

INNER CONTRADICTIONS AND HIDDEN PASSAGES: PEDAGOGICAL TACT AND  
THE HIGH-QUALITY VETERAN URBAN TEACHER EN VUE DE CURRERE

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While state report cards and federal assessments evaluate urban schools as failing and their teachers as the least competent and least experienced, the high-quality veteran teacher remains in service in the urban school. In daunting circumstances, the urban teacher teaches where few high-quality teachers choose to stay. Moreover, once at school, this experienced, expert teacher is pressured to conform in practice to the federally-mandated standardization required of students, teachers, and schools.

The practitioner of pedagogical tact is “the most personal embodiment of a pedagogical thoughtfulness” (van Manen, 2002, p. 9). Refusing the theory of tabula rasa either for the teacher or the student, the high-quality teacher manifests pedagogical tact in small silent episodes unnoticed, unrecognized, and overlooked by the panoptical eye of the cyberculture (Pinar, 2004). In a revolutionary act of autobiography, this research, centered in *currere* as both epistemological and research subject (Pinar & Grumet, 1976), will raise the voice of the unvoiced/silent by seeking the essence of the experience of pedagogical tact for the high-quality veteran urban teacher.

The research questions are What is the nature of the experience of pedagogical tact for a high-quality veteran urban teacher? and What meaning does a high-quality veteran urban teacher ascribe to the experience? Five high-quality veteran urban teachers identified as practitioners of pedagogical tact were nominated through purposive criterion sampling to this study. In the hermeneutically-spiraling three-part phenomenological interviews, the

participant engaged in critical conversation that recognized the past and the future in the present toward an analysis of the teacher and his/her curriculum work in the classroom. The third interview sought a higher level of being, The Synthetical Moment, when public and private spheres are reunited in the prize of intentionality (Pinar & Grumet, 1976). The valuation of the results was hermeneutic in interpretation and phenomenological in description. Findings of this autobiographical research included issues of curriculum studies, race, family, assessment/evaluation, the good girl syndrome, the excluded/outsider, church and school, the arts, the human condition, violence, poverty, the insular school, institutionalism vs. intellectualism, politics and government, and education as an art in the Lebenswelt of the urban teacher.