics of one entity are related to the characteristics of other entities. Because we can never understand and appreciate all of the possible relationships between parts, we never uncover the whole story. Thus, we offer only approximate explanations (the examples of teaching we offer in this book are not *truths* about teaching—they may indeed work for you in some situations, but in other contexts they may not work at all).

The new paradigm does not appeal to some people because of its complexity, its refusal to offer reductionistic answers to life’s complex questions. The old paradigm is comforting to many because of its faith in traditional methods of science to explain the nature of the world and the “truth” about teaching. In the old paradigm meaning was lost as information was turned into factoids, bits and pieces of data removed from context. We learned to think in fragments removed from the context that gives our thoughts meaning through their connection to the larger good. School has little to do with such connections—rarely do we talk about human problems and the interconnectedness between them. We speak, for example, of adolescent suicide as a growing problem that needs to be addressed and we hold workshops to prepare teachers to identify those students who fit the “profile” of potential suicide victims. But that’s where the process stops. Rarely do we connect the growth of adolescent suicide to the larger context of late-twentieth-century life with its economic problems and its loss of meaning. Viewed within this larger context, youth suicide can be understood at a new level of sophistication. Immediately the decontextualized inadequacy of the teacher workshops confronts us. Once we begin to contextualize youth suicide our ability to develop viable responses to it improves dramatically. In the case of suicide or any other problem, the more ways we can contex-

tualize the matter, the greater our understanding of it and the more likely we are to solve it.

We are vitally concerned with teachers and students being able to produce knowledge. Indeed, one of the key differences between education in the old paradigm and in the new paradigm is that the old model emphasizes the *discovery* of knowledge while the new one emphasizes the *invention* of knowledge. Thus, teachers are scholars who both contextualize and produce knowledge, all the while sharing their abilities with students. Thus, the classroom takes on the appearance of a “think tank,” an institution in which important knowledge is produced that has the value outside of the classroom. In modern positivism, teachers were instructed to say: “Give me the truth and I will pass it along to students in the most efficient manner possible.” In the new paradigm, teachers are encouraged to support themselves, to assert their freedom from all-knowing experts, to operate in an unauthorized manner. Such teachers often say: “Please support me as my students and I explore the world of mathematic, sociology, or whatever.” Teachers in the new paradigm refuse to accept without question the validity of the Western canon (the great books and ideas that have been taught in the traditional Western curriculum) as they seek knowledge from other cultures and traditions. Indeed, they are not content to operate within the framework that is taken for granted—they seek to recontextualize questions that have been traditionally asked about schooling and knowledge production in general. While they respect earlier insight and are reverential in respect to the genius of past eras, such educators display their veneration by continuing to question the work of their intellectual ancestors. Your own personal context and understanding may lead you to revise and to expand many of the ideas presented in this book.

Teachers in the new paradigm seek new ways of conceptualizing the world. Thus, in the spirit of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, they problematize the information that confronts them. Freire and other educators (including Jo Anne Pagano, Deborah Britzman, Donaldo Macedo, Michael Apple, Philip Wexler, Joyce King, Gaile Canella, Ivor Goodson, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, William Pinar, and Tomas da Silva) have argued that any paradigm shift be viewed in a critical or socially transformative manner. Such a position maintains that knowledge always reflects larger power relationships in society. This means that those with social, economic, and political clout will have more say in what the schools consider official, validated knowledge than those without clout. Critical teachers understand this tendency and account for it in the way they work to problematize class-

room information. Problematization in this critical new paradigm would, of course, involve asking questions such as where did the knowledge come from or who benefits as the result of the canonization of this knowledge. The ability to recognize these power-related dynamics lays the foundation for what Paulo Freire has called “critical consciousness.” Such a way of seeing moves individuals to reconceptualize their world in a manner that leads to transformative action, to social change.

Teachers who embrace these critical goals help students develop an awareness of themselves as social agents. This goal requires that teachers and students contextualize what happens in the classroom in relation to power and social justice issues as well as in relation to real lived experience. Thus, when students read a section of a science textbook that touts the virtues of nuclear power without references to environmental questions or allusions to Three Mile Island or Chernobyl, critical teachers insist that power questions be asked. Who benefits if we buy into such a description of nuclear power or who loses? These are central questions in such a context. A key question of this book is: *How do we construct contexts for critical growth in our classrooms?* We will present activities and methodologies that teachers have used to encourage student reflection of the cultural values that shape personal views of the world and one’s place in it. Understanding the ways our consciousness is constructed is a fascinating exploration that not only provides insight into who we are but also into how the world works. Critical teachers in the new paradigm are enthralled by such questions.

### **AS TEACHERS, WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO BECOME SCHOLARS AND SELF-DIRECTED AGENTS**

Teachers becoming excellent scholars will certainly not solve every problem in education, but we believe such a vision would constitute a damn good start in long-term educational reform. As we apologize for our glibness, we understand the structural problems that undermine education—not the least of which is an unequal distribution of wealth that robs the poor and marginalized of an equal opportunity to educational resources. Indeed our call for scholarly teachers in a more complex new paradigm is always accompanied by the belief that critical scholarly insight will render teachers better prepared to lead the struggle for political and economic democracy and social and educational justice. In the old paradigm elementary and secondary teachers were not even considered members of the traditional scholarly culture

of higher education. Too many teachers have worked in the culture of the time clock, anti-intellectualism, ideological naivete, limited interpretive practice, and minimal analysis of the assumptions of the professional world. The logic of such working conditions emphasizes something quite unlike interpretive thinking. There is a tendency to surrender to the given, to view existing institutional arrangements, *authorized* arrangements, as objective realities. Without the catalyst of interpretation, and of an intellectually active analytical community, pronouncements tend to speak at a literal level—they speak “for themselves.” Without an analytical view of the everyday and of institutional requirements and activities, thought is fragmented and conceptual synthesis is blocked. Indeed, our relationship to knowledge is severed. As a result, our role as participants in social and institutional life is unexamined and our power to anticipate the consequences of social actions is devoured (Zeuli and Bachmann 1986; Greene 1988; Britzman 1991).

The implicit message of older paradigmatic teacher education, the positivistic research that often grounds it, and the state and provincial reform movements that share the same epistemological assumptions is that teachers must do what they are told, what they are authorized to do, and that they must be careful about thinking for themselves. Such caution eventually turns into apathy as teachers lose interest in the creative aspects of pedagogy that originally attracted them to the profession. Teacher thinking is profoundly affected by the top-down flow, the teacher-proof curriculums that assume practitioner incompetence. As they are rewarded in teacher training for their passive acceptance of expert-generated knowledge, prospective teachers gain little experience in contextually grounded interpretive thinking about the purpose of teaching in a democratic society. Management science is geared to the control of human beings in line with visions of institutional efficiency and standardization. Teacher education often contributes to such management orientations by conveying the belief that the laws of social and educational life are well known and devoid of ambiguity (Glickman 1985; Baldwin 1987; Popkewitz 1981).

In this context consider Madeline Hunter’s popular teaching/supervision model (an authorized model) used in thousands of teaching education programs and school districts. Hunter’s model assumes a predetermined, prescribed version of teaching based on “seven essential steps.” Teachers guided by Hunter follow these specific (and measurable) steps in every lesson regardless of the subject matter. Supervisor evaluation is simplified, standardized, and streamlined as administrators come to define good teaching as that which conforms to Hunter’s

model. Accountability is ensured, Hunter and the technicians argue, as teachers come to understand what is expected of them so they can perform appropriately.

The range of teaching behaviors that may be considered appropriate is narrowed under Hunter's model. Supervisors and teacher educators admit that innovative lessons that fail to follow the model must be evaluated as unsatisfactory. Thus, rewards for teaching are not based on reasoned notions of competence and creativity but on adherence to format, or, teacher compliance. Teacher education becomes a conformity mill, an adjustment procedure in which novices are fine-tuned to the Hunter channel. Like workers in Frederick W. Taylor's scientifically managed factories of efficiency, the technician system a la Hunter strips teachers of their role in the conceptualization of the teaching act. Teachers become executors of managerial plans. The moral and ethical dimensions, not to mention the cognitive aspects of the teaching act, are submerged in a pool of standardization and conventionalism (Garman and Hazi 1988). Practitioners in this context are operating only with *authorized* teaching methods.

When teaching methods are taught in old paradigm professional teacher education, they are rarely conceived in the context of high-order scholarly demands on the teacher. Yet, we maintain that teachers must understand educational psychology and cognitive theory in paradigmatic context. Cognition studied in such a rigorous manner would provide educators with insights into the type of scholarly/cognitive abilities that are possible and how they can teach themselves and their students to operate at a higher cognitive level. In the old paradigm of teacher education, however, modernist cognitive theories are typically presented one after another without any attempt to critically assess or relate them to actual classroom practice. Such information is presented at a concrete cognitive level, as students commit to memory what B. F. Skinner, Kurt Lewin, S. Freud, or J. Piaget said. Because of a particular emotional attachment, particular students latch on to certain cognitive theories. Many theories are useless and have little to do with the everyday life of teachers. Consistent with the technician assumptions about neutrality and objectivity, many education professors believe that students should learn a little about every major cognitive theory so they can make their own choices. Such an approach is in many ways an abrogation of pedagogical responsibility, as it ignores each theory's significance, its explanatory power, its epistemological dimensions, and its political implications. If teachers were empowered to understand the relationships between Piagetian constructivism and, say, Skinnerian behaviorism from pedagogical, epistemological, and

political perspectives, they would not allow the simpleminded imposition of lesson plan *formats*, behavioral objective writing, or bulletin board making to dominate their pre-service and in-service teacher education (Kamii 1981).

Most teachers agree with the proposition that it is important to induce students to think critically but few are sure how such a goal should be achieved. It seems obvious—but it is commonly overlooked in the old paradigm—that teachers must learn to operate in a cognitively sophisticated scholarly way before they can teach students to do so. This simple observation forms the foundation for much of our work as educational scholars. We have attempted to develop a specific description of what such cognitively sophisticated scholarly activity entails. Labeling our description post-formal thinking (see Kincheloe and Steinberg 1993; Kincheloe 1995), we have delineated a cognitive mode that is post-Piagetian and post-Vygotskian. Drawing upon but moving beyond these important cognitive theorists, post-formalism engages a form of self-reflection and cognitive self-monitoring. It transcends Piagetian formalism (his highest level of human thought) via the questioning of his untroubled acceptance of Cartesian-Newtonian logic. It transcends Vygotskian socio-cognition by specifying the social theory that helps shape cognition—a specification Vygotsky never had time to articulate before his early death. Drawing upon the anti-positivist tradition of philosophy from Giambattista Vico in the early 1700s, to Soren Kierkegaard in the first half of the 1800s, to John Dewey in the early twentieth century, to more recent phenomenology, critical theory, feminist theory, and post-structuralism, post-formal thinking attempts to map new cognitive territories for both teachers and students.

The cognitive demands of teaching are unique. They differ from the technical, scientific ways of knowing traditionally associated with professional expertise. Post-formal teacher thinking draws upon Donald Schon's (1983) notion that professional expertise is an uncertain enterprise as it confronts constantly changing, unique, and unstable conditions. Teachers never see the same classroom twice, as teaching conditions change from day to day. The students who reacted positively to a set of pedagogical strategies yesterday, respond differently today (despite William Bennett's assurances of "what works"). Schon's practitioners relinquish the certainty that attends to professional expertise conceived as the repetitive administration of techniques to similar types of problems. In the post-formal reconceptualization of practitioner thinking, the ability to develop research strategies that explore the genesis and efficacy of comfortable

assumptions and implicit objectives is extremely important. In education, post-formal teachers become teachers-as-researchers who question the nature of their own thinking as they attempt to teach higher order thinking to their students. What are the limits of human ways of knowing? Where do we begin conceptualizing post-formal modes of teacher thinking that lead to a metaperspective, to empowerment? Drawing intellectual sustenance from its familiarity with paradigmatic dynamics and social theoretical challenges to traditional psychological assumptions, post-formal teacher thinking reconceptualizes the highest cognitive expressions of Piaget, Vygotsky, William Perry, and other psychological theorists.

### TRANSCENDING FRAGMENTATION

Post-formal thinking provides the concrete grounding necessary for teacher self-direction, teacher empowerment. If teachers are to employ unauthorized methods to create their own knowledge, they must be able to disengage themselves from the tyranny of unequal power relations and dominant discursive practices. It is by “getting smart” (thanks to Patti Lather) that teachers and students will exert more conscious control over their everyday lives. Hyperrational, positivist thinking emerging from modernism’s one-truth epistemology produces not only a congregation of nervous right-answer givers and timid rule followers, but a rather mediocre level of education unrelated to any ethical effort to use constructively our ability to reason. The old paradigmatic efforts to cultivate higher order or critical thinking among teachers too often involved removing prospective practitioners from their lived worlds in order to control the variables of the situation. As a result, thinking was sequestered in artificial laboratory settings where passion and authentic feelings of love, hate, fear, and commitment were scientifically removed. Cartesian-Newtonian models of the rational process are always culturally neutral, always removed from the body and its passions. These modernist models assume that a practitioner can be removed from his or her embeddedness in a physical context without affecting cognition (Hultgren 1987; Bobbit 1987; Bowers and Flinders 1990).

But this separation of context from cognition is exactly what’s wrong with teacher education. Whether we are teaching high school math, elementary language arts, or teacher education, the approach is the same: break down the information to be learned into discrete parts that can be easily memorized. Thus cognitive theories, grammatical rules, vocabulary, math computation skills, the “causes” of the Civil



War can all be “learned” in this way. As long as the curriculum is conceived in a technical way with prespecified facts to be learned, with improvement of standardized tests the goal of instruction, with little concern granted to connecting school and life, with no debate over the role of learning in a democratic society, then maybe science has proven that we know how to teach (Jones and Cooper 1987).

Take the way science has “authorized” us to teach reading. Mastery learning programs break reading skills into subskills such as beginning consonant sounds, vowel sounds, ending consonant sounds, consonant blends, and vowel diagrams. Teachers learn to teach these in a structured, sequenced manner until students pass the mastery test on each subskill. Again, the common sense, linear methodology seems to satisfy everyone’s demands. Upon deeper examination, however, problems begin to materialize—even on the superficial level on which such programs are assessed. Researchers have found that in the first few years of the program, reading skill scores among early elementary students increased. But, by the time the children were in the sixth grade, reading levels decreased, and students were not reading. Although students were scoring high on achievement tests, the examinations only measured what early grade teachers had taught: the subskills. Reading or language arts classes had revolved mainly around worksheets or dittos on the subskills. Very little actual reading was taking place. Students had learned the fragmented curriculum well. They had indeed learned the isolated subskills and had reflected that knowledge on the standardized tests. Even so, they were not reading for knowledge, enjoyment, or meaning—they were not even reading. The reading program had committed a fatal modernist error: It had assumed that the parts add up to the whole. As with most human endeavors the whole was far greater than the parts (Fosnot 1988; Shannon 1989).

The above case exemplifies what happens when knowledge is fragmented, separated from its context—when teaching methods are isolated from subject matter. Getting beyond traditional, authorized forms of teacher education involves uniting pedagogical method with a detailed knowledge of subject matter. The way we approach a body of knowledge (especially knowledge we have created), determines what is important about it, decide how it relates to other subject matter, massage it for an engagement with a target group, and ascertain the ways it affects our lives and the lives of others are all part of what are called teaching methods. Thus, teaching methods in the new paradigm are never considered outside the context of an engagement with a body of knowledge. Teaching is more than the mere application of a set of

prearranged activities to a set of generic, standardized students. Methods classes that attempt to provide teachers with a set of pre-arranged behaviors assume a positivistic universe where learning outcomes are measurable and predictable. Authentic, spontaneous interaction between students and teachers in this worldview is deemed uncomfortable and disconcerting in its improvisational uncertainty. From the post-formal, new paradigmatic perspective the well-prepared teacher is not one who enters the classroom with a fixed set of lesson plans but a scholar with a thorough knowledge of subject, an understanding of knowledge production, the ability to produce knowledge, an appreciation of social context, a cognizance of what is happening in the world, insight into the lives of her students, and a sophisticated appreciation of critical educational goals and purposes.

The paradigm shift is still in its early stages—as a society we are extremely confused about what it means. Arguing for a move to a new paradigm, we do not call for a complete break from that which has preceded us. Indeed, the new paradigm takes strength from a combination of ancient, new, and even modernist ideas. Ancient wisdom of indigenous people from around the world, the great contributions of modernist science in gaining new insights into the world, modernist political notions of justice, freedom, and liberty, and, of course, the new insights emerging from our understanding of the interconnect-edness of all “living” and “non-living” things shape our eclectic view of the new paradigm. We are interested in synthesizing this diversity of ideas and insights in a way that helps students gain a multifaced view of the world and themselves. Reuniting context, content, and methods, we attempt to make school an integral part of life—not a superfluous hoop that holds little intrinsic meaning for students. Without this connection to the lived world of students and dedication to meaning making, schooling becomes what Paulo Freire so aptly described as a banking process, where data deposits are made into the inactive mental vaults of students’ brains. When this occurs dispirited teachers face a corps of passive, uninterested students and the potential for a meaningful, exciting learning experience quickly fades away.

### **REINVENTING LESSON PLANS AND TEACHING METHODS FOR A NEW WORLD**

In modernist positivism, teachers are often disempowered in their role as information deliverers, servants of knowledge and curricula produced elsewhere. In the new paradigm we advocate that classroom teachers take charge of developing courses of study emerging

from their conceptions of both what is truly important and useful in the lives of the particular students they are teaching. We don't want system guidelines to cease to exist or for teachers to ignore subject delineations of governmental departments of education. We do want teachers to take more responsibility for interpreting how such guidelines fit into their classroom contexts. Such teacher interpretation may take shape around what a practitioner decides not to cover in his or her classroom. Maybe a detailed examination of the novels of James Joyce with analysis of his life, writing style, literary innovations, and literary criticism of his work might provide students more insight into the purpose and benefits of literary studies than a cursory, fragmented, fact-oriented survey of twentieth-century novelists. Higher orders of cognitive activity would replace modernist fact gathering, expanding, as we put it, the cognitive envelope. In no way are we making the argument that subject matter doesn't count. Content is extremely significant, so important that it demands to be studied in sufficient detail to allow us to make meaning around it. We need to understand the conditions of its production and validation, who benefits from it and who does not, and how it relates to knowledge and information. Such conceptual understanding cannot be learned in a superficial survey of a discipline's subject matter.

Empowered teachers work together to thwart supervisors' efforts to evaluate them on the basis of how much content they cover during the school year. Such expectations reflect modernist positivism's obsession with quantification and measurability, as supervisors speak of how the teacher covered only sixty percent of the required subject matter. Few questions are asked, of course, about how students made use of the data or even how long they remembered it. Advocates of less but deeper and more analytical coverage of content understand that force-feeding students massive amounts of data dulls their interest in a subject and their appreciation of the meaning of the material. Students' relationship to the survey curriculum that focuses on quantity of coverage is similar to contestant preparation for an appearance on *Jeopardy*. The breadth but no depth form of learning that pays dividends on *Jeopardy* can be put to use only in a few other life circumstances—maybe in a game of *Trivial Pursuit* or in an attempt to impress prospective in-laws. As we learn to make meaning, to search for connections between subject matter and student-produced knowledge, and to relate students' worlds to the lived reality of schools, our methods of teaching and curriculum making begin to change.

Such a change, as we argued previously, demands a reconceptualization of the modernist methods courses with their emphasis on provid-

ing teachers with methods of information delivery. Such an orientation renders teachers deskilled paraprofessionals who are the executors of some expert's lesson plans, not empowered conceptualizers of their own professional practices. In methods classes grounded on these assumptions teachers often come to internalize their reduced role. They begin to demand teacher education classes and crudely practical in-service programs. Such victimized teachers are uncomfortable with our vision of teachers as scholars, as they seek out teacher-proof materials that can be plugged into their classes on Monday morning. Tragically, these teachers adopt a deskilled ethic that glorifies paint-by-numbers education and denigrates and even ridicules those who seek to understand teaching methods in relation to the context of students' lives, the discourses of academic subjects, social/economic justice, and educational purpose. A few months after taking an education course with Joe Kincheloe that emphasized the limitations of modernist forms of teacher training with their inculcation of technical methods of skill delivery, a group of his education students ran into his office to describe a final exam given in a technical audio-visual education class. They were excited to describe the way the exam served as an example of (in their words) "the ultimate technocratic form of evaluation." Fragmenting all aspects of the teaching act, the test required students to list the five steps involved in making a bulletin board. All five had to be in correct order or they would all be marked incorrect. One of the students had missed all five steps because he forgot the first step: "Get an idea." The absurdity of the exam struck us all as very funny, reminding us of a George Carlin comedy sketch. We imagined a future teacher after making a bulletin board proclaiming in frustration: "Damn, I forgot to get an idea!"

Donaldo Macedo picks up on the pedagogical implications of this story, arguing that a critical pedagogy is always an anti-method pedagogy. It is anti-method in the sense that critical teacher education provides no specific road to the way a critical educator must teach or a student must learn—there are not five correct ways to construct a bulletin board. Drawing upon the poetry of Antonio Machado, Macedo understands that critical teachers will make their road as they walk (Macedo 1994). Macedo doesn't mean that we simply throw young teachers into classrooms with no experiences with teaching methods. His point here is that we don't present simplistic notions of the "correct way to teach." Prospective teachers need examples of teaching methods as we provide in this book—methods that are described in the context of all the dynamics that make the lessons valuable. And we invite our readers to change these ideas,

take from them, and add to them—we hope the “methods” discussed in this book will be elastic and stretch and shrink to each person’s needs and tastes. Indeed, in this context, we found the title of this book, *Unauthorized Methods*, creating a resource that provides examples of lessons for analysis, not recipes.

The methods courses we envision necessitate a reconceptualization of teacher knowledge, that is, what teachers need to know to perform their jobs successfully. Teachers develop what many have called “practitioner knowledge,” in a variety of ways, including experience. This practitioner knowledge alerts teachers to the fact that the classroom is a complex and chaotic place with significant and peripheral variables. Such an understanding alerts teachers to the innate problems with modernist attempts to produce empirical generalizations about the best way to teach. Even though they intuitively understand the limitations of these empirical generalizations, teachers are unable to escape the shadow of their scientific power. In their seemingly perpetual vulnerability to the vicissitudes of public opinion, teachers are unable to prove their competence through their practitioner knowledge. Because it has not been scientifically validated, it holds no legitimacy in the court of public opinion. Thus, state and provincial legislatures demand scientific validation of teacher practice. As a result, teachers are forced to abandon practitioner knowledge in favor of practices the research base has scientifically endorsed—practices that may directly contradict subtle practitioner understandings (Alrichter and Posch 1989; Madaus 1985; Garrison 1988).

Knowledge about teaching produced by modernist science smashes the experience of teaching into discrete fragments that are one generation removed from the subtle interplay of forces that made experience what it was originally. As educational science issues its injunction to keep experience away from verified knowledge, a chasm develops between the official discourse and the one that teachers develop in action. Teachers come to be personally excluded from the process of producing knowledge about their profession. The concept of teachers as virtuosos who create brilliant pieces of pedagogical performance is alien to the modernist conception of educational knowledge. In a modernist context teachers are expected to follow imperatives that are scientifically derived, not to produce teaching masterpieces (Britzman 1991; Clark 1987).

The authorized methods course that emerges from this modernist dismissal of practitioner knowledge involves transmitting the forms of teacher behavior that researchers have connected to improved student standardized test performance to prospective teachers. Yet, these