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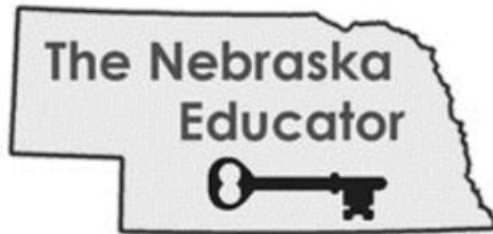


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Editors' Note:

There are not many student-run academic journals, so we are obliged to provide a forum for researchers, scholars, policymakers, practitioners, teachers, students, and informed observers in education and related fields in educational settings in the United States and abroad. The following volume serves as a small testament to what can be accomplished when those interested in educational research can share their contributions.

The Nebraska Educator has four main goals with its published research: 1) to familiarize students with the process of publication, 2) to facilitate dialogue between emerging scholars, educators, and the larger community, 3) to promote collegiality and interdisciplinary awareness, and 4) to establish a mechanism for networking and collaboration.

This publication would not have been possible without the guidance and assistance from Dean Marjorie Kostelnik, Assistant Dean Beth Doll, Dr. Beth Lewis, Dr. Theresa Catalano and Paul Royster. In addition, we would like to thank the Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education's Graduate Student Association for their financial contributions.

The Nebraska Educator is an open access peer-reviewed academic education journal at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This journal is produced by UNL graduate students and publishes articles on a broad range of education topics that are timely and have relevance in the field of all levels of education. We seek original research that covers topics which include but are not limited to: (a) curriculum, teaching and professional development; (b) education policy, practice and analysis; (c) literacy, language and culture; (d) school, society and reform; and (e) teaching and learning with technologies.

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Kristine Sudbeck

Editor-in-Chief, 2014

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Urban Immersion: Changing Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of Urban Schools

Connie Schaffer, Deborah Gleich-Bope
and Cindy B. Copich

Abstract

This research investigated the impact of an Urban Immersion (UI) program which partnered urban schools with a university's teacher preparation program. The UI program provided experiences for pre-service teachers by completely immersing them, along with their university instructors, in urban schools where they worked and learned alongside K-12 teachers and students. Data collected from pre and post experience surveys provide statistically significant evidence that the UI program reshaped the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding urban schools and also increased their confidence and interest in teaching in an urban setting. The success of traditional field experiences is indecisive (Mason, 1999; Sleeter, 2001); however, approaches such as the UI program may positively impact the recruitment of teachers to urban schools. This innovative approach to pre-service teacher preparation has tremendous potential. Longitudinal research will be important as this urban university and the local urban school district work together to provide high-quality educational opportunities for all of their students.

Keywords: *urban immersion, urban schools, pre-service teachers, pre-service teacher preparation, urban field experience*

Introduction

A fundamental premise for teacher preparation programs is to prepare pre-service teachers for the K-12 workplace. Programs must prepare pre-service teachers for a classroom that may be far different from the one they experienced in their own personal journeys through elementary and high school. While many pre-service teachers are from white, middle class backgrounds and were raised in suburban and rural areas, the future workplace for many pre-service teachers will be classrooms in urban settings with increasingly diverse students (Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2010; Hampton, Peng, & Ann, 2008; Landsman & Lewis, 2011; United States Census Bureau, 2012; Valentiin, 2006).

This is concerning as studies suggest teacher preparation programs may fall short in their goal to train pre-service teachers to work with diverse student populations (de Freitas & McAuley, 2008; Feldman & Kent, 2006; Mills, 2008; Valentiin, 2006). This is critical given that research indicates that teachers are more effective when they are proficient at teaching classrooms made up of diverse students, and these skills can increase student motivation and learning (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2013). If pre-service teachers are not adequately trained to work with diverse populations, how can they be expected to be effective in the workplace of the future?

The Urban Immersion (UI) program was designed to better prepare pre-service teachers for urban schools and the diverse students found in those settings. The program, which coupled a faculty-supervised field experience with a unique coursework delivery model, was developed to assist pre-service teachers in forming more accurate perceptions of teaching in diverse K-12 urban schools as well as increase their individual sense of preparedness to teach in those settings. The program was designed through an existing partnership between a large urban teacher preparation program and the surrounding urban public school district and implemented at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Literature Review

Pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher preparation programs are comprised of individuals with distinctive dispositions. These dispositions consist of beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions, which are integrated within the context of the K-12 classrooms they encounter during the preparation program. The concepts of race and class are two important socially constructed categories for pre-service teachers to consider as they develop into professional educators who very likely may teach in urban schools. Universities preparing pre-service teachers have a responsibility to consider how these integrations lead pre-service teachers in reshaping their interactions with students and to design programs that provide opportunities for them to form more accurate perceptions of themselves and others (Freedman, 2008).

Understanding pre-service teachers' perceptions of students who have differing backgrounds from themselves is increasingly important. This is especially true as demographic trends in the US indicate the future demand for teachers will be greatest in urban schools that have diverse student populations (Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2010). This is a challenge for the profession because pre-service teachers often report a lack of confidence in their ability as well as inadequate preparation to teach in urban schools, particularly to teach students from diverse backgrounds (Burstein, Czech, Kretschmer, Lombardi, & Smith, 2009; Desimone, Bartlett, Gitomer, Mohsin, Pottinger, & Wallace, 2013; Whitney, Golez, Nagel, & Nieto, 2002).

Pre-service teachers, many of whom are white and from middle-class communities, may have few genuine interactions with minorities from poor communities. As a result, white pre-service teachers may have limited opportunities to become culturally literate or build awareness of how education may be experienced by different groups (Hancock, 2011). The challenge becomes to "no longer graduate white teachers from colleges and schools of education who are not culturally literate" but to address the issue by providing "prolonged opportunities" for pre-service teachers to be in urban settings where they themselves become the minority (Hancock, 2011, p. 105).

The need to better prepare pre-service teachers to work in urban schools has not gone unnoticed by teacher preparation programs (del Prado Hill, Friedland, & Phelps, 2012; Jacob, 2007; Nieto, 1992; Sleeter, 2001). Approaches taken by teacher preparation programs to prepare future teachers for success in urban schools have included initiatives to: (1) increase their sociocultural competence, (2) foster high expectations for student achievement, (3) build collaborative skills, and (4) equip them with instructional strategies that promote learning within diverse populations (Voltz, Collins, Patterson, & Sims, 2008).

Many teacher educators believe an effective means of learning any teaching competency or skill is to purposefully link university coursework with experiences in K-12 schools (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005). These opportunities, referred to as field experiences, are a requirement of every nationally accredited teacher preparation program (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2007; Teacher Education Accreditation Council, 2010). During field experiences, pre-service teachers observe and interact with students and staff while gaining valuable teaching opportunities in K-12 schools.

While participating in these experiences, pre-service teachers begin to challenge their existing and often highly ingrained perceptions and assumptions of schools-- perceptions that have developed over the numerous years they themselves have spent as K-12 students (Lortie, 1975). Field experiences have long been viewed as a potential means to alter pre-service teacher perceptions, specifically those related to teachers and students in urban schools (Haberman & Post, 1992; McDermott, Johnson Rothenberg, & Gormley, 1999; Olmedo, 1997; Singer, Catapano, & Huisman, 2010). Historically the results of these efforts have been mixed (Mason, 1999; Sleeter, 2001). Like the research on general field experiences, urban-based field experiences appear most promising when they are tied to coursework and closely supervised (Mason, 1997; Olmedo, 1997). Ideally, urban field experiences should also be long-term and take place in high-quality urban schools (Voltz, Collins, Patterson, & Sims, 2008).

Defining Key Terms

Urban Areas and Urban Growth

Concepts related to this discussion include urban population trends and the definition of urban schools. Urban areas are commonly defined in terms of population density (Howey, 2008). The US Census Bureau classifies urban areas as "densely developed residential, commercial and other nonresidential areas" (United States Census Bureau, 2012, p. 1). Urban growth can be described in terms of population trends. In 2008, 3.3 billion people were estimated to live in urban areas worldwide. By 2030, this number is expected to grow to almost five billion, well more than half of the earth's population (Schlein & De Capua, 2012). The 2010 US census reported the rate of population increase in urban areas was 9.7% greater than the overall rate of population increase for the country (United States Census Bureau, 2012).

The growth in urban populations and the increased diversity of those populations are important reasons why teacher preparation programs must prepare pre-service teachers to work with the children represented in these demographic groups. Many people living in urban areas will represent racial minorities and will require education for their children. In fact, population growth in the US is now concentrated in urban areas and is becoming more culturally diverse. Many metropolitan areas already report a majority, non-white status among those under the age of 18 (Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2010).

Urban Schools

Urban schools educate nearly one quarter (23%) of all public school students in the US (Howey, 2008). However, the study of these institutions is confounded by the varying definitions of urban schools (Milner, 2012a). Milner found that some definitions focus on the deficits of students or families and seem to discount the geographical or social context

of the school. Milner suggests that urban schools be defined using a three-tiered typology that focuses primarily on the population of the city in which a school is located and the surrounding context of the school's environment (considering elements such as poverty, housing, and transportation).

Using this typology, *urban intensive* districts are those in major metropolitan centers such as Los Angeles and New York City. *Urban emergent* districts are those located in cities with large populations, but fewer than one million residents. *Urban characteristic* districts are not located in urban areas, but experience the challenges and characteristics similar to those associated with the other two categories of urban schools (Milner, 2012a). In addition to city size, other definitions of urban schools include the racial diversity and socio-economic status of students, as well as barriers commonly found in urban schools (Howey, 1996, 2008; Russo, 2004; Urban Schools Resources at The Ohio State University, 2005). These barriers include declining physical and structural properties of neighborhoods, fragile family structures, influential youth subcultures, segregated bureaucratic school districts with large student populations, individual schools with poor facilities and resources, as well as a teaching staffs characterized by high rates of turnover and provisional certification (Chou & Tozer, 2008; Howey, 1996; 2008; Ravitch, 2013). Using Milner's definitions, urban intensive and emergent districts are located in large cities. Urban characteristic districts are not. If urban characteristic districts are considered as part of the definition of urban schools, the percentage of children attending urban schools may be even higher, making the need to adequately prepare pre-service teachers even greater.

The characteristics of urban schools and the growing need for urban teachers have a significant impact on staffing issues in urban schools. "Hard-to-staff" schools are defined by some of the very same criteria that have been used to define urban schools (Chou & Tozer, 2008; Horng, 2005). Hard-to-staff schools contain a high percentage of students who are below grade level and eligible for free and reduced meals. These schools also face issues related to facilities, resources, and bureaucratic structures. All of these characteristics contribute to staffing issues in K-

12 schools. Individual teachers base their decisions regarding where they choose to teach on these characteristics, making it difficult to attract and retain teachers to work in schools which serve large concentrations of low-performing students, low-income students, and/or students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Glennie, Coble, & Allen, 2004; Horng, 2005, Ravitch, 2013).

Hard-to-staff schools are often located in urban settings. They have high turnover rates in their teaching staff, sometimes exceeding 15-18% annually and often contain 25% or more teachers who have emergency or probationary licensure (Chou & Tozer, 2008). The diversity of urban students, growing demand for urban teachers, and factors which make urban schools difficult to staff are important reasons why teacher preparation programs must graduate pre-service teachers who are both interested and equipped to work in urban schools with diverse student populations.

Diversity in the 21st Century Classroom

Current K-12 classrooms reflect a diverse student population. The National Center for Education Statistics (2012) reports that slightly less than half (47.6%) of elementary and secondary school students represent ethnic minorities, and the Center projects the percentage of minority students will continue to increase over the next decade (2012). Teacher education programs must ready pre-service teachers to meet the needs of all learners in today's classroom (Simonds, Lippert, Hunt, Angell, & Moore, 2008). To do so, an appreciation and understanding of diversity is essential because as Allen (2004) states, "most children attend schools segregated by race, ethnicity, and class" (p. 106). "Cultural knowledge is attained through socializing agents such as family, school, church, community, etc." (Valentiin, 2006, p. 197). Teacher preparation programs can also serve as an important socializing agent if they provide pre-service teachers the opportunity to filter their perceptions of the diverse students found in urban schools. This is particularly important if pre-service teachers have cultural backgrounds dissimilar to those of the students they are likely to have in the classroom (Landsman & Lewis, 2011).

Preparing Pre-service Teachers for the 21st Century Urban Classroom

The widening cultural gap between teachers and urban K-12 students is concerning particularly if it results in a growing number of teachers who fail to understand cultural differences. Despite the increasingly diverse K-12 student population, the majority of current K-12 teachers and pre-service teachers continue to be white, female, middle class, and from rural or suburban backgrounds (Hampton, Peng, & Ann, 2008; Landsman & Lewis, 2011;Valentiin, 2006). The privileges conferred through being both middle class and white has been described as *whiteness*—“a socially constructed norm that focuses white privilege in the center at the cost of other cultures” (de Freitas & McAuley, 2008, p. 431). The saliency of white dominance in the teaching force is "heralded by the current demographics of in the urban school teachers and student population" (Hancock, 2011, p. 96) and the possibility that teachers who are culturally different from their urban school children may underestimate their unique educational "capital" (unique abilities and assets) and misinterpret their behavior and communication styles (Gay, 2000; Lazar, Edwards, & McMillon, 2012; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Yosso, 2005).

Research suggests that non-minority pre-service teachers may often resist pedagogies that address these inequalities if they themselves are directly implicated in the systems causing oppression for others (de Freitas & McAuley, 2008; Hampton et al., 2008). As a result, pre-service teachers need to be given the tools and support to deal with this cognitive dissonance and to avoid a resistance to honest reflection. Without adequate support and understanding, pre-service teachers may practice the “pedagogy of poverty” which emphasizes teacher control and student passivity and may limit critical thinking strategies and other methods that utilize the skills and creativity of students to learn from one another (Allen, 2004; Fecho, 2004). Thus, in order to foster these skills, it becomes essential to help pre-service teachers develop more accurate perceptions of the opportunities and challenges facing students in today’s urban schools (del Prado Hill et al., 2012).

Teacher preparation programs also compete with other socializing institutions, such as the media, impacting the perceptions of pre-service teachers (Hampton et al. 2008). The media's representation of urban schools tends to be over-simplified and biased. For example, the popular and award-winning documentary, *Waiting for Superman* (Chilcott & Guggenheim, 2011), was viewed by many as an incomplete and misrepresentative portrayal of public schools (Ladson-Billing, 2013; Ravitch, 2013). This type of portrayal often depicts urban schools as failing due to ineffective teaching practices and poor support from administrators. Due to the media's representation of urban schools, it is possible that pre-service teachers may incorporate these generalizations into their own perceptions.

Theoretical Framework

Given the diversity found in urban schools and the importance of developing accurate perceptions, culturally responsive teaching provides a framework for understanding pre-service teachers' perceptions of urban schools. Among other things, culturally responsive teaching pedagogy recognizes the attitudes and expectations teachers hold for students will impact their ability and interest to learn. In addition, within the context of culturally responsive teaching, diverse student populations are not seen as being socially or academically deficient (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Lazar et al., 2012).

Rather, culturally responsive teaching theory rejects this deficit approach. In fact, culturally responsive teaching thrives on the "rich array of intellect, experience, and know how" of K-12 students and capitalizes on these to customize and create "relevant and responsive learning opportunities" for unique students in unique learning environments (Milner, 2012b, p. 182-183). Culturally responsive teaching views the social context, cultural identities, and distinctive experiences of students as potential resources to engage, motivate, and empower students to construct meaningful learning experiences and potentially provide a means for them to move beyond the marginalized position they may encounter in school and society (Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner,

LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy, & McDonald, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Nieto, 2010).

If pre-service teachers form attitudes and expectations based on uninformed perceptions of urban school environments and carry these into their future classrooms, it may negatively influence their ability to effectively teach and connect with their students. The same misperceptions may also contribute to the common pattern of inexperienced teachers accepting positions in urban schools—only to teach in these settings until they secure a position elsewhere (Jacob, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994). This staffing pattern exacerbates the issue of resource inequity, in this case teacher experience, which exists between schools in affluent, predominantly white communities and those in low-income minority communities (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Ravitch, 2013). In urban districts, the annual teacher attrition rate has grown to 19-26%; this is higher than the attrition rates previously used to describe hard-to-staff schools. Over the past decade, the five-year attrition rate has consistently remained at 50% or higher, causing many urban districts to encounter a revolving door of inexperienced teachers that may impede student achievement (Chou & Tozer, 2008). Two of the most commonly cited reasons for urban teacher attrition include lack of adequate preparation and lack of adequate mentoring support (Waddell, 2010).

Rather than abandoning urban settings at the first opportunity, culturally responsive teachers embrace working with diverse students as a professional calling (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and view this teaching environment and student diversity from a positive perspective. Teacher preparation programs may be able to counteract the urban attrition rate and contribute to the development of culturally responsive teaching by immersing pre-service teachers, along with the presence and support of their professors, in urban school settings. With guidance and opportunity, pre-service teachers may be able to develop what Price (2011) termed as personal power, the "spiritual internal force that every person is born with that enables him or her to know that he or she can indeed create positive change" (p. 271). Price goes on to propose that this can "provide teachers, regardless of their color, with a tool that transcends the barriers of race and provides them with the opportunity to empower

and motivate students to learn and achieve" (p. 273). This is the foundation of culturally responsive teaching.

Pre-service teachers have the potential to become culturally responsive teachers if they are motivated to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, dispositions, and skills needed to be culturally responsive (Milner, 2012b). To prepare culturally responsive teachers, teacher preparation programs must help pre-service teachers acquire this knowledge and skill set by creating experiences in which they confront their own beliefs and attitudes about schools, teachers, and their future students (Banks et al., 2005). Field experiences offer an opportunity for pre-service teachers to not only apply their knowledge and skills but to also examine their current assumptions and perceptions (Olmedo, 1997) and acquire the attitudes and dispositions indicative of culturally responsive teachers.

The Urban Immersion Program

The UI program was examined as a method to increase the culturally responsive dispositions of pre-service teachers. This approach increased faculty supervision of pre-service teachers and immersed them in urban school environments. University coursework and field experiences were simultaneously delivered in K-12 urban school buildings and changes in perceptions of those pre-service teachers who participated in the program were measured.

The program was designed by administrators in the teacher preparation program and their K-12 urban school district partner. The two met regularly as part of a multi-district K-12 human resources task force and specifically worked together on a variety of the program's field experiences and student teaching experiences. In this context, they begin to discuss pre-student field experiences and this led to the conceptualization of the UI program. The preparation program hoped UI would improve its pre-student teaching field experiences, and the district hoped to capitalize on pre-student field experiences to recruit more student teachers and eventually classroom teachers.

The teacher preparation administrators created a unique course delivery model, and district administrators selected the UI school sites. The sites were located in an urban area as defined by the US Census Bureau (Howey, 2008). According to 2011 estimates, schools participating in this field experience program were located in a mid-sized metropolitan city with a population over 400,000 (United States Census Bureau, n.d.), and in the largest K-12 school district in the state. Based on Milner's (2012a) categories, each of the settings was urban emergent.

Through prior models, pre-service teachers at this university completed pre-student teaching field experiences in a variety of local school settings while enrolled in education courses which were delivered on the university campus. There was no on-site university supervision of these field experiences. Through the UI program, the pre-service teachers and program instructors conducted the university courses within the urban schools, literally learning and teaching side-by-side with the K-12 teachers and students. The corresponding field experiences were also completed in the same schools and, because the university faculty were on-site, supervision of the pre-service teachers was possible.

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of the research was to examine pre-student teaching field experiences that were: (1) located in a K-12 urban school, (2) structured through a school-university partnership, (3) between 30 and 40 hours in length, (4) paired with university coursework, and (5) supervised closely by a teacher preparation faculty member. Pre-service teachers completed a four-week, urban school field experience that was a result of a partnership between the university and a large urban school district. The experience immersed the pre-service teachers in urban school settings as both the courses and the field experiences were entirely delivered in urban school buildings. The research examined the self-re-

ported perceptions of pre-service teachers before and after the UI courses and field experiences.

The UI program was implemented in two university courses: (1) Human Growth and Learning (HGL) and (2) The Art and Science of Teaching in Secondary Schools (ASTSS). HGL was delivered in an elementary school for two weeks and then moved to a second delivery site, a middle school, for the remaining two weeks. The field experience in HGL focused on observations. Three sections of HGL offered over a three-year period were included in this study. ASTSS was delivered in a secondary setting for the entire four weeks. The field experience in ASTSS included working directly with individual and small groups of secondary students. Some, but not all, pre-service teachers in ASTSS taught whole-group lessons. Two sections of ASTSS included in the study were delivered over a two-year period and in two different schools. The first year the ASTSS course and field experience was delivered in a high school. Due to scheduling conflicts during the second year, the location was changed to a middle school.

The demographics for all four schools indicated poverty (determined by the percentage of students receiving free or reduced meals) and minority student enrollment rates far above state averages. The elementary and both middle schools also exceeded the poverty and minority student enrollment rates of the district (State Department of Education, 2011). The average years of experience of the teaching staff in all four buildings was lower than the averages reported at both the district and state levels (State Department of Education, 2011). This may have been an indication of the staffing challenges and teacher attrition rates often associated with urban schools. In addition, all the schools were embedded in either an urban business area or an urban neighborhood.

Participants

Participant identification and methodology were approved by the program's Institutional Review Board. Participants in the UI program were pre-service teachers enrolled in HGL and ASTSS courses that were

part of a traditional teacher education program. Administrative permits were required to enroll in the courses. The permits were issued to students based on recommendations from academic advisors and faculty members. Pre-service teachers in HGL (62% of participants) had no prior field experiences and were in the beginning phase of the teacher preparation program. Pre-service teachers in ASTSS (38% of participants) had more than 50 hours of previous field experiences and were approximately 75% of the way through the teacher preparation program.

Seventy-seven pre-service teachers completed the UI pre and post survey, field experience, and coursework. Participants' demographics, self-identified through the survey included: certification level, gender, age, race/ethnicity, and community of origin. Upon graduation, 27% of participants would be certified to teach at the elementary level, 65% at a secondary level, and 8% any grade K-12. There were 51% female and 47% male (2% did not identify their gender) participants with the majority (68%) between the ages of 20-24, 14% between the ages of 25-29, and 13% between the ages of 30-35. Only 3% of participants were between the ages of 35-49 (2% did not identify their age).

As reflective in the national trends and Figure 1, the pre-service teacher participants in the study were predominately white (Caucasian). Ninety-two percent of participants self-identified as being Caucasian, 4% as being Hispanic, 3% as being from more than one race or ethnicity, and 1% as being Native American/Native Alaskan. Figure 2 represents the participants' self-identified community of origin, again showing the participant group of the study represented the national trends. Community of origin was self-reported by asking participants to identify the type of high school(s) they attended: 38% attended suburban schools, 31% attended small-town schools, 19% attended urban schools, 8% attended rural schools, and 4% attended school is a combination of two of these types of communities.

Data Collection

Participants completed a pre-experience survey instrument on the first day of course instruction and then completed a condensed, three-credit hour course and corresponding field experience delivered entirely within a K-12 urban school. The survey was based on an extensive literature review, created by the program's field experience coordinator and the chair of teacher education, and reviewed for validity by the faculty members teaching the courses - one of whose area of expertise was culturally responsive teaching. This was the first time the survey was used. The UI program created a four-week experience in which pre-service teachers were immersed in an urban school setting. Furthermore, as the university faculty members delivered on-site course instruction, it provided those faculty members the opportunity to closely supervise the field experience of the pre-service teachers who were enrolled in the courses. Upon completion of both the field experience and coursework, participants concluded the UI program by completing a post-experience survey.

The same instrument was used for the pre- and post-experience survey. The survey consisted of 28 items indicated in Table 1. Participants rated each item on a four-point Likert-scale: Strongly Agree (4) – Agree (3) – Disagree (2) – Strongly Disagree (1). Pre- and post-experience surveys were analyzed in relationship to the following research questions. To what extent did the (UI) program change pre-service teachers':

1. perceptions of urban schools?
2. sense of preparedness to teach in urban schools?
3. interest in student teaching or teaching in urban schools?

The survey also had several open-text questions including:

1. What prepares a teacher to work in urban schools?
2. What experiences in your teacher preparation program have helped to prepare you to work with children from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds?

3. What was the best thing about the UI program? (post-experience survey only)
4. What changes would you make to the UI program? (post-experience survey only)

Data Analysis

Table 1 shows the survey, pre- and post-test data (means and standard deviations), the repeated-measure *t*-test value, and the significance. For each individual question, there was a statistically significant difference between pre-service teachers' pre- and post-data, indicating a change (all post-test scores were significantly altered from the pre-test scores at the .01 alpha level except for item 5b, 6b, and 6c) in their perceptions of urban schools. Results indicate no significant difference in post-test scores between the various demographic groups.

Findings

The findings indicate field experiences, when paired with on-site university supervision and related course work, positively influenced the participants' perceptions of urban schools. The data provided an indication that participants, regardless of progression in their preparation program, certification level, gender, age, race, or community of origin, were impacted by the program. Results revealed that participants increased their level of confidence related to teaching in an urban K-12 school and reported that they had a more accurate perceptions of the challenges and opportunities facing teachers and students in urban schools.

According to the data shown in Table 1, after completing the UI program, participants felt they had a more accurate perception of urban schools (Item 4). They had a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities of urban teachers (Items 7 & 8) and urban students (Items 9 & 10). The participants also indicated their perceptions were now more influenced by past college courses (Item 6c) and their direct experience

in K-12 urban school settings (Item 6a). Post-survey results showed participants' perceptions were less influenced by the media (Item 6b). As a result of this experience, participants also felt more prepared to teach in urban settings (Items 11a-11k, & 12). Finally, participants developed greater interest in both student teaching and applying to teach in an urban environment (Items 13 & 14).

Participant responses to the open-text questions on the survey provided additional insight into the UI experience. The responses were analyzed using a method of reduction by proceeding from identifying statements of meaning, to grouping those meanings into emergent themes, and finally to developing a description of the essence of the UI model as experienced by this group of pre-service teachers (Creswell, 1998). Their comments can be summarized in three underlying categories: (1) the impact of the UI approach, (2) the specific benefit of sustained and substantial time spent in the urban schools settings, and (3) their perceptions of urban schools.

Pre-service teachers recognized the opportunity the UI program offered in terms of connecting the theory taught in the coursework to realities of the K-12 urban classroom. One student simply stated, "No book work could prepare you." Other students made comments such as, "This class has been the best experience to prepare me for these students because the past classes talked about it instead of letting students experience it." In a similar vein, another student stated, "It [the UI program] allows me to apply concepts and knowledge to experience and reality."

Comments also indicated the benefit of the sustained time participants were able to spend in the urban school setting. Responses regarding the amount of time included phrases such as "longer observations and sequential days added tremendous benefit" and "it is that continuous time spent in the classroom that has helped so much!" They saw the "amount of observation time we were allowed and actually being in the room to interact with the students" as assets of the program, and that "being in the room with other students [pre-service teachers] was helpful in the discussions of the observations." The suggested changes overwhelmingly focused on extending the length of the experience. Some

participants wanted the additional time because they felt the demands the UI program were too intense to complete in only four weeks. Others wanted added time to allow for more opportunities for interactions with student and teachers.

Finally, they voiced a change in their perceptions of urban schools. When asked to comment on the benefits of the program, they identified things such as "a new understanding and perception" and a "comfortable base that I hadn't had before." They recognized that the UI experience allowed "students [pre-service teachers] to form their own perceptions based on their experiences." They mentioned initially perceiving urban schools as "a little scary" but then "seeing how great the kids could be." Combined with the quantitative data, the comments provide evidence that participants regarded the UI program as influential in terms of building their confidence as a future classroom teachers and altering their perceptions of urban schools.

Implications

The implications are clear based on the findings that are aligned with existing research. As this study demonstrates, the UI program had a significant impact on pre-service teachers. As teacher education programs face increased scrutiny regarding their value, programs which have pre-service teachers participate in more comprehensive, first-hand urban school experiences may be able to show the "value added" of such experiences. Immersion programs provide the benefit of a unique depth of experience because the faculty members are on-site giving real-time support to pre-service teachers. The program combined field experiences with on-site university instruction that allowed pre-service teachers to connect pedagogical theory to classroom practices. These authentic learning opportunities led to more confident pre-service teachers who may be more likely to implement culturally responsive teaching practices and improve learning opportunities for urban students.

With the faculty member on-site, immersion programs, such as the UI program, have the potential to build strong school-university partner-

ships through the consistent university presence in the K-12 school. By participating in this type of program, university instructors have the opportunity to improve their own understanding of urban schools while also enhancing the experience of the pre-service teachers. For the teacher preparation program in this study, the results informed the complete redesign of its pre-student field experiences. Specifically, the sustained, day-to-day delivery model within specific partner schools along with the on-site supervision became priorities for field experience in urban settings. Other programs should also consider the findings related to the UI approach to inform their program improvement.

When considering the benefit for K-12 urban schools, the UI program addresses staffing challenges. Participation in UI or similar programs may increase the willingness of pre-service teachers to seek teaching positions in K-12 urban school settings. The goal of effective staffing practices is to reduce teacher attrition and retain effective teachers in their schools. Immersion programs offer pre-service teachers authentic first-hand urban school field experiences which can increase their confidence as well as their desire to seek employment in urban schools.

Limitations

The first limitation of this research was the number of participants, particularly at the elementary level. A second limitation was having participants complete the same survey twice in a four-week period. Responses may have been impacted by repeated exposure to the survey in a relatively short period of time. Third, research was also limited to participants enrolled in one teacher preparation program and who completed the experience in one school district. In addition, further research should be conducted to determine if results could be replicated in other universities with similar pedagogical approaches and practices. Finally, future research should investigate the long-term benefits of the UI program in the areas of urban teacher retention and culturally responsive teaching pedagogy.

Conclusion

As the demographics of the US continue to transform, teacher education programs are being asked to create programs that respond to the changing dynamics of K-12 classrooms. The nationwide push to redesign teacher education programs in order to allow pre-service teachers the opportunity to participate in more comprehensive, first-hand urban school field experiences can be addressed through programs similar to the one described here. Perceptions of pre-service teachers, like all other people, are influenced by media images and other socializing agents. It has become the responsibility of the university to challenge what may be limited perceptions and educate pre-service teachers not only in methods and pedagogy but also in the sociology of urban schools. It is imperative that preparation programs develop well-rounded teachers who are equipped with the skills needed to effectively educate a wide range of diverse learners. Immersion approaches, such as the UI program, provide pre-service teachers the opportunity to build more accurate perceptions of urban schools.

As this research shows, the participants who completed the UI program indicated a greater willingness to apply for teaching positions in an urban school district along with an increased feeling of preparedness to meet the needs of students in urban school settings. Without their participation in the UI program, it is possible that these pre-service teachers would be more reluctant to apply for a position in an urban school setting. The UI program, which offers real-life urban school field experiences, may motivate a greater number of pre-service teachers to seek employment in urban schools because they are confident and comfortable working with the diverse students of the 21st-century.

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Appendix

Figure 1: Racial & Ethnic Identity of Pre-Service Teacher Participants

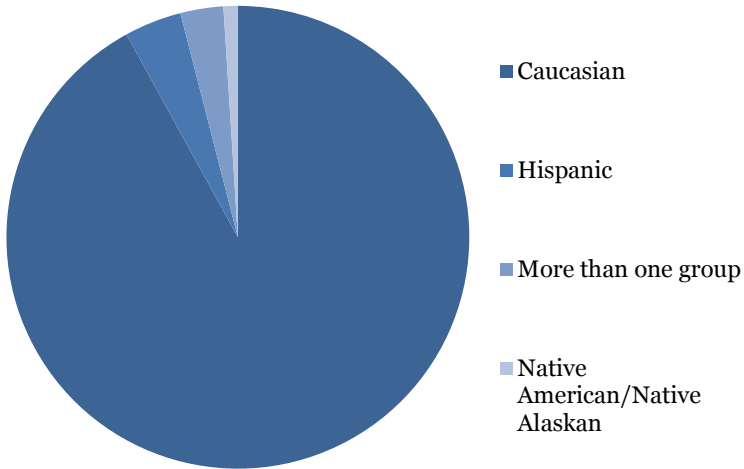


Figure 2: Community of Origin of Pre-service Teacher Participants

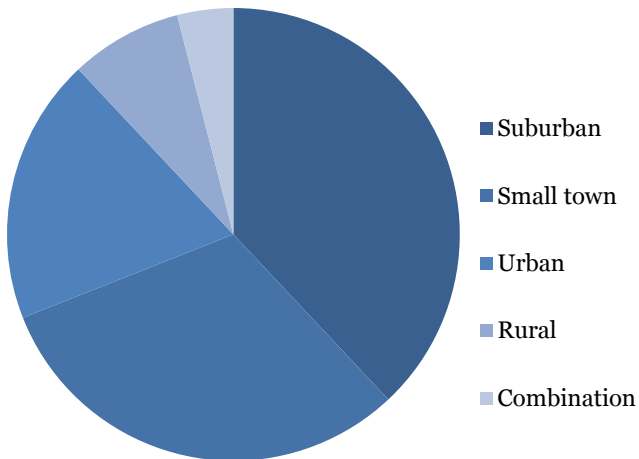


Table 1: Urban Immersion Pre- Post-Survey Results

Questions Answered by Pre-service Teachers	N	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test Standard Deviation	Post-test Mean	Post-test Standard Deviation	t	p
1. I feel comfortable in K-12 school settings.	77	3.42	.52	3.69	.47	4.52	<.01
2. I feel comfortable in K-12 urban school settings.	77	3.09	.67	3.53	.50	5.71	<.01
3. I have an accurate perception of K-12 schools.	77	3.05	.48	3.50	.50	6.50	<.01
4. I have an accurate perception of K-12 urban schools.	77	2.81	.59	3.43	.52	7.73	<.01
5a. My perception of K-12 schools is most influenced by my own experiences.	77	3.53	.64	3.82	.42	3.31	<.01
5b. My perception of K-12 schools is most influenced by the media.	75	2.37	.63	2.29	.73	1.03	.03
5c. My perception of K-12 schools is most influenced by past college course work.	75	2.95	.66	3.17	.79	2.27	<.01
6a. My perception of K-12 urban schools is most influenced by my own experiences.	76	2.92	.97	3.60	.67	5.97	<.01
6b. My perception of K-12 urban schools is most influenced by the media.	76	2.56	.76	2.35	.83	2.28	.03
6c. My perception of K-12 urban schools is most influenced by past college course work.	75	2.99	.67	3.19	.73	2.07	.04
7. I understand the opportunities for teachers in urban school settings.	77	2.75	.67	3.52	.53	11.12	<.01
8. I understand the challenges for teachers in urban school settings.	77	2.97	.73	3.63	.48	8.23	<.01
9. I understand the opportunities for K-12 students in urban school settings.	77	2.82	.72	3.41	.59	6.43	<.01
10. I understand the challenges for K-12 students in urban school settings.	77	2.94	.68	3.56	.55	7.29	<.01
11a. (If I student teach or teach in an urban school setting, I feel prepared to...) Build effective rapport with my students.	77	3.12	.54	3.62	.51	6.72	<.01
11b. Teach students from diverse cultural	77	3.08	.60	3.61	.49	6.35	<.01

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backgrounds.							
11c. Teach students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.	77	2.52	.72	3.09	.59	6.25	<.01
11d. Teach students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.	77	3.10	.53	3.67	.47	7.63	<.01
11e. Plan effective lessons.	77	3.02	.65	3.51	.55	6.36	<.01
11f. Differentiate instruction.	77	3.05	.59	3.56	.55	6.19	<.01
11g. Connect content to the daily lives of students.	77	3.04	.59	3.52	.58	5.59	<.01
11h. Manage classroom behavior.	77	2.92	.72	3.34	.53	4.98	<.01
11i. Positively impact student learning.	77	3.30	.51	3.66	.48	5.27	<.01
11j. Communicate with parents.	77	3.01	.57	3.50	.55	6.38	<.01
11k. Collaborate with colleagues.	77	3.29	.51	3.65	.51	4.78	<.01
12. I feel my teacher preparation program has prepared me to meet the needs of students in urban school settings.	76	2.88	.46	3.47	.53	7.63	<.01
13. I would like to student teach in an urban school setting.	77	2.87	.78	3.32	.63	5.90	<.01
14. I am likely to apply for a teaching position in an urban school district.	77	2.79	.82	3.27	.66	6.52	<.01

Exploring Public Middle School English Language Learner Teachers' Grammar Teaching: An Instrumental Case Study

Sevda Budak

Abstract

We know little about how teachers teach grammar in the public school context. This qualitative study explores public middle school teachers' grammar instruction in today's diverse classrooms. An instrumental case study design was employed to provide a broad description of two ELL middle school teachers' grammar teaching. Analysis of the multiple data sources revealed how ELL teachers orchestrated grammar teaching, which is explored in themes within each case. Based on the findings that emerged in cross-case analysis, similarities and differences between two cases are also discussed. The particularities of these two in-service teachers' grammar teaching provide insight to all language-teaching professionals regarding the factors that impact ELL teachers' thinking and practice. Such insight holds particular importance for teacher educators who need to better understand how in service teachers think about and teach grammar in order to guide and develop such thinking into their practice.

Key Words: grammar teaching, ELL teacher thinking, form-focused instruction, ELL teacher education, case study

Introduction

The proper teaching of a language's grammar has always received considerable attention throughout the history of language instruction (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Numerous grammar-teaching approaches have emerged, each varying in their perspectives on the quantity and the quality of focus on the form of a language (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). While language-teaching researchers carried out studies to explore the effectiveness of different approaches regarding grammar,

teachers' roles in applying these approaches in their practice have also been acknowledged. In an attempt to explore the relationship between teachers' grammar teaching and their thinking, an abundance of studies have been carried out since the late 1990's. The majority of these studies have been carried out in the university and/or private institution settings with homogenous student population. The present study examines English language learner (ELL) teachers' grammar teaching in a public middle school setting with a heterogeneous (linguistically and culturally diverse) student population by exploring how teachers address target grammar features and their rationale for their choices of options related to the teaching of grammar.

Literature Review

In the past, it was believed that the best way to teach and learn a language was achieved through studying grammar, which was connected with the approaches and understanding of the teaching of classical languages (Rutherford, 1987). As a result of this conviction, grammar stayed at the center of language pedagogy for years. In line with researchers, the majority of language teachers also think that grammar is the foundation of a language and this foundation of language is considered of foremost importance in language learning and teaching (Budak, 2009). For that reason, the approaches language teachers use to teach grammar has been a continuous matter of concern for the language-teaching professionals.

Various approaches, which are also referred to as traditional methods, have emerged throughout the language teaching history such as the Grammar Translation, the Audio-Lingual, the Structural-Situational (also known as Structural Language Teaching), and the Silent Way (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Even though these methods differed in their ways of applying language study, their primary focus was on teaching grammar rules and structures to facilitate language learning (Batstone, 1994). For example, the Grammar Translation Method involved the study of grammatical rules through the means of practice and translation into or from the native language by heavily focusing on written language. The Audio-Lingual Method, on the other hand, prioritized the attainment of oral

language skills. A typical Audio-Lingual lesson involved a conversational dialogue, followed by memorization and practice of certain grammatical forms, phrases and key words. Based on the Structural-Situational framework, a typical lesson often followed Presentation-Practice- Production (PPP) sequence (Richards, 2006). The target grammatical structure(s) were introduced in the presentation stage, followed by the practice stage in which students were encouraged to practice the target grammatical items with the use of written or spoken exercises. In the production stage, students were expected to use the target form in different contexts.

Grammar-based approaches were claimed to be insufficient in increasing learner's communicative skills (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Recognizing the functional aspects of language, the Communicative Approach has emerged. The Communicative Approach opposed the study of language that focused on grammatical structures through context-free pattern drills, memorization and repetition (see Richards, 2006). It was argued that language was a medium of communication and more than grammar structures. Therefore, language teaching should also focus on "communicative competence" (Hymes, 1972), not only to know the form but also to be able to produce it in appropriate circumstances. For that reason, it was proposed that the language should be taught in a meaning-based context in which form was considered a second priority (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

With the advent of Communicative Language Teaching, the goal of teaching was shifted from building on knowledge and skills of grammatical competence to communicative competence. However, the Communicative Language Teaching was divided into two different categories based on the degree of attention to grammar: strong and weak. The main concern of the strong version was to develop learner's communicative and comprehension skills, which manifested in various language instruction models such as content based or task based. The weak version; however, implied the development of communicative competence without the exclusion of grammatical competence. Despite the distinction between strong and weak communicative language teaching, the emphasis was on facilitating communicative language skills, rather than the knowledge of language form.

The Communicative Language Teaching models helped in learner's communicative abilities, comprehension skills and, vocabulary knowledge; however, learner's still experienced difficulties in grammatical accuracy in their oral and written language use. Therefore, language-teaching professionals proposed that there should be a balance between attention to form and meaning. It was claimed that learner's benefited from explicit attention to form within a meaningful context in terms of acquisition and accuracy (Long, 1991). The approach that proposed a language instruction that purposefully drew learner's attention to language forms within a meaningful context was called Form-Focused Instruction (FFI).

Form-Focused Instruction involved "any pedagogical effort which is used to draw the learners' attention to form either implicitly or explicitly ... within meaning-based approaches to L2 instruction [and] in which a focus on language is provided in either spontaneous or predetermined ways" (Spada, 2011, p. 226). The definition of FFI varied in literature, for example Long (1991) categorized FFI as focus-on-forms (fonfS) and focus-on-form (fonf). The former involved the teaching of language forms in isolation, whereas the latter indicated "attention to linguistic elements as they arise[d] incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus [was] on meaning or communication" (Ellis, 2001, p. 45-46). Spada and Lightbown (2008) categorized FFI as Integrated FFI and Isolated FFI. Integrated FFI, similar to focus-on-form, entailed the study of language forms within a meaningful, communicative context. Isolated FFI; however, was used to define the explicit teaching of a language form either before or after an activity to foster or complement student understanding. Despite the differences in the description of FFI, they all shared a common theme: attention to language form within a communicative, meaning-based context.

Recent schools of thought related to grammar teaching still differ in their views when it comes to their preference. Some prioritize teaching grammar within meaningful communicative contexts (focus-on-form) (Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2002, 2006; Long, 1991) while others insist on the benefit of teaching grammar in discreet items in which the focus is on the language form (focus-on-forms) (Sheen, 2003, 2005). There have been many empirical studies regarding different considerations in teaching grammar; however, none of the studies are in consensus

with the benefit of a single approach (Ellis, 2006; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). In fact, the majority argued for the use of an approach that would best fit the surrounding circumstances (Ellis, 2006; Ellis et. al., 2006). Essentially, it was confirmed that teachers are the sole agents that could make the best decision among the proposed grammar teaching options based on their teaching environment and experience.

Investigators who have looked at the practices of language teachers brought forward the impact of teacher thinking, teacher knowledge base, and their classroom context on their choices of grammar teaching options (see Borg, 2006; Freeman, 2002; Johnston & Goettsch, 2000). It has been recognized that language teachers rely on several different factors such as student expectation, student proficiency levels, and/or curriculum requirements in their decision-making regarding grammar teaching (Budak, 2009). Within the research regarding teacher practices and teacher thinking, much insight has been provided related to university and private institution settings (Basturkmen, Loewen & Ellis, 2004; Johnston & Goettsch, 2000; Phipps & Borg, 2009) compared to primary or secondary school context (Andrews, 2006; Andrews & McNeil, 2005; Farrel & Particia, 2005; Ng & Farrel, 2003). Attention to public school ELL teacher thinking and practice regarding grammar teaching has been minimal. This present study was carried out in an attempt to fill this void. The purpose of this instrumental case study is to explore how grammar is taught by middle school teachers in ELL classrooms. In this stage of the research, the understanding of grammar involves the morphological (structure of the words) and the syntactical (the structure of the sentences) properties of the language (Crystal, 2004). Grammar teaching will be generally defined as:

Any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it (Ellis, 2006, p. 84).

Therefore, the central question of the present paper is: How is grammar taught by two ELL teachers in a public middle school? The following sub-questions also guided this instrumental case study: How do the ELL

teachers understand grammar? What approaches do they prefer in teaching grammar? What is the rationale behind their choices? How do they understand what their students know about grammar?

Methodology

An instrumental case design is used in this study. Stakes (1995) uses the term “instrumental” when a case is used as a means to understand an issue. Using Stake’s (1994) words, “The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else” (p. 237). Since the aim of this research is to explore how grammar is being taught through understanding “the particularities” of the two different secondary ELL teachers, this approach fits best for this particular inquiry. Additionally, the description of a case study involves a “bounded system” (Creswell, 2007). The two ELL teachers in Hill Middle School (pseudonym) in the Midwest U.S during the months of January to March, 2011 set the boundaries of this study.

The sampling strategy used in this study can be defined as purposeful as the intent was to find the persons and the places that would provide information to heighten the understanding of the research question(s) (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, two criteria define the site and the participant selection: access and a middle school in which ELL instruction was being offered.

Data Collection

Qualitative research stresses the place of scientific methods of inquiry in the data collection and the analysis process in a qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2007). In consideration with this statement and consistent with a case study design, multiple sources of data were collected for this study (see Table 1 below).

Four observations per teacher (45 minutes per class) were conducted in each teacher’s classroom setting during the months of January and March 2011. In addition, audio recording and note taking were employed for the interviews. The classroom observations were initially recorded in fieldnotes later to be typed into the computer no later than forty-eight

hours (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Interviews ranged between 35 to 45 minutes in length and were later transcribed.

Table 1. *Types of Information and Sources*

Information Source	Kerry and Erin (Pseudonyms)
Interviews	Two interviews with each teacher (ranged between 35 to 45 minutes)
Observations	Four visits per teacher (45 minutes per class)
Documents	Plans, district rubrics, worksheets, activities, curriculum
Audio-Visual Materials	Digital recordings of the interviews, photos related to the activities
Emails	Related to all kinds of information exchanges
Informal Chats	Before and after the observations

Data Analysis

MAXQDA 10 software was used to analyze the data. A case study template (Creswell, 2007) was adapted by assigning codes in the code system in MAXQDA 10. To be more specific, after uploading the data into the MAXQDA 10, recurring codes were identified for each case context and description. During the analysis, the recurring codes were aggregated under themes within each case, which was followed by a thematic analysis across the two cases, called cross-case analysis. In-vivo codes and themes (terms used by the participants) were written in italics throughout this paper. Pseudonyms were assigned to give anonymity to the participant teachers and the school.

Following the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, permissions from the district office, the principal, and the teachers were obtained concurrently. As a need to validate accuracy and representation of the findings, member checking was used (Stake, 1995). Seeking for clarity in reporting the findings also served as an additional validity (Nunan,

1992). For further verification, the 20-point checklist prepared by Stake (1995) was used as a referral.

Findings

Context

In the school district of this study, the ELL program, which was under the umbrella of Federal Programs, was cross-graded and organized by levels (see Table 2 below). Students identified as ELL according to their measured English language proficiency scores received pull-out ELL classes. In every nine weeks, students that showed improvement in their language proficiency were advanced to the next proficiency level. Typically, students spent four quarters in each level, yet the frame was still variable. The district provided teachers rubric checklists with specific skills that were expected for each proficiency level for each language domain- speaking, listening, writing and reading. Grammar was embedded within these domains.

Table 2. *English Language Proficiency Levels*

Language Level	Description
Entry	Students with Interrupted Formal Education
1	Pre-functional
2	Beginning
3	Intermediate
4	Advanced
5	Full English Proficiency

(K-12 Guidelines for English Language Learners, 2011)

The participant teachers indicated that they used rubric checklists *as a guide* for the *specific language skills* they needed to focus on in their teachings and *as a source for planning* their units. The previous year, after extended committee meetings, the teachers formulized the curricu-

lum for level 1 in themes by focusing on vocabulary, reading, writing science and writing social studies. For the other levels, the teachers stated that the teachers took general education curriculum as a basis. Each year, by using series of books on different topics, the teachers divide the topics among themselves. Each teacher was free to choose the directions they wished to go; yet, still needed to focus on *teaching to the skills* that were *outlined in the curriculum*.

The use of *district expectation* or insinuations for the district expectation was frequent in teachers' utterances such as, "...what the district requires of us...; I need to meet those requirements that the district gives;...regardless of how they [students] are doing I will do a lesson on that because I know that it is part of the district expectation." While the pressure of district expectation was perceived as the primary driving force by the teachers in their teaching of grammar, several other factors also shaped the teachers' grammar teaching objectives and manner, which will be explored within the case profiles.

Case Profiles

Site: Hill Middle School

Hill Middle School was one of the two public middle schools in which ELL program was being offered in a midsized city in the Midwestern U.S. As of official 2010 Fall Membership Count provided by the city district, out of total 809 students enrolled at this school, 50% came from multi-lingual and multicultural backgrounds. At the time of the study, 18 % of the student population represented ELL. The countries the students came from included Mexico, Guatemala, Bosnia, Sudan (Sudan includes South Sudan because the study was conducted prior to its independence), South Korea, Burma, Thailand, American Samoa, and Iran. The school operated on a total of seven periods: four periods in the morning, lunch, and three periods in the afternoon.

Table 3. *Demographics*

Names	Kerry	Erin
ELL Teaching Year	13	10
Initial Degree	English	Social Sciences
Levels being taught	1 , 2, 3	2, 3

Case One: Kerry

Kerry was a monolingual, native speaker. Kerry had the intention of becoming a high school English teacher at first, but after serving as a para-professional for a year in the ELL department at a high school, she got a job at a middle school while completing her ELL endorsement. She has been teaching for thirteen years. At that time it was possible to teach before the completion of the endorsement program, but it was not being accepted at present (see Reeves, 2010, for an overview of ELL certification programs). She was teaching proficiency levels 1, 2 and 3.

Grammar, she thought, was basically *using the language in its most proper form* and use of *correct grammar* was beneficial in every aspect of one's life such as job searching, school, and interactions with other people. Her approach to grammar teaching mostly revolved around explicitness based on *student factors* by which she meant student's proficiency level. She preferred addressing only the grammar features that the students were supposed to know according to the present and past lesson objectives. She was attuned to the student proficiency level expectations and reinforced this to her students at appropriate times.

Kerry was aware of the grammar errors that were specific to the ELLs and to the mainstream speakers. She would speak to that point when needed. She was also aware of the negative effects of first language (L1) influence on her students' English language use, which is further addressed within the themes below. Language learners use their knowledge of native language as an aid in their target language learning, which is also known as language transfer. Language transfer refers to "the [lan-

guage learner's] use of previous linguistic or prior skills to assist [their] comprehension or production" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p.120). This suggests that language learners either consciously or unconsciously apply their knowledge of native language to the target language to facilitate their learning. In addition, the transfer can be positive or negative to the learning of target language. It was claimed that the high degree of similarity of the two languages enabled more positive transfer (Karim, 2003).

Kerry's main concern as an ELL teacher related to grammar was how to get those students, who had been making the same mistakes continuously, to use the correct form. She was struggling to find what she was missing when her students were not making the target form a *natural part of them*. "It drives me crazy", she said and wished for a switch she could have turned on in those occasions.



Case One: Themes

Theme One: "What Dictates How I Teach"

District rubric checklists and *the student level* of proficiency were the two essential factors that shaped Kerry's choice of topics and teaching strategy. Initially, all ELL teachers decided and chose the topics and resources they would prefer using at the group meeting. Then, they each planned their units by taking the district guidelines as a foundation. If the district required Kerry to teach certain grammar points, she would teach it without considering the students' background knowledge. For example, the district rubric checklist and the ELL guidelines for Level 2 students required ELL teachers to teach how to "use the present simple tense". Kerry, in an attempt to address this requirement, prepared a worksheet addressing the main points about the technical use of the present tense, even if the students might have the knowledge of use and function of the simple present tense.

Yet, Kerry pointed out the *student reality* as her core factor in choosing what to focus as a grammar point. *Student reality* was basically the level of student understanding. According to Kerry, student understanding is revealed better in their written works and writing prompts. By looking at the frequent common errors, Kerry would prepare work-

sheets composed of students' own sentences. Then, she would carry out mini-lessons in a suitable time during a lesson period. The example of the use of *have/has* below shows this point. After reading Level 1 student assignments, Kerry realized that the students were still confused as to when to use *have and has* in their sentences. She prepared a worksheet showing the differences between the two verbs:

Has  he, she, it, 1 person, place or thing
Have  I, you, we, they, 2 or more

She also prepared a small worksheet that included the students' own incorrect sentences from their homework to pull their attention to their mistakes such as:

1. Mrs. Benzer and Mrs. Tan (has)? two cats.
2. My friend (have)? two brothers.

Kerry believed in the importance of using students' own sentences to point out the differences in the usage of a grammar point. She thought that students would learn more effectively from their own mistakes.

Theme Two: “Grammar in the Context of What We Have Been Doing”

In addition to the elements above that have been shaping Kerry's use of methods in addressing the grammar items in her practice, the second theme that emerged was how Kerry combined the targeted grammar features in broader contexts. Kerry supported teaching grammar in combination with the content that they were studying at that moment rather than in meaningless structural chunks. For example, one of the topics of the unit “The Continents” was “Asia”. The Level 1 district curriculum said:

Students will learn about the world as a whole by studying the individual continents (land/climate, weather, people, animals/plants, natural resources.)

One of the language objectives the district curriculum asked the teachers to teach was, “Students will use comparative and superlative

expressions.” Therefore, she combined this objective with the content she already planned.

Kerry used the continents –Africa, Asia and South America- and the animals that were indigenous to these continents such as tiger, hippo, and panda that they had studied as part of the content objectives. She also used the adjective *big* to cover the comparative and superlative forms of adjective as a grammar target because she thought “ *big* [was] a simple adjective that all the students knew and understood in English”. She brought stuffed animal toys that ranged in size, panda was the smallest animal and rhino was the biggest (see Figure 1). She also had the worksheet at hand with the pictures of those animals included. The students were asked to form their sentences using the comparative and superlative forms:

The panda(is smaller than)....the tiger.

The rhino(is the biggest)....toy animal.

With this additional worksheet, Kerry targeted to complement her students’ comprehension of the form and function of comparative and superlative adjectives.



Figure 1. *Stuffed Toy Animals*

Kerry provided students an additional assignment with the adjective “tall” and the students themselves participated in the exercise. She asked the students to line up and mark their height at the board. Afterwards, the students were asked to form their sentences by comparing their heights. Her explanation for this activity was that the adjective was simple and the idea was very concrete when the students were able to line up and clearly see who was taller than whom and who was the tallest.

Kerry’s mindset for the activities above shows that she was not only interested in addressing the formal requirements of the rubric, but also weaving them within her students’ appropriate proficiency level as she perceived it. The district curriculum required Kerry to teach the comparative and superlative adjectives. Kerry believed that she should address these grammatical structures within a meaningful context to facilitate student understanding. On the other hand, her students’ identified language proficiency level was Level 1, which indicated that their knowledge of English language was limited. Ultimately, all of the above factors- the curriculum requirement, the student proficiency level and Kerry’s belief in context-embedded grammar teaching- shaped Kerry’s mode of instruction.

Theme Three: Use of Instructional Options during Grammar Teaching

The third theme that emerged was the set of actions that Kerry carried out during her lessons. Two different instructional approaches dominated her method of teaching grammar. The majority of her strategies consisted of Initiation, Response and Evaluation (IRE) patterns and explicit instruction.

IRE pattern

In Kerry’s room, the classroom talk usually consisted of teacher initiation (I), student response (R) and teacher evaluation (E) especially during mini grammar episodes. Below is a small segment of the kind of interaction during which they discussed the animals on the worksheet:

T: This is ?...Sts: Panda.	I, R
T: We call it baby Panda. While we were studying Africa, we talked about lion, but what animal is this?	E,I
St 1: Jaguar	R
T: Tiger. We haven't talked about it, but they live in Asia.	R,E
T: What is this animal?	I
St 1: Hippopotamus	R
St 2: Dinosaur	R
T: Rhinoceros. Raise your hand to tell me which animal is the biggest?	R,I
Hang ? Is it the panda or the tiger or the rhino?	I
St 3: Rhino is the biggest animal.	R
T: Here is the panda, here is the tiger. Which one is bigger?	I
St 3: Tiger.	R
T: Can you put it in a sentence?	I
St 3: Tiger is bigger than the baby panda.	R

As can be seen, the interaction between the students and the teacher was limited. However, Kerry tried to encourage her students to talk by constantly asking questions in an attempt to direct them toward her set goals. Her goals were helping her students go beyond one-word answers and using the targeted structure in full sentences. In addition, she tried to include as many students as possible by addressing more than one student within this model of interaction and pushing the students until they came up with an acceptable answer.

Explicit Instruction

Within this IRE sequence, the use of an explicit teaching approach was Kerry's primary preference. This approach consisted of explicit instruction by means of description, explanation, comparison and contrast. Providing feedback on errors was also among her options. For example, in one of the Level 1 lessons the objective was the use of *have/has* within

the unit “The Continents”. The small segment of this lesson below clearly depicts the elements of explicit approach:

T: Do you remember yesterday when you wrote three sentences about Africa? And you all wrote good examples with little problem.

Sentence is: Africa have more than 50 countries.

T: Almost perfect. Who knows what the problem is in this sentence?

St: Have

T: Can you tell me the difference? You have to decide when to use have/has.

(She turned the projector on)

T: Use have with “you, they, we” use has with “he, she, it.

T: How many is “they”? Use have when you have more than one person, place or thing. Eg. Africa and Asia have two deserts.

Why have?

Use has for one person, place or a thing. Eg; Asia has a very big desert. Why has?

Practice it because many of you want to say have. First, you see, why and when do we say have/has? Practice.

T: Why is it “Asia has”? Before you say, remember, Africa and Asia have. Now Africa is just one. Asia and Africa ...two...have.

Use *have* when you are talking about more than one place. You see...why and when we use have and has.

This particular classroom interaction shows that Kerry preferred providing strategies to find and use the correct form by comparing the differences between the uses of *have* and *has*. She was frequently reminding students of the form and rationale to increase student understanding. However, Kerry was aware that the explicit strategies did not work at all times and that created concern for her. She was struggling to find what she was missing when her students were not making the target form a “natural part of them”.

One example of this is the use of “ain’t”. As a result of one of the Level 2 student’s constant use of “ain’t” she asked the student to use “am not” instead. Immediately, she explained that even if native speakers

were using “ain’t” it was not Standard English. She also thought that many of the student mistakes were the result of the negative effects of first language influence on her students’ English language use. Her only way to overcome this problem was to ask the students to practice often to achieve correct “muscle memory”, such as in the misuse of the third person singular verb ending –s. She said that “as a rule any Asian speaker struggled with the –s” and that “there was something in their language that did not transfer” positively into English language. For that reason, constant practice might help in achieving the use of –s. In these situations, she was asking her students to practice the correct form in front of a mirror at least a hundred times until the correct form became a habit, “a natural part of them”.

Case Two: Erin

Erin was also a monolingual, native speaker. Erin’s initial degree was in social science. She described her present situation as “accidental.” During her training to be a social science teacher, she had the opportunity to complete her K-12 ELL endorsement courses through the university grant. She admitted that she was lured by the idea of no cost when she first took the classes, but she later found out that she loved teaching ELL and ever since then she has been teaching in the ELL department. This year was her tenth year, all at the same Hill Middle School. During the time this study was conducted she was teaching Levels 2 and 3.

Erin believed that grammar was important for oral and writing skills. Having not taken any courses related to grammar teaching, her pedagogical knowledge mostly grew from observing an ELL teacher during her formal teacher-training year. Contrary to her personal experience with grammar learning by means of out-of-context excessive drilling exercises, she preferred a *holistic view*, which she learned and liked during her teacher-learning observations.

Rather than as a whole lesson, she preferred addressing target grammar points as a *warm-up* in the first ten to fifteen minutes in each lesson period. The routine involved working as individuals first, followed by working as a whole class. The book she was following consisted of exercises such as finding mistakes, using the correct forms or editing. The

repetitive feature of this book reflected Erin's belief in repetitive practice that occurred with a lapse of time was effective in learning.

Erin's initial tension was to have to look up different sources for "little picky details in grammar". She described herself as having a basic foundation, yet she needed to learn grammar on her own, as she did not have a concrete background during her college and teacher learning years.

Case Two: Themes

Theme One: *Grammar as Warm-ups and Grammar as District Objectives*

The district objectives and a daily review book marked Erin's methods related to grammar teaching. Initially, she preferred using a review book heavily focused on different language skills on a daily basis at the beginning of each lesson. The target grammar feature depended on the book itself as Erin followed the book orderly. Second, if the unit and the story they were reading required her to teach certain grammar features, she would plan it as mini-lessons. Sometimes the review practice in the warm-up sessions would link to the story they were reading by chance. At these moments, she would heavily stress the connections between reading and the grammar practice. During an interview, she defined her approach as *holistic*, by which she meant addressing the target grammar points within a meaningful context. However, her use of a practice book did not necessarily reflect her statement as the book taught grammar that was not tied to genuine and meaningful contexts.

Theme Two: Instructional Approaches

Apart from the above factors that shaped Erin's grammar lesson objectives, as a second theme two primary approaches dominated Erin's practice related to grammar teaching, IRE (Initiation, Response, Evaluation) sequence and explicit instruction, which are detailed below.

IRE Pattern

IRE was the dominant class talk during warm-up exercises. The snippet of Erin's teaching episode below is an example of this pattern. In this particular lesson segment, the students were working on the sentence: his car broke down on peek road so we call a toe truck. And the classroom talk went like:

St: Capitalize the "h"

R

E: capitalize the "he"

E

St: car brokez

R

E: How would you spell it?

I/?

As seen above, the interaction mostly went between the teacher and the student and the primary focus was on the structure of the language and making appropriate corrections. In addition, the coding shows that Erin used her initiations mostly in the form of questions and her last evaluation marked the closing of the interaction in the form of a detailed explanation. In fact, the use of question forms was dominant in Erin's strategy to attract student attention to the focus point. Erin preferred using "good" and "excellent" frequently as reinforcements as well.

Explicit Instruction

Within the theme instructional approaches, a second subtheme emerged as the use of explicitness. Specifically, during story related activities and the warm-ups Erin preferred talking about the language by analyzing and describing. *Whys* were frequent in her grammar related in-

quiries. Usually short, but detailed explanations followed the inquiry. The use of terminology often occurred in her instructions and questions. Consider the following example that was related to a sentence correction during a warm-up session.

Sentence: our class study the graph to find information about americas favorite pet.

Student: Capitalized “O”, capitalized “A” -America’s – and apostrophe.

Erin: Why do you need the apostrophe?

St & E: It belongs to the people in America

St went on: –favorite pet –period-.

E: So, we’ve got to make sure that our subject and our verb agrees. Ok. So, class is a singular subject, there is only one class. Even though there is many people in the class, it’s just one class. Same with family. So, you have the make sure the verb and the subject in a sentence agrees in the present tense. And then we have a proper noun. America. It’s also a possessive noun needing the apostrophe ‘s’.

As can be seen, the analysis of the language includes the use of terminology and metalinguistic information in Erin’s instruction. Erin believed that the students needed to know the correct labels of the grammatical features that they were studying.

A similar format was evident within story reading episodes as well. Erin would remind the students of the previously studied grammar point(s) at every possible opportunity to help them make the connection between the form and the usage in the immediate text, such as during the story *Johnny Appleseed*. Following the reading assignment *Johnny Appleseed*, the students were asked to study the elements of the story: the characters, setting, time period, and the type. When they were talking about the time period, which took place during “the westward movement” (1750s-1980s), Erin felt the necessity of providing additional information regarding the simple past tense:

E: ...the story took place a couple of hundred years ago. What tense should you be using? You should be using past tense to write the events: “adding –ed or irregular verbs”.

Another example that shows the characteristics of Erin’s techniques is related to the study of the story about Mr. President and the cherry tree. In connection to this story, the students were assigned to respond to the question: If you were given the chance to be the president of the United States, what would you do? After writing the sentence on the board, Erin stressed that either “I would” or “I would not” should follow the sentence, “If I were given the chance to be the president of the United States”. She continued as:

A lot of sentences grammatically should say things like I would want the job because I would be best person in charge; I would make many changes; I would like to make some laws.....OK....A lot of sentences should start with I would because of the way the question is asked to you. You need to be looking through your papers ...if you got things in the correct grammar that says I would want to do these things. So look through your papers and see if you want to make any changes.

How does it needed to be worded. I would.

Erin was describing the rule without using the metalinguistic terms here, and she was encouraging her students to apply the correct usage. She did not need to go into details about the conditional sentences, and/or its semantic meaning. Erin found it adequate to address the grammatical form at hand according to her perceived student level and understanding. In addition, the small classroom episodes discussed above show that Erin was true to her words when she said, “I use different approaches. Some benefit from segregated pulled out pieces, others from holistic”. These words indicate Erin’s deliberate consideration of differing student needs and how she orchestrated her instruction in an attempt to address her various student needs. As explored above, Erin addressed grammar in explicit ways as she considered many of her students would understand grammar if studied in isolation. In addition, she combined the previously studied grammar points within a target reading,

as she believed that many of her students would benefit from attention to grammar within a meaningful context.

Cross-Case Theme Analysis

Kerry and Erin both believed in the importance of grammar knowledge in students, yet they stated that they were against teaching grammar “as an end in itself” (Celce-Murcia, 1991, p. 467). Kerry favored addressing grammar features as a continuation or part of the immediate content. Her preference of teaching grammar as a part of the content under study showed itself in her teachings. Her grammar teaching approach mirrored her advocacy for teaching grammar within a meaningful context (Long, 1991; Spada & Lightbown, 2008).

Erin’s approach in the *warm-up* practices did not really tie the target grammar features to the content or unit that was under study. In this sense, her approach reflected her belief of the effectiveness of grammar teaching in isolation, not connecting the target grammar item with a meaningful context. However, for story readings she either taught certain grammar points as a preparation for the coming unit or addressed the target grammar features during the study of a story. These techniques showed that she supported teaching form and function relationship in connection with a meaningful context.

Student proficiency levels played a huge role in both teachers’ plans. For example, by looking at her students’ writings, Kerry designed activities or handouts directly related to the common student errors in combination with the content as a mini-lesson. On the other hand, even if Erin said that she valued her students’ understanding level in constructing her daily plans, it was not as evident in her daily teaching activities. These two teachers’ preparation of a lesson plan related to a grammar feature based on the demand of the district curriculum was similar to their mini-lessons. They targeted teaching the form and function of a grammatical feature that was required in the district rubrics to enhance student uptake before the introduction of the essential content unit assigned in the curriculum.

Both teachers demonstrated different use of teaching options in their instructions during teaching such as explicit feedback on error (Long,

2007), description and explanation of the rules. They both tried to pull their students' attention to the errors they made and explained *how and why* the errors should be corrected according to the rules. However, providing feedback on errors occurred more frequently in Kerry's strategies than Erin's.

One of the major differences between the two teachers was the use of terminology. While addressing grammatical features, Erin was more inclined to use the linguistic terminology during instruction. This reflected her belief that the students needed to know the proper names of the grammar points that they were learning. Last of all, even if there were differences between the two teachers' ways of addressing grammar in their daily practice, both teachers seemed to have developed their own personal theory of grammar teaching and recognized the different options to use depending on the circumstances surrounding them.

Conclusion

The two cases presented here show teachers' understanding of grammar and the exterior factors that shaped their grammar-teaching options. The other conclusion that emerged here relates to the teachers' opinions about language teacher education and ELL endorsement programs.

Teachers' beliefs regarding the place of grammar in language teaching highly impact their teaching styles. This finding is consistent with the results of previous related studies conducted in various contexts (Basturkmen et al., 2004; Borg, 2003, 2005; Richards, Gallo & Renandya, 2001). It appears that when teachers in this case study planned on grammar related lessons and activities, they not only consider their students' level of proficiency as they perceived it, but also aim to cover the requirements of the district rubrics by aligning these requirements according to their students' level of proficiency. With these considerations in mind, these participant teachers prefer connecting the target grammar items either to the previous activity, and/or content or the future content to be studied.

Teachers in the current study prefer using an intensive and explicit grammar-teaching model as a mini-lesson with two conditions. These conditions involve either the district rubrics requirements or the gap in

student knowledge and/or proficiency level as perceived by the teachers. These teachers mostly detected their students' grammar gaps through their students' own writings. By looking at common student mistakes or errors, these teachers prepare extra worksheets that focus on the correct uses of the frequently made written mistakes in an attempt to increase their students' conscious awareness. Within these mini-lessons, teachers' explicit instructions consist of describing, explaining and comparing the structure(s) that they focus on or providing metalinguistic explanations (see Ellis, 2006). In addition, while addressing grammar, either in isolation or in combination with the target content, teachers in this study utilized techniques of feedback on errors, as they believe it is one of the effective ways of pulling students' attention to the target grammar items.

This study also shows the differences between both teachers' choice of options regarding grammar, depending on their teacher learning background and beliefs. Kerry's English language education background seems to afford her to weave the target grammar pieces with the content unit that is under study. One reason for this inclination may be related to her strong knowledge and experience of the English language. In addition, her belief in combining grammar within a meaningful context may also be the factor for her effort to teach it in a genuine way. On the other hand, as Erin confirmed, her educational profile influenced her manner in which the teaching of grammar was much more in isolation- even though she said she preferred to tie the target grammar to the immediate content under study. This finding actually shows the discrepancies between ELL teachers stated beliefs and their actual practice regarding grammar teaching, which is also supported by previous research (Farrel & Particia, 2005; Richards, Gallo & Renandya, 2001). Teachers may address grammar points in isolation even if they state that they prefer to focus on grammar within a meaningful context (Ellis, 2001). There may be several reasons for this divergence between the teacher beliefs and their practices such as the influence of teachers' educational background, and/or teacher-learning experiences. In this case study, even though Erin's teacher-learner experiences affected the way she would like to teach grammar, she did not necessarily reflect this belief in her practice, as much as she would like to. As she said rather hesitantly, her professional preparation programs did not enable her to develop pedagogically oriented grammar teaching. She added that most of her classes were

tuned to increase theoretical knowledge rather than hands-on activities, which would have developed her sense of pedagogy and practice.

Another key point to emerge here is that the findings of this study have a clear implication for teacher educators and ELL endorsement programs. Exploring these teacher practices and the reasons behind their choices of options regarding grammar teaching provided a window to teacher educators as to what to consider for constructing the language teacher education classes. Language teachers in this study explicitly stated their desire for a class that includes grammar teaching pedagogy, which also offers ways to connect grammar with the requirements of the rubrics or curriculum that they are asked to follow. Specifically, Erin conveyed that the language teacher programs fail to adequately prepare them with a thorough understanding of grammar and usage. In addition, this lack of understanding goes beyond leaving teachers without the skills to teach particular conventions. Learning English grammar should not be about “breaking bad habits” as Kerry said. A course in grammar and usage might help ELL teachers understand that language is an evolving social practice and that there is no one proper form of Standard English, but instead a myriad of forms, variations, and dialects. I am not suggesting that ELL teachers should not teach grammar as part of their instruction; however, it would be useful for teachers to help students understand that the variations of English are not “wrong” while standard English is “correct,” but instead that Standard American English within the context of the United States is one of many useful variations – and one that will certainly grant them important kinds of access in their experiences in schooling and beyond.

As a final point, the teachers in this study represent a small sample of public middle school ELL teacher population and thus it would be wrong to encapsulate all of the middle school ELL teachers within the findings of this study. As Stake (1995) says, this instrumental case study is all about “particularization” rather than “generalization”. Nonetheless, this multiple case study contributes to the existing literature as the particularities of these two ELL teachers provide insight to all language teaching professionals and teacher educators regarding the factors that impact in-service ELL teachers’ thinking and practice in public school setting. Such insight holds particular importance for teacher educators who need to

better understand how in-service teachers think about and teach grammar in order to guide and develop such thinking into their practice.

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Eyes Never Lie: Eye-tracking Technology Reveals how Students Study Displays

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Abstract

This study investigated the achievement benefits of studying different forms of verbal displays and explored how students study these displays using eye-tracking technology. Sixty-eight college students were assigned randomly to one of four display groups: text, outline, simple matrix, and signaled matrix. One at a time, students wearing an eye-tracking apparatus studied their one-page display on a computer screen for 15 minutes in preparation for achievement tests that followed. Achievement results indicated that studying text displays produced lower achievement than studying any of the other displays. Unlike past studies, however, no advantage was found for matrix study over outline study perhaps because of design constraints associated with eye tracking. Eye-tracking results, however, were robust. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses showed that students tend to study text and outline displays one topic at a time, whereas students tend to study matrix displays across topics. Across-topic study is instrumental in spotting and learning comparative relationships among topics. Implications for research and practice were provided.

Keywords: *matrix, verbal display, eye tracking*

Introduction

Suppose you had to study information on different species of wildcats in preparation for a test. Would it be better to study that information when it is displayed in text, outline, or matrix form (as shown in Figure 1)? Researchers have investigated which verbal display works best and confirmed that studying a matrix produces higher achievement than studying a text or outline (Kauffman & Kiewra, 2010; Kiewra, DuBois, Christian, & McShane, 1988; Kiewra, DuBois, Christian, McShane, Meyerhoffer, & Roskelley, 1991; Kiewra, Kauffman, Robinson, DuBois, & Staley, 1999). Such research is designed so that the three displays have informational equivalence—the same number of critical ideas—but vary in structure. Structurally, a text contains blocks of information in paragraph form, an outline contains lines of information in a list-like form, and a matrix contains smaller bits of information in table form. In one representative study (Kauffman & Kiewra, 2010), students studied longer and more detailed versions of the abbreviated wildcat material shown in Figure 1. They studied either a five-page text containing about 2000 words, a three-page outline containing about 400 words, or a one-page matrix containing about 250 words. Although word count differed, all three displays had informational equivalence and contained the same 78 facts about six species of wildcats. Results showed that matrix studiers achieved more than outline studiers who, in turn, achieved more than text studiers on both fact and relationship tests. In a similar study where word totals were equated for text, outline, and matrix displays, matrix study still produced higher achievement (Robinson et al., 2006).

Researchers have also theorized that matrices are superior to texts and outlines because they are built more efficiently. According to Kauffman and Kiewra (2010), and as shown in Table 1, three factors explain matrices' superior efficiency: signaling, extraction, and localization. Signaling refers to cues that aid information access. An outline's topic and subtopic organization and a matrix's column and row structure make it easy to access facts (e.g., the cheetah's weight is 125 pounds). A text does not commonly provide such signals. Extraction is the process of identifying the most important text information and setting it apart. Only outlines and matrices extract critical information and set it apart. Localiza-

tion is the process of positioning related information in close proximity. All three displays have topical localization. They place information about a single topic (such as tigers) in the same text paragraph, the same outline section, or the same matrix column. Only the matrix, though, has categorical localization. Information about the “call” category, for example, appears across a single matrix row for easy viewing and comparison. That same information, though, appears in four different text paragraphs and four different outline sections. Categorical localization in the matrix makes finding comparative relationships across topics quick and easy. With just a glance at the matrix in Figure 1, for example, you see that wildcats with louder calls weigh more and live longer than wildcats with softer calls. In addition, you see that jungle cats are solitary, whereas plains cats live in groups. In conclusion, outlines are more efficient than texts because of better signaling and extraction, and matrices are more efficient than outlines because of better categorical localization.

Of course, a matrix’s categorical advantages might only be realized if students study a matrix horizontally by category (at least to some degree). If they only study a matrix vertically by topic, then they might miss comparative relationships like those mentioned above. Using computer technology, an experiment was conducted to uncover how students should study a matrix in order to benefit from its categorical advantages (Jairam, Kiewra, Kauffman, & Zhao, 2012). In that experiment, students studied a matrix topically, with only one column appearing at a time; categorically, with only one row appearing at a time; or in a unified way, with the full matrix appearing at all times. Results showed that studying the matrix categorically, row by row, or in a unified way led to higher achievement on fact and relationship tests than studying the matrix topically, column by column. And, results from a supplemental experiment in that same study also showed that adding color-coded signals to the unified matrix resulted in increased relationship learning.

In summary, it has been established that (a) studying a matrix display increases achievement more than studying text or outline displays, (b) a matrix is more effective than other displays because it offers categorical localization of related ideas, and (c) studying a matrix horizontally by category is superior to studying it vertically by topic. What is unknown, however, is how students actually study a matrix when left to their own devices. Are they getting the most they can from their study?

Do they study a matrix column-by-column, row-by-row, or some combination of both? To find out how students study a matrix and other displays, the present study used eye-tracking technology to track the path of students' eye movements as they studied displays. The remainder of this introduction briefly describes eye-tracking theory, technology, and application before introducing the present study.

Eye tracking has been used as a measure of reading comprehension (e.g., Gordon, Hendrick, Johnson, & Lee, 2006; Rayner, 1998; Rayner, Chace, Slattery, & Ashby, 2006). According to the eye-mind theory (Duchowski, 2007), readers' eyes reveal not only their place in the text but their mental processing too. For example, a relatively longer fixation might mean that more attention is being paid to a difficult text section.

Eye-tracking systems use miniature cameras affixed to a band placed around the learner's head to record eye movements. Resulting data usually include number of fixations or times the eye focuses on areas of interest (or number of times that the eyes leave and return to areas of interest) within the learning materials, fixation duration or time spent looking at key words, and scan paths that show how learners' eyes move from spot to spot on their learning materials. A large number of fixations might suggest the importance of certain points that demand repeated fixations. Long fixations might reflect difficulty in understanding and interpreting (Hyona, 2010). And, scan paths might indicate the nature and efficiency of processing (Jacob & Karn, 2003).

To our knowledge, only two studies have used eye-tracking technology to investigate how verbal displays other than text are studied. In one study, Salmeron, Baccino, Canas, Madrid, and Fajardo (2009) used eye tracking to examine how giving students a hierarchical organizer in advance of reading easy or difficult texts affected their study. Participants had longer fixation times on the hierarchical organizer when the text was difficult than when it was easy. Moreover, longer fixation durations on the organizer led to higher test scores.

In another study, Liu, Chen, Chuang, and Huang (2012) used eye-tracking technology to assess the effectiveness of two types of advance organizers presented prior to the full text: question-based and summarized. Eye-tracking results showed that participants given the summarized organizer spent less time reading the organizer than reading the text. In contrast, participants given the question-based organizer spent

more time reading the organizer than reading the text. The researchers concluded that summarized organizers were more efficient in aiding participants' reading comprehension compared to question-based organizers. One possible reason is that question-based organizers invited more active processing than summarized organizers, and thereby reduced the time available for reading the text that followed.

These two investigations (Liu, et al., 2012; Salmeron et al., 2009) are closest to our research interest because both track eye movements to examine what students look at while they study graphic organizers. Neither study, however, examined how students study various displays and the matrix display in particular. The purpose of the present study was to do just that.

In the present study, college students studied one of four displays (text, outline, simple matrix, or signaled matrix) in preparation for fact, relationship, and transfer tests. While they studied, an eye-tracking apparatus recorded their eye movements. In line with established matrix research and theory, we predicted that matrix groups would (a) achieve more and (b) scan their displays in more categorical ways than outline and text display groups.

Methodology

Participants and Design

Sixty-eight undergraduate students from the educational psychology research participant pool at a large Midwestern university participated to obtain research credit. Eight participants (12%) could not complete the study because the eye tracker could not track their eye movements. This percentage of non-tracked participants is considered normal (Jacob & Karn, 2003). Among the remaining participants, 93% were Caucasians, 73% were female, most were juniors (25%) and seniors (50%), and most (87%) held grade-point averages of 3.0 or higher. Participants were assigned randomly to one of the four verbal display groups: text ($n = 14$), outline ($n = 14$), simple matrix ($n = 17$), or signaled matrix ($n = 15$).

Apparatus

The EyeLink II computer-based eye-tracking system collected eye movement data. This system included a head-mounted eye tracker, a display computer, and a host computer. The eye tracker was comprised of two miniature cameras mounted on a padded headband worn by participants. The eye tracker captured participants' eye movements as they studied a verbal display presented on the display computer in front of them. The host computer, located in the adjoining room, recorded and stored eye movement data pertaining to eye fixation numbers, durations, and paths.

Materials

Materials included a demographic survey, study material about wildcats displayed in four different forms, a vocabulary test, and three achievement tests. The four wildcat displays were presented via computer; the other materials were paper-based. The demographic survey asked participants to declare their gender, ethnicity, class standing, overall GPA, and prior knowledge about wildcats.

There were four wildcat displays akin to those shown in Figure 1: text, outline, simple matrix, and signaled matrix (not shown in Figure 1). Wildcat material was used because it was used in previous display research that produced achievement differences (e.g., Jairam, et al., 2012). All contained equivalent information about six wildcat topics presented in the same order (tiger, lion, jaguar, leopard, cheetah, and bobcat) and nine categories presented in the same order (call, weight, life span, habitat, social behavior, range, time of hunt, distinct trait, and hunting method) for each topic. In all, there were 54 facts with each fact corresponding to the intersection of a wildcat topic and category. For example, the fact "tigers roar" stems from the topic of tiger and the category of call.

Although the four displays contained identical information, the displays' word counts and structures varied. The text display contained 1056 words and was divided into six paragraphs according to the six wildcat topics. An example text sentence was, "The jaguar's call is a growl." The

outline display contained 198 words and was divided into six sections according to the six wildcat topics. Each section began with a wildcat's name and was followed by nine lines, each showing a category name and related fact. For example, under the Jaguar topic, the first line was, "Call: Growl". In order to fit all of the information onto one screen, the six outline sections were placed in two unaligned columns rather than in a single column like most outlines. This unaligned design was used so that category names (such as call) did not align across topics. Category alignment is the hallmark of matrices, not outlines. The 115-word simple matrix was a two-dimensional table that listed the six wildcats' names (topics) along the top row and the nine categories down the left-most column. The 54 matrix cells that intersected topics and categories each contained one fact. For example, at the intersection of jaguar and habitat was the single fact "jungle". The signaled matrix (see Jairam, et al., 2012) was identical to the simple matrix except that it was color-coded to signal relationships. For instance, the six wildcats' weights, calls, and lifespans were interrelated so all of this (and only this) information appeared in blue type. These matrix cells were also shaded in three colors to show the relationship that heavier weight cats have louder calls and longer lifespans than medium weight cats, which, in turn, have louder calls and longer lifespans than lighter weight cats.

The vocabulary test contained eight multiple-choice questions taken from the vocabulary portion of sample Scholastic Aptitude Test items. This test served as a filler task to clear participants' short-term memory between studying and testing and as an index of verbal ability.

Three achievement tests assessed fact, relationship, and transfer learning. The fact test contained 54 matching items organized by the nine wildcat categories. For example, the six items pertaining to the weight category required participants to match the six wildcat names to their six weights. The relationship test contained 26 short-answer items. Some items tapped relationships within a topic (e.g., How is the leopard's distinct trait related to its hunting method?), some tapped relationships within a category (e.g., What is the range of wildcat weights?), and some tapped relationships across multiple categories (e.g., What is the relationship between call and weight?). The transfer test measured participants' ability to apply the wildcat information to new settings. Participants were given information about "newly discovered" wildcats (e.g.,

This newly discovered wildcat was observed in the jungle and looked to weigh about 100 pounds) and asked to predict things like its range and hunting behavior.

Procedure

The study took place in the eye-tracking laboratory housed on the university campus. Because there was only one eye tracker available, data were collected one participant at a time, and all participants followed the same procedure. Upon arrival, participants were assigned randomly to one of the four display groups (text, outline, simple matrix, or signaled matrix). Each participant was then read the experimental instructions that revealed the experiment's purpose (to determine how students study instructional materials), four phases (pre-survey, eye-tracker adjustment, study session, and testing), and participant expectations (e.g., do as instructed throughout and try your best). Next, the pre-survey was completed. Then, the eye tracker was placed on the participant and calibrated. When calibration was completed, the participant tapped a designated key that presented the display material on the computer screen and started the eye-tracking process. Every three minutes, the study session was briefly interrupted for eye-tracker recalibration to ensure accurate data collection. During the 15-minute study session, the participant solely studied the material displayed on the computer screen. No other study materials or tools were available, and the participant was forbidden to take handwritten notes or to create another file on the computer to record notes. Meanwhile, a researcher was monitoring the entire process on the EyeLink II host computer in the adjoining control room.

Following the study session, the researcher re-entered the testing room and removed the eye tracker from the participant. Then, the participant was led to a quiet room to complete the vocabulary test (10 minutes), transfer test (5 minutes), relationship test (15 minutes), and fact test (10 minutes), in that order. The entire procedure took about 60 minutes per participant.

Results

Preliminary analyses were conducted on demographic variables and on vocabulary scores to ensure that the groups were comparable. The four display groups were comparable in terms of gender, ethnicity, class standing, GPA, wildcat prior knowledge, and verbal ability. The main analyses discussed next were conducted to detect differences in achievement and eye movement.

Achievement

A MANOVA was conducted to detect display group differences on transfer, relationship, and fact tests. There was a significant difference in test performance for the display groups, $F(9, 132) = 2.00, p = .045$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .73$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$. To determine how display groups differed on each test, between-subjects effects were examined. These analyses revealed group differences for the fact test only, $F(3, 56) = 2.87, p = .04, \eta^2 = .13$ (medium effect). Fisher's LSD post hoc tests indicated that the outline, simple matrix, and signaled matrix groups all learned significantly more facts than the text group. Table 2 shows the percentage means and standard deviations for all display groups across the three achievement tests.

Eye Movement

With respect to how participants studied displays, two measures of eye movement data were examined: run count and scan path. Run count indicated how often a participant's eyes moved away from an area of interest (AOI) and later moved back to this area again. The predetermined AOIs for this study were the six wildcat topics. Higher run counts would indicate that participants generally moved from topic to topic more often as they studied than did those with lower run counts who generally studied one topic at length before studying another. Because run count data were collected for each of the six AOIs, a total run count (TRC) was established for all interest areas. And, because recalibration was done every three minutes, five eye movement intervals (each three minutes long) were also established. Given these parameters, a factor analysis on TRC

for display group and time interval effects was conducted. Results¹ revealed a main effect of display group, $F(3, 250) = 39.5, p < .00, \eta^2 = .32$ (large effect). Specifically, Tukey's HSD post hoc tests revealed that the two matrix display groups had significantly higher TRCs than the text and outline display groups ($p < .00$). There was also a main effect of time interval, $F(4, 250) = 3.3, p = .01, \eta^2 = .05$ (small effect). Tukey's HSD post hoc tests indicated that participants had marginally higher TRCs in Time Interval 1 than in Intervals 4 or 5 ($p = .05$ and $.07$, respectively). The interaction between display group and time interval was not significant. In summary, these run count findings suggested that the two matrix display groups compared information across topics more frequently than the text and outline display groups and that all display groups, in general, also did more comparisons at the beginning of the study period than towards the end. Table 3 presents the run count data, and Figure 2 illustrates the run count patterns.

The other eye movement measure, scan path, was a qualitative measure obtained by watching the complete replays of 20 participants' (5 chosen randomly from each group) eye movements on the computer screen. A researcher examining the replays classified each as (a) topical if participants largely scanned from one idea to another within a topic (e.g., tiger) and then from one topic to the succeeding topic (e.g., from tiger to lion), (b) categorical if participants largely scanned from one idea to another within the same category (e.g., call) and then from one category to another (e.g., from call to weight), and (c) random if participants largely scanned the screen with no discernable pattern. A second researcher independently watched one-third of the replay videos and summarized the scan patterns as well. The two researchers later compared their observations and reached agreement for each participant's scan path pattern.

Scan path results showed that the text display group tended to scan the material topically—top-to-bottom, paragraph-by-paragraph, and line-by-line. They essentially read and reread the text and made almost no attempt to integrate material between paragraphs (topics). For the outline display group, most participants scanned the material topically—topic-by-topic, from top to bottom, again and again. A few participants looked occasionally from topic to topic so that topic comparisons could be made. Participants in the simple matrix display group primarily scanned the matrix categorically. Right from the start, every participant

scanned horizontally and across wildcat topics. This would permit them to discern horizontal relationships within categories such as call and weight. After a while, some participants also studied vertically, which would allow them to discern relationships within topics. Participants in the signaled matrix display group had scan paths much like those in the simple matrix display group. In addition, their eyes frequently moved from row to row, which would enable them to discern relationships that exist between multiple categories such as call and weight. Overall, the scan paths showed that the two matrix groups compared the information categorically across topics more than the other two groups. This finding is consistent with the quantitative run count data.

Discussion

The present study sought to reconfirm previous findings that studying a matrix display results in higher achievement than studying text or outline displays and to break new empirical ground by determining just how students study various displays, particularly the matrix. With respect to achievement, present findings reconfirmed that outline and matrix display groups learned more facts than the text display group. Surprisingly, however, the display groups did not differ with respect to relationship or transfer learning, and the expected achievement advantages of matrix study over outline study did not materialize for any learning outcome.

These unexpected findings might be the result of design factors unique to the present study. Because the present study used eye-tracking technology, it was necessary to fit each display on a single computer screen page without the need to scroll. This restriction resulted in text and outline displays that differed markedly from those used in past studies. Kauffman and Kiewra (2010), for example, used a wildcat text that appeared on five pages and was about 2,000 words long. The wildcat text in the present study appeared on one page and was only about 1,000 words long. The past study also used an outline that appeared over three pages, whereas the outline in the present study appeared on a single page. The text and outline displays used here were not only different from those used previously; they were, because of eye-tracking con-

straints, also designed in ways that violated their very nature to some degree. The present text was bare bones; it contained no extraneous information as most texts do. More importantly, it provided explicit signaling cues throughout. Rather than conversationally report, for example, that a cheetah makes a hissing sound or that it lives in groups, the present text drew readers' attention to the category names and associated facts by reporting information this way: "The cheetah's call is a hiss" and "It's social behavior is groups." As seen in Figure 1, texts commonly lack these clear signals ordinarily found in outlines and matrices. Meanwhile, the present outline was presented in two columns instead of its customary one column, which might have unintentionally invited and simplified across-topic comparisons among wildcats. In essence, because of its two-column design, the outline looked more like a matrix than an outline. Future research might replicate the present study using paper materials so that computer constraints do not compromise the materials' structure or the students' study methods.

Although the accommodations made to employ eye-tracking technology might have diminished achievement findings, such accommodations were worthwhile in producing original quantitative and qualitative data about how students study various displays, particularly the matrix. As predicted, run-count and scan path analyses showed that text and outline studiers tend to study in a linear fashion, one topic at a time, whereas matrix studiers tend to move from topic to topic so that they might better draw out the important categorical relationships that exist across topics (e.g., "most wildcats live in the jungle" or "the louder a wildcat's call the heavier its weight"). In this way, present findings reconfirmed matrices' categorical advantages (Jairam, et al., 2012).

Present findings also indicated that display studiers make more topic-to-topic eye movements earlier in the study period as opposed to later. A closer examination of Figure 2, however, suggests that most of the topic-to-topic study stems from the matrix display groups. And, although the matrix groups do somewhat less topic-to-topic study as time goes on, they continue to do more than the text and outline display groups throughout the study period. We are uncertain why participants studied in a more topic-to-topic fashion in the earlier study periods than in the later periods. Future research might add a follow-up interview or a think-loud procedure to uncover explanations.

Finally, the present study has implications for research and practice. Researchers should strive to measure eye movements using computer or paper displays that are more ecologically valid such as longer and less contrived texts and single column outlines that extend beyond a page. Researchers might also re-investigate signaled matrices to uncover ways they might increase achievement more than they did in the present study. Teachers and students should employ matrices more often for learning comparative material. Unlike texts and outlines, matrices encourage learners to study information by categories as well as by topics. Categorical study helps students see and learn important relationships across topics that might otherwise go unnoticed.

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Footnote

¹ Reduced sample size ($n = 54$) for eye movement data was the result of equipment malfunction that interrupted the data saving process.

Appendix

Table 1 : Efficiency Ratings for Three Types of Displays

Efficiency	Display		
	Text	Outline	Matrix
Signaling	No	Yes	Yes
Extraction	No	Yes	Yes
Localization	Topical	Topical	Topical Categorical
Overall	Low	Medium	High

Table 2: Test Score Percentages (and SD Percentages) for Display Groups

Display Groups	Test Performance		
	Fact	Relationship	Transfer
Text (n=14)	86 (15)	72 (18)	58 (33)
Outline (n=14)	94 (6)	82 (11)	77 (67)
Simple Matrix (n=17)	94 (9)	74 (16)	66 (32)
Signaled Matrix (n=15)	95 (7)	75 (17)	78 (25)
Total (n = 60)	92 (10)	75 (16)	70 (41)

Table 3 : Eye-tracking Run Counts (and Standard Deviations) for Display Groups at Five Time Intervals

Display Groups	Time Interval				
	1	2	3	4	5
Text (n = 14)	104 (53)	114 (50)	131 (49)	120 (38)	130 (49)
Outline (n = 14)	113 (38)	126 (36)	108 (36)	97 (41)	93 (42)
Simple Matrix (n = 14)	223 (75)	185 (61)	175 (71)	167 (58)	171 (52)
Signaled Matrix (n = 12)	230 (62)	194 (49)	189 (65)	170 (53)	162 (73)
Total (n = 54)	165 (82)	161 (56)	149 (64)	137 (56)	138 (61)

Figure 1: Text, outline, and matrix displays for abbreviated wildcat material.

Text

The tiger’s call is a roar. Its weight is 450 pounds. Its lifespan is 25 years. Its habitat is the jungle. Its social behavior is solitary.

The lion’s call is a roar. Its weight is 400 pounds. Its lifespan is 25 years. Its habitat is the plains. Its social behavior is groups.

The cheetah’s call is a hiss. Its weight is 125 pounds. Its lifespan is 8 years. Its habitat is the plains. Its social behavior is groups.

The bobcat’s call is a hiss. Its weight is 30 pounds. Its lifespan is 6 years. Its habitat is the jungle. Its social behavior is solitary.

Outline

Tiger
 Call: Roar
 Weight: 450 pounds
 Lifespan: 25 years
 Habitat: Jungle

Lion
 Call: Roar
 Weight: 400 pounds
 Lifespan: 25 years
 Habitat: Plains
 Social Behavior: Groups

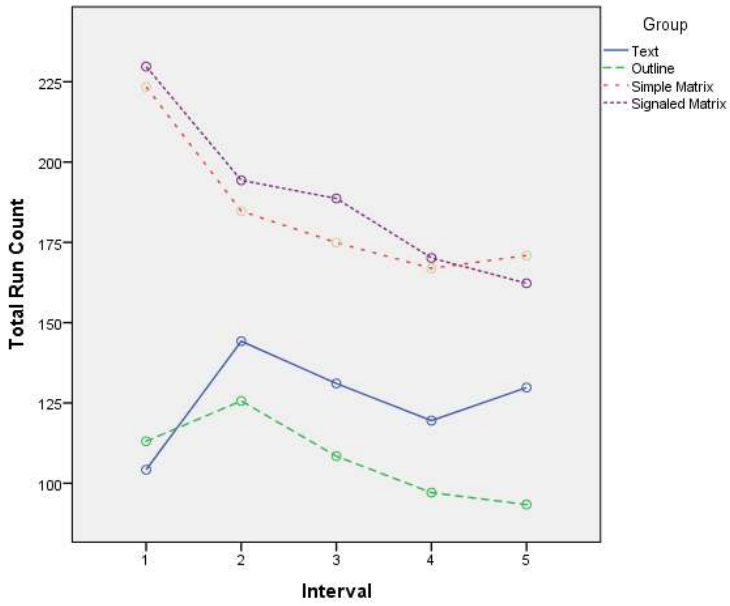
Cheetah
 Call: Hiss
 Weight: 125 pounds
 Lifespan: 8 years
 Habitat: Plains
 Social Behavior: Groups

Bobcat
 Call: Hiss
 Weight: 30 pounds
 Lifespan: 6 years
 Habitat: Jungle
 Social Behavior: Solitary

Matrix

	Tiger	Lion	Cheetah	Bobcat
Call:	Roar	Roar	Hiss	Hiss
Weight:	450	400	125	30
Lifespan:	25	25	8	6
Habitat:	Jungle	Plains	Plains	Jungle
Social Behavior:	Solitary	Groups	Groups	Solitary

Figure 2: Eye-tracking run counts for display groups by time interval.



Faculty Perceptions to Imposed Pedagogical Change: A Case Study

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Abstract

In higher education, professors are seen as the subject matter experts, yet many pedagogical decisions are made by administrators. This leaves teaching professionals without a voice in the reform process and in some instances without the resources necessary for implementation of change, yet still responsible for enactment of change. This case study describes the issues for faculty who are adopting imposed changes to pedagogical course design at a postsecondary institution. It examines how faculty express concerns, as well as how they interpret administration responses to those concerns. The findings reveal four key themes in faculty resistance to imposed pedagogical change: Fear and Anxiety, Encouragement without Support, Insufficient Training, and Student Resistance to New Pedagogy. It is clear that administration and faculty at the study site recognize the significance of, and the necessity for, changes in pedagogy. Multiple changes to practice have been incorporated at this institution such as an increase in the number of graduate and undergraduate online course offerings and a significant increase in the use of collaborative learning strategies, team teaching, and other alternative pedagogical practices. It appears that administration and faculty have developed a culture that is open to continuous pedagogical change using evidence-based research to engage faculty and students.

Key words: *collaborative learning, online education, higher education, imposed pedagogical change, pedagogical reform, team teaching.*

Introduction

Professors in higher education are subject matter experts yet many pedagogical decisions are made by department administrators. This diminishes faculty voice in the reform process, and in some cases leaves them without required resources yet still responsible for enacting the changes. This lack of voice can often lead to resentment and shortsightedness. Faculty feel that they have, or should have, control over what happens within their classrooms, and when pedagogical change is required by their administration, they feel they are losing control and that their professional expertise is being challenged (Ginsberg, 2011).

According to Felder and Brent (1996), and others more recently (Doyle, 2011; Reynolds, Stevens, & West, 2013; Weimer, 2013), there has been a shift in preferred instruction in higher education from the traditional teacher-centered to a more student-centered, collaborative techniques such as problem based learning, team-based learning, and others. These changes are made to address shortcomings seen by those outside of higher education regarding inadequate higher-level learning. Therefore, the problem, according to Fink (2003), is that “although faculty members want their students to achieve higher kinds of learning, they continue to use a form of teaching that is not effective at promoting such learning”(p. 3), as it is largely based on the tradition of lecture-based instructional practices. Fink explains that lectures are less effective in helping students to retain information after a course is finished, to develop problem solving and critical thinking skills, and to develop the ability to transfer knowledge from a course to other situations. That is to say, it often diminishes student motivation to continue learning.

The paradigm shift to the newer collaboratively-based approach to college teaching facilitates co-construction of knowledge amongst teachers and students, assists in the development of student abilities to create connections between course content and other areas of learning and experience, increases motivation for learning and empowers students through inquiry-based learning (Fink, 2003). It also provides the students authority in their acquisition of subject matter and focuses on assisting students in the process of developing competencies and talents.

A great concern for instructors who are required to make this transition is one of time. Because this approach requires considerable training, teachers are asked to become experts not only in their domains but also in pedagogy (Fink, 2003). Teachers and students alike face a steep learning curve related to the implementation of student-centered approaches, which Felder and Brent (1996) refer to as “navigating the bumpy road to student-centered instruction” (p. 1). Within the classroom, there is concern that using this approach may make it difficult for completion of the course syllabus as time must now be devoted to activities that promote active learning and interaction with course content rather than presentation of important concepts. As these changes require a shift in mindset for all involved, teachers fear that they will lose control of the students in their classrooms and that students will react negatively to these changes. Many also fear that student reactions may negatively impact performance evaluations completed at the end of the term. However, as interdepartmental collaboration amongst teaching professionals often occurs in relation to sharing ideas on course design and content outside of the classroom (Devlin-Schere & Sardone, 2013; Major & Palmer, 2006), this same philosophy can and should be applied to students within a classroom regarding their learning.

While current research focuses on collaborative learning in higher education, it largely looks at how this approach can be implemented through technology. There is significant emphasis on creating opportunities for student-centered structures in online courses (Hennessy, Ruthven, & Brindley, 2005; Hlpanis & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007; Lofstrom & Nevgi, 2008; Schneider, 2010). Other research has focused on the use of classroom-based collaborative learning and how it impacts student learning and achievement (Jones, 2007; Michaelsen, Bauman Knight, & Fink, 2004; Millis & Cottell, 1998). However, most of the research provides few opportunities to look at the challenges faculty face when transitioning to different teaching methods especially when required by administrators to implement these pedagogical changes, whether the changes are in the physical classroom or the online classroom.

Therefore, the purpose of this case study was to describe the issues for faculty who are adopting imposed changes to pedagogical course design. The research for this study is guided by the central question: “How do faculty members at a postsecondary institution in the Midwest perceive the challenges that accompany implementation of required changes

in pedagogical practice?” To expand on this question, we have also established and framed our research around the following sub-questions:

- 1) How do faculty members make administrative personnel and other faculty aware of any displeasure with respect to the required change?
- 2) Are there differences in how faculty members express concerns depending on their audience?
- 3) Do faculty members respond, and if so, how, to administration's acknowledgment and feedback regarding expressed concerns?

The intent of this research is to provide beneficial information for administrators and for teachers who are subject to imposed changes in pedagogy. Administrators, particularly those involved with faculty development and teaching, should understand what imposed change does to the individuals enacting it, as well as see how these changes could affect recognition of problems. These findings can inform administrators so they may approach change in a manner that allows for increased comfort for educators especially by making changes less threatening and more attainable for all involved. For teaching professionals, we hope that this provides a metacognitive function, as the research provides an insight to reflect on how changes impact those involved.

In order to effectively determine the impacts of administratively-imposed pedagogical change on college faculty, the researchers felt that a qualitative approach would be most appropriate for collecting and analyzing data and for presenting results to aid in the understanding of this phenomenon. Imposed pedagogical change often leads to an emotional response from the faculty impacted by this change. In order to elicit these emotional responses, a more detail-oriented, open-ended qualitative study is necessary. In addition, since the goal of the research is to promote an understanding of the emotional and professional reactions to imposed change, qualitative research allows for the researcher to be the means of data collection, because the human instrument is “immediately responsive and adaptive, [which seems] to be the ideal means of collecting and analyzing data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 19).

Tradition of Inquiry: Case Study

The case study method was selected because it would allow researchers to look at specific examples of faculty members who were faced with imposed pedagogical change and to compare these cases to determine significant themes that appeared across them. Case study research focuses on how actors within a case “function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus” (Stake, 1995, p. 1), while looking at both the similarities and unique traits that coexist within that case. In this study, the phenomenon of emotional reactions to imposed change is situated within the bounded context of a small college of nursing and allied health. Because imposed changes and their implementation can vary depending on the department and institution in which they take place, the researchers wanted to ensure they could compare reactions to a shared experience. The data collection procedures in case study incorporate descriptions of the contexts of the research that allow the reader of the research to ‘develop *vicarious experiences*, to give them a sense of “being there”’ (Stake, 1995, p. 63, emphasis in original), and this attention to description was well suited for the unique case.

Participants

This study used criterion-based selection to ensure that both participants had the necessary attributes needed to inform the researchers about the phenomenon. The criteria used for the participants in this sample were to be: (1) an assistant, associate, or full professors at an institution of higher learning; (2) an individual who experienced significant pedagogical changes; (3) someone who felt that these changes were imposed; and (4) a person who felt concern with these impositions. These criteria were important to the study in order to make sure that participants were comparable in terms of their experiences.

Participants were drawn through accidental sampling from a conveniently positioned population. To maintain the responsibilities of confidentiality to the participants of this study, especially in relation to the emotional and personal nature of the phenomenon studied, their names and positions, as well as institutional affiliation, will not be referenced in this research study.

In order to collect data from these participants, the researchers completed two 30-45 minute interviews with each of the participants. These interviews were semi-structured and each was recorded and transcribed verbatim. One researcher completed the first of the two interviews with both participants, and this data was used to inform areas of interest for the second researcher to explore during the second interview, which was completed within two weeks of the initial interview. Upon completion of all study interviews, the participants reviewed the transcripts to ensure that their responses were accurately recorded.

Data Analysis

After all data was collected and transcribed, the researchers began the analysis of data. The data were coded by both researchers using open coding, and all coding was completed by hand rather than with qualitative analysis software. Each transcript was reviewed independently of the others in order to keep researchers from looking for codes that existed across the cases in this initial phase. Any word or phrase that appeared 6-8 times was considered to be important.

Once coding was completed, the researchers met to compare and discuss codes to ensure inter-coder reliability. The researchers developed themes that existed across the cases, and significance was given to any theme occurring across two or more interviews. Themes were then considered for their relatedness, and overarching themes were determined. According to the data collected in this study, four themes were present: (1) Fear and Anxiety; (2) Encouragement without Support; (3) Insufficient Training; and (4) Student Resistance to New Pedagogy.

Verification Procedures & Ethical Considerations

According to Stake (1995), in our search for both accuracy and alternative explanations, we need discipline, we need protocols” (p. 107), and these protocols are called triangulation. This need for validity in the presentation of the research is also an ethical consideration to “minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding” (p. 109). To accurately depict

the interview data, member checking was used with the interview transcriptions, as described above. Triangulation of participants was also used to make sure that the data collected was an accurate representation of the phenomenon studied, so data were collected from more than one participant, and this data was used to develop the themes in the analysis process. In addition, to maintain an accurate portrayal of the phenomenon, both of the participants in the study were interviewed separately by both of the researchers. Due to the small sample size, and in order to increase reliability, the researchers used many of the same questions in the interview process. In this way, the second researcher was able to ask for any needed clarification or elaboration.

Finally, it is important to note the researchers' biases in relation to this study. Both of the researchers of this study are doctoral students of education and formal teacher training, and this study is situated in a domain where limited formal teacher training is required to receive a faculty position in higher education. This is particularly important because this study looks at pedagogical change within this institution and the participants' affiliated departments.

Research Site

The research site for this study is a college of nursing and allied healthcare professions located in an urban area in the Midwest of the United States. This college offers classroom-based instruction in nursing, clinical and classroom courses for allied health professions, and short certificate programs in other fields of health care. The institution is accredited to offer courses toward master's degrees in nursing and graduate level courses in such fields as health promotions and administration. These graduate programs were designed to be offered solely in the online environment. Administrative support for and/or recognition of the need for targeted faculty development in online teaching pedagogies was minimal. When the participating faculty was assigned by administrators to teach online courses, the faculty thought erroneous assumptions were being made regarding the ease with which effective pedagogical practice could be transferred from the physical classroom to the online classroom. As with most postsecondary institutions, this college is attempting to ed-

ucate the increasing technologically advanced students who are the consumers of education today. According to the college website, less than one quarter of the students educated at this institution is traditional college students. Therefore, the predominance of non-traditional students requires that the institution be aware of and stay current with the needs of these students. To address the needs of the diverse student population across institutions of higher education, it is necessary that these institutions employ alternative teaching and learning methods or pedagogies, alternative tools and means of delivery, and that the offerings are provided using multiple platforms in ways that ensure availability and access to all students.

It is clear from our investigation and interviews that administration and faculty at the study site recognize the significance of, and the necessity for, incorporating changes in pedagogy. Multiple changes to practice have been incorporated at this institution. Examples of this include increased numbers of online course offerings (with all five graduate programs entirely online), undergraduate online courses, and classroom changes that include a significant amount of collaborative learning strategies, team teaching, and other alternatives. It appears the college administration and faculty have used evidence-based research and developed a culture of continuous pedagogical change to engage both faculty and students.

Results

Anne has been teaching at the institution for almost six years. Although most of her teaching experience previously related to clinical interaction and instruction, she had some classroom teaching experience as an adjunct instructor and guest lecturer at a large university in the Southwestern United States. Previous experience with more progressive teaching and learning techniques was gained when she served as a facilitator for problem-based learning courses. As a result, she was excited to learn of the administrative support for faculty growth and development when she first began teaching at the institution. This was illustrated by her statement, "It felt exciting to me to come to a place where there was this openness to new ideas in teaching and not just acceptance but pur-

suance of excellence in teaching in that sense.” Anne’s responsibilities at the institution include teaching an undergraduate combined laboratory and lecture course. Most of the efforts put forth by Anne, that could be considered alternative pedagogies, have related to her classroom interactions with students and teaching.

Janet was trained as a nurse and has been involved in health care education for four decades. While she has been teaching at this particular institution for many more years than Anne, Janet seems to have experienced a similar feeling of excitement and the same encouragement for change: “I believe we’ve been encouraged to try things. No one’s ever said you have to do it, or you must do it, there’s never been any mandate but we have been encouraged to try things.” This would indicate that faculty not only had the autonomy to implement change but that the institution would be encouraging and supportive of it.

Janet began to teach at this institution twenty years ago and has seen many of the changes occur in the program offerings. However, it seems she has had previous experiences with teaching at the college that have led to some apprehension about using some platforms and in some formats: “We’ve been through a lot of changes over the last couple of years with moving from classroom to online education. [...] It was a very bad experience and since then I’ve really not wanted to try online teaching again.” So even though Janet felt supported with respect to ‘trying things’, when changes were implemented institutionally by administration, the support seemed to be absent.

Our interviews with the participants revealed that many factors contribute to faculty reluctance to adopt imposed pedagogical change. These factors included faculty fear and anxiety about embracing change, insufficient administrative support for required changes, unavailable support for these changes, administrative requirements for online teaching and learning, and student resistance to pedagogical change. The overall consensus from participants in this study was a hesitance to embrace change because of prior negative experiences.

Fear and Anxiety

At this institution of higher education, there has been a shift in the dynamics of faculty that has led to an increased fear and anxiety regard-

ing the expectations for change by administration and the support of faculty work. When Anne began teaching here, she felt “it was an exciting place to be, where change was embraced, and people were excited to be moving forward.” Over the past year however, “the spirit has been dampened.” She felt that there was a change in the direction the institution was taking and that she did not receive “the full explanation for why it occurred.” Unfortunately, this has caused her to question the institution’s direction and where its motivation lies. While she still feels like she is able to change and grow, she isn’t sure if there is adequate support for the changes she would like to make or for those that she has already put into place.

Anne was recently approached about a change in her teaching techniques. While the college has advocated and supported a pedagogical shift to team-based learning, she was asked to remove this strategy from her courses. When asked to change, Anne “wasn’t really given any specific guidance on how.” Being told that she needed to stop using the method she was using, Anne feels less comfortable making these, or other, changes in her classroom and has expressed her concern to her program director. However, because she feels the need to do what is asked, Anne has not expressed concern with anyone in a higher position. She feels that the methods she was incorporating into her classroom instruction were effective, but they were not as appreciated by students. Anne also discussed that she felt there were many colleagues who were willing to embrace change, which would require educators “to really explore what might work and how it might work.” However, with Anne’s example of her administration’s reaction to incorporation of new pedagogical strategies, it can be seen how the necessary time, space, and support for experimenting with new techniques may be more idealistic than realistic.

For Janet, feeling comfortable was an important component of embracing and enacting change. While working on her graduate studies at a Midwestern university, she had her first classroom teaching experience. Because of her discipline, she felt that she learned a more “classical” mode of teaching, “Where the professor is the god or end all and be all of everything.” She calls her teaching style old-fashioned, stating that she really likes “the old ways of doing things,” such as lecture-based instruction. While she understood that “the teacher certainly doesn’t have all the answers,” she still felt that this was an effective technique for teach-

ing, especially when used along with large and small group discussion.

Both Anne and Janet have anxiety related to enacting changes in their classrooms and teaching. Their fears have evolved out of negative previous experiences with administration's reactions to the enactment of imposed change. For Anne, the experiences that have hindered her interest in change arose from her administration's limitations of her implementation of a suggested teaching technique. Janet, however, felt discomfort and anxiety toward adopting imposed changes because of previous experiences with insufficient support for the incorporation of these changes.

Encouragement without Support

The participant faculty members were willing to adopt the changes being introduced at the college and anticipated that support and encouragement would be provided. However, this was not always the case. Janet has been teaching at the institution for a number of years and her experiences with administrative support are generally good, although limited. When asked to teach courses online, she felt very much on her own, however. Technical support was not in place and neither was the pedagogical training that faculty needed. During this period in early online education at the college, administrators and faculty both believed that teaching online required taking lecture notes in some form and putting them online where the students could access. Some discussion boards were introduced and maintained, writing and other assignments were placed in a Dropbox for review and grading and the students were distant from the instructor.

Janet believed overall that "it was a very bad experience and since then I've really not wanted to try online teaching again." She also felt that true teacher-student and student-student interactions were outside of the scope of the online courses in which she was involved. She thought her colleagues' experiences were the same as hers. "In the online situation, the entire program was an online program and so there really wasn't a lot of discussion," the implicit meaning being that faculty had no say in whether they would teach the courses, let alone in what pedagogical direction the courses were to be taken. Faculty were told "this is the online

program you'll be teaching and we'll [the administration] give you the support. Unfortunately, the support piece never happened." She thought some of her colleagues were more technologically capable, and she felt "a little more challenged and their [other faculty] experiences weren't necessarily negative, but as a whole we really were not given a lot of support."

Janet was happy with the opportunities provided for development in, and exposure to, pedagogical alternatives. At "the beginning of every semester we have an opportunity for continuing education for faculty and we actually had one of the professors that wrote the textbook come and do an all-day seminar for us." She continued to describe this seminar, explaining that:

"We [the teachers] got the opportunity to work in groups and actually utilize it [...] Then several other faculty got together after the fact that are very interested in team-based learning to actually try those things in their class and they were able to go for continuing education not in the college but outside of the college where they actually travel to some of the conferences on [Team-based Learning]. They're available to assist faculty who feel more comfortable with it, they're available to help faculty that aren't as comfortable, if they're interested."

Development opportunities for interested faculty are available and utilized. The long term expectation of faculty is that encouragement and support for change would be sustained.

The breadth of opportunities provided for development, Janet felt, did not correlate with the breadth of support once the opportunity is taken: "... really for the most part, people aren't too resistant to trying things. I think what they are most fearful of is that if I do, am I going to get the support that I need or am I going to be left out there to fend for myself?" Janet believed that this was where faculty resistance came in when faculty began to question the administrative support: "Am I going to have ample time to learn it? Am I going to have plenty of opportunity to have someone help me if I need help?" She felt that "[faculty] are fearful of the trial and error just because I think the biggest issue is not that they don't want to try [new pedagogies] but the support piece."

Initially, Anne felt encouraged that there seemed to be ample support for investigating and introducing new teaching and learning strategies into courses at the institution. She was very excited because “when I first got here I felt like, and maybe it was just the honeymoon period, but I felt like it was an exciting place to be where change was embraced and people were excited to be moving forward. I felt like people shared a vision of what the college was about.” However, recently she was asked to change and return to the more traditional teaching methods and to discontinue her use of team-based learning: “I wasn’t given any specific guidance on how, how to change it. I was told that the students weren’t happy and I need to stop using the method that I was using.” To receive the continued support of administration, Anne would have had to first gain support for change from the students:

“I’ve discussed concerns with my program director and I feel that she has the students’ best interests at heart and is trying to do her best to make sure they are learning what they need to know. Unfortunately, I feel like I need to learn how to build a better relationship with the students and get them more interested in supporting a different type of pedagogy and that may take a while.”

Anne recognizes the need to engage students but is disappointed that her ability to facilitate learning does not seem to be understood or supported by administration.

Insufficient Training

When new changes were suggested and required by the administration and support was offered, these resources did not always meet faculty needs. In particular, their institution offered training courses called faculty interest groups which are intended to provide faculty driven development opportunities. However, faculty were only allowed to participate in one at a time, which was particularly unsatisfactory to Anne, who stated that “one thing that concerns me, that I don’t really understand, is why they’ve limited the number of groups that you could join.” This was chal-

lenging for Anne because prior to her membership in a faculty interest group, she was working on her doctoral degree, where she took as many as two doctoral courses in addition to her teaching and supervisory duties, which were more time-consuming and required more effort than the interest groups. She continued that there is not a huge workload required for these groups, and that she didn't even "want to hazard a guess as to why they've limited that." Anne elaborated on the content of these faculty interest groups and expressed concern about the design of the course. Due to their name, Anne believed that "the ideas had come from faculty," but she is no longer sure if this is true. When she first arrived at the institution, she felt change was fairly faculty driven, but she continued to say that she has "lost some of that sense that they [the] faculty are really driving changes."

Janet also expressed concerns about the training and support provided by the institution, stating that she wants "to learn how to do [new] things, but I'm skeptical on making sure that we have the support we need to make sure that it works." While she has seen some support available to faculty who are making pedagogical changes, she "would like to see the administration really embrace [change] if we are going to do it, and then provide everything that's needed from the bottom all the way to the top to make sure that we're really going to do it."

Janet was very concerned with continuity of support for all involved in the reform process. She expressed feeling that both faculty and students would be angry because without support, outcomes will not be what they are desired to be. She discussed that having support would make her feel more comfortable, and that without this level of comfort being addressed through resources and support, "I'd just as soon not do it."

Anne and Janet were both active in their faculty professional development programs, which existed in the forms of large group faculty senate meetings and small group faculty seminars. However, Anne in particular has found that the faculty seminars are often poorly designed and do not take into consideration teacher input and needs. Janet felt that the pedagogical practices, which were introduced in the larger faculty seminars, did not receive long-term, continuous administrative support among those involved in the education process.

Participants felt there was insufficient training for online education. They expressed that online learning has become more important at their

institution. Anne believed that administration provided information sessions for online learning only “because they are developing the programs.” She understood the push for online teaching and learning, especially in terms of “competitiveness in a broader area, rather than just locally,” and accepts that it is a way for the institution to “bring in more students and increase their revenue.” However, she did express concerns that many of the courses in her program may not be a strong fit for this type of instruction because “the model we are using for teaching [our] students, online learning isn’t really useful because we need them to be here to show us the hands-on skills.”

While Anne was somewhat open to teaching online, Janet had significant concerns. When Janet began teaching at the institution, she taught an online course. She expressed that she had no idea what she was doing, and she did receive initial support, as “there was someone that helped to put the content on.” However, she was left alone to conduct the course, and stated, “I didn’t know how to manage the course.” Thus, this first course was “a really terrible experience,” especially because of issues of support. She felt that the teachers offering this first group of online courses “did not really have the support to provide the class[es].” This experience was equally unpleasant for her students. Because Janet “was lost all the time,” her students were frustrated with her inexperience as evidenced through course evaluations. Thus, she has “really not wanted to try online teaching again.” However, she hoped to enroll in an optional course on teaching online that would offer her some comfort as she faced the online teaching requirement at her institution.

Anne and Janet both understood the value that online education could offer to the students at their institution. While Anne was more willing to explore the online education requirement, Janet was hesitant. Both participants, however, felt that there were limitations to online course offerings and that these issues were not being considered by administration as they require implementation of courses on a digital platform.

Student Resistance to New Pedagogy

Both participants in this study discussed that student perception and reaction to pedagogical change was a concern. In particular, they refer-

enced the importance of teacher evaluations. Anne was a strong proponent for team-based learning and used it in many of her courses as a primary teaching technique. According to Anne, she was asked to “decrease the amount of team-based learning [she] was using in the classroom” by her program department head as a result of student evaluations. However, she was not surprised, as she stated “I knew that the students didn’t like it.” Unfortunately, Anne did not receive departmental support on how to rectify this situation. She believed that this teaching technique is effective, so she would have preferred being approached “to help figure out how to make it more student friendly, helping the students to understand better why I feel it is important to use.” While she felt that she had previously had administrative support by stating, “I was able to do whatever it was that I wanted to do to teach in the classroom,” she found out “that’s not always the case.”

When she initially learned that students did not find value in this approach, she looked for a way to elicit student feedback earlier in the semester. Using another professor’s tool for student evaluation of teaching midway through the semester, she was “hoping to get some comments that would lead [her] to make some changes before they filled out the [final teacher evaluation] form.” However, she found that students were not willing to make many comments, but “there weren’t any that were particularly negative.” Therefore, she did not have any reason to modify her teaching until after the final evaluations, which led to the mandate that she discontinue the use of team-based learning.

In contrast, Janet, who has adopted only some components of team-based learning in her classroom, has found student acceptance of some aspects of team-based learning. She incorporated readiness assurance tests (RATs), which involved groups of students completing assessments together. She used these to test students on readings completed outside of class, where “[students] still get points even if they didn’t get the first answer right. They lose a little bit every time they have to make another attempt.” She felt that this aspect of team-based learning has “worked really well with the students” and that “they really like that.”

There were many more traditional techniques that Janet kept in her classroom, such as lecturing and providing her students with notes and outlines from her lectures. She stated that it was important to keep these aspects because “our students here [at this institution] are very science-

based” and they came into the institution’s programs “because they are science-based programs.” In her experience, Janet felt that “students get really ticked off sometimes when we have them doing things that aren’t lecture-based.” Her students were “resistant to trying other [techniques]” and were “almost more resistant to trying things than the faculty are.” They often had negative reactions to collaborative learning because “they don’t see that as teaching.” Students believed teaching requires lecture and have expressed to Janet that this is how they learn best.

With the importance placed on faculty evaluations, and the previously discussed impact of student dissatisfaction, it was apparent that administration clearly considered student perceptions when reviewing pedagogical changes. These student opinions, as well as faculty fear and anxiety about adopting change, administration’s encouragement of change with limited or insufficient support, and institutional requirements for online teaching and learning, have implications for both faculty and administration.

Discussion

The findings from this study will be presented first in terms of their relationships with the distinct themes determined from the study and then in an overall format, which presents the larger picture of how these themes relate to one another. However, it is important to note that there is a general theme to our findings. It is clear that regardless of what kind of change is being required, the participants feel they need to be adequately supported by their administration. They want to feel comfortable with enacting the required changes, and an important component of this is the assurance of continued support both for themselves and for their students.

In examining faculty fear and anxiety for embracing change, we determined that the participants seemed excited about pedagogical changes and were passionate about their desires to help students learn. Therefore, they want to enable changes that allow for improved student learning. They recognize, as Fink (2003) noted, that traditional pedagogical methods, like lecturing, are less effective than progressive, student-centered pedagogy. However, for faculty like Anne, who work to imple-

ment these collaborative learning strategies in their classrooms, there is often limited administrative support when students do not support these techniques.

Negative prior experiences with administration's reactions to teacher-initiated change have led to faculty members' fear of change. They are unsure which changes are most appropriate for their classrooms and which changes administration will support in the long-term. Their experience has shown that when they do introduce change, support may not be available to the necessary extent. As faculty and administration introduce new ideas and pedagogical strategies through faculty development opportunities, they would receive significant initial training, as both Anne and Janet described about the large group faculty senate forum. They may also receive some funding for conferences so they might gain additional insight into these techniques, but long-term support is unavailable.

Fink (2003) proposed that teachers become experts of their domain and of pedagogy, so it is necessary they have resources and support in this process of professional development. Felder and Brent (1996) also discussed the steep learning curve related to implementing progressive pedagogical approaches, such as student-centered learning. This demonstrates the importance of space and time for teacher development of these strategies. However, at this institution, administration has not advocated for educators who are implementing these changes, particularly when Anne was asked to discontinue the use of team-based learning in her classroom.

The level of administrative support for innovative teaching is evident in the limited continued professional development opportunities offered by the institution. While there are multiple forums for addressing change in teaching and learning, faculty often feel that these are not designed with teacher need in mind. For example, Anne felt her administration-led faculty assessment-training course was not structured to encompass teacher needs. She had joined this group with a clear educational goal in mind: to find formative assessment tools that allow for accurate mid-semester student feedback on her pedagogical practices. It appears that the course developers of these faculty training seminars have created courses addressing what they perceive faculty want, not what faculty are actually seeking.

In this study, the interview data revealed an unexpected focus on the importance in considering the necessity of online education. As participants are required to offer more of their courses online, what is required of them throughout the process of adaptation is not being considered by the administration. Typically, administration feels that offering courses through the digital platform will be more convenient for educators, but administrators do not take into consideration the challenge in creating a properly designed, quality course. Rather, administration is of the assumption that online classes will be easier for teachers and students alike, which has not been the case for Janet and her students in her online courses. While there was technological support for transferring course content into the digital format, she did not receive pedagogical support that would assist her in offering an engaging course. The time she spent attempting to adjust to the new means of course presentation caused significant frustration for both her and her students.

The participants considered two forms of student reactions and resistance as important, those expressed in the face-to-face classroom and those on students' teacher evaluations. Institutions of higher education, particularly private colleges, have a need to maintain student satisfaction for new student recruitment and retention. The educational environment has evolved and adjusted to the consumerist society in which we live, and this requires "treating students themselves not as autonomous learners but as free consumers and not yet committed brand-shoppers" (Barber, 2007).

The participating faculty members in this study felt pressure from their students to balance student interests with their own professional understanding of teaching, evidenced by Janet's depiction of combining traditional teaching techniques with team-based learning. She has had to implement only aspects of this progressive pedagogical method because her students have verbally addressed their concerns about taking an active role in their education. They do not see the value in collaborative learning, so Janet has adjusted to incorporate their interests into her course design.

While both participants expressed concern about the end of semester teacher evaluations, these were of significant importance to Anne, whose evaluations directly impacted her teaching. After reviewing the students' negative opinions, Anne was asked by her administrator to change what

she was doing. It was particularly disconcerting that she was not asked to adapt her approach or offered assistance in how to make it more relevant to her students. Her students' input had such an immense impact that her own professional competency was challenged by her administration. The participants' experiences demonstrate the power that students have as consumers of higher education.

It is evident that the greatest concern for faculty who are adopting imposed pedagogical changes is that there is a need for continuous support from administration for these changes. Faculty are willing to embrace change when they are well-informed about what is expected from them and when they have the resources to address all necessary aspects of the change. Whether online or face-to-face, faculty members are concerned about student receptiveness to change, sufficient training in the pedagogical approaches, and long-term support.

Recommendations

As evidenced by the findings of this study, we have determined that faculty have a strong need for administrative support throughout the process of developing, adopting and enacting changes to their teaching. It is hoped the recommendations that follow will be relevant to administrators, teaching professionals, and educational researchers or others investigating impediments to pedagogical change in postsecondary education.

For administrators the results from this study should help elucidate the need for initial and continuing support for faculty who are adopting pedagogical changes. This support should be provided regardless of whether the pedagogical changes are administration- or faculty-driven. Administrators should keep in mind when they require change, whether it be in response to economics, student course and teacher evaluations, or administrative evaluations of teaching, that the teachers, while they may seem reluctant, are generally willing to embrace changes if they can see and understand how these will benefit their students. However, the researchers recommend that faculty insight and input be sought early in the process. Faculty must also be assured they will have access to any necessary training and support, thus enabling the time and space to experiment with and implement these new changes more comfortably.

One of the themes that emerged from our study included student apprehension, reluctance and resistance to any change in pedagogy. It is equally important to faculty that they be confident of administrative support when changes are made in the classroom so that student sentiment does not impede progress. Administrators should not only provide faculty the means to educate students about the pedagogical changes but we recommend administrators be actively involved in student education, which will help students gain an understanding of the potential benefits of pedagogical change. When students voice concerns, administrators must advocate for the instructors. This advocacy, alongside continued training and support, will empower faculty, reduce their anxiety and reluctance, and provide an atmosphere in which faculty will be more willing to develop and introduce alternative pedagogical strategies.

For teachers who are implementing imposed changes, it is important they have the means to discuss concerns and difficulties that arise. It is necessary that faculty feel able to openly discuss problems and concerns with administration as issues arise. Teachers must be proactive in these discussions and must recognize the importance of having their voices heard by those people who may be in the position to offer support, assistance, and advice.

Faculty should also work collaboratively with one another when adopting and implementing change. By so doing they can open up collegial discussions of problems and concerns. These discussions may result in collective problem solving opportunities that will reduce apprehension and anxiety surrounding incorporation of change. The formation of faculty learning communities can be an important mechanism for discussing and coping with these issues. In addition, faculty should seek and share alternative pedagogical opportunities with which they are comfortable and that will be valuable in their teaching.

While this research was designed to investigate teacher perceptions of adopting imposed pedagogical change, it also provides the opportunity to consider required pedagogical change from the administration's perspective. Pedagogical changes and faculty openness to these changes may also be influenced by impediments or factors outside of faculty control. While student numbers, retention, budgetary concerns, space, additional resources such as equipment and technology, are all common considerations for administration when looking at providing support for fac-

ulty members, these are not variables that fall within the scope of the present study.

By examining these various factors and considering the administrative perspective, further investigation may provide significant insight into the issues that affect faculty. Researchers may learn much by studying the awareness that administrators may or may not have concerning faculty perceptions of pedagogical change, imposed or otherwise. They could also look at how faculty expressions of concern are perceived by the administration, and in turn, how administrators respond to these concerns. Administrators could be asked to describe the mechanisms that are in place to receive faculty concerns and complaints and provide examples of the provisions available for addressing these issues. Researchers could also look at a more quantitative approach of how effective these tools are at offering accurate feedback to the administration.

It may be discovered that at some postsecondary institutions, faculty are not provided any means of voicing concerns about, or displeasure with, imposed pedagogical changes. It would be beneficial in these instances to examine the intentionality of administration in avoiding or suppressing faculty concerns. Some postsecondary institutions do not consider faculty representation important in terms of developing and adopting innovative approaches to teaching. Information of significant interest may be gleaned by studying administrative perspectives about this intentional exclusion of faculty from the decision making process. In the continually evolving and dynamic post-secondary educational environment, it is more important that administration and faculty work in tandem to provide the learning environments necessary for the evolving and dynamic student population.

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Finding the Connections Between Art and Teaching: A Case Study

Tareq Daher and Stephanie A. Baer

Abstract

Finding the connection between art and teaching can be a difficult task for pre-service teachers who do not have a background in the arts. This qualitative case study explores the journey of a group of pre-service elementary teachers in an art methods course considering what it means to teach and to be an artist. The way in which these students defined the arts and teaching changed over the course of the semester and found connective threads, productively tying together the work of teaching and the creative process. Findings from pre-service teacher course work indicated three important themes: connections between art and teaching, finding connections to self, and becoming a teacher. Data revealed implications for pre-service teachers making productive connections, beginning to see themselves as capable, creative teachers, able to encourage the creativity of their future students. Practicing teachers and teacher educators are also implicated as art and teaching find authentic connections throughout an art methods course.

Keywords: *art education, art methods, elementary teachers, pre-service teachers, online journals*

Introduction

It is fairly obvious that the work of an artist requires at its very foundation, a great amount of creativity. It is perhaps not quite as obvious that good teaching also requires vast amounts of creativity. Even less obvious is the connective tissue that holds together the concepts of art and

teaching. Operating on the assumption that art and teaching are inherently linked (Simpson, Jackson, and Aycock, 2005), these researchers set out to examine the perspectives of pre-service elementary teachers on the subject. While the definitions of creativity, art, and teaching could be debated, the focus of this paper will be to uncover how pre-service teacher perceptions about these ideas changed over the course of a semester in an art methods course.

The context for this case study was a one semester art methods course, *Arts in the Elementary Curriculum*, for pre-service elementary teachers at a Midwestern university. The instructor [secondary investigator] who had been teaching this methods course for several years found that students consistently had difficulty considering themselves as artists, or capable of creativity. Even more, they tended to see art as a thing; a product; an extracurricular activity if there was time after the normal school day. While many students gave lip service to appreciating the arts, their understanding of the arts as a medium for critical thinking and complex experience was not evidenced in what they produced early in the course (e.g. reflective journals, art-making, discussions, etc.). More often than not, students would categorize the arts as a break for elementary students from the rigors of the core curriculum; a soft science; an emotional endeavor. These pre-service elementary teachers are not alone in this assumption. Eisner (2008) asserts that “The arts traditionally have been regarded as ornamental or emotional in character. Their connection to epistemological issues, at least in the modern day, has not been a strong one” (p. 3). He goes on to posit why this may be, which will be examined later.

In any case, it is the change in how pre-service elementary teachers view these ideas that is up for discussion today. For as we teach and encourage a new generation of teachers, these researchers argue that how pre-service teachers think about connecting creativity to their daily practice is of great import and has hefty implications for their future students. This paper focuses on the growth/transformation evidenced when students were asked to consider their definitions of the concepts of art and teaching. Researchers found striking differences in how students defined each of these ideas at the beginning of the semester as disconnected; then in their final paper students were reforming their understandings of how art, teaching, and themselves, were interconnected. The journey, or *how*

they arrived at these new connections, is the work of the creative, reflective practitioner engaging in purposeful explorations in the arts.

Research Problem

The problem researchers encountered was a lack of clarity for how pre-service elementary teachers were defining the arts and teaching throughout *Arts in the Elementary Curriculum*, an art methods course for pre-service elementary teachers. The instructor suspected that students' ideas about the arts and teaching were changing through the work of the course and wanted to collect this evidence more formally. For this case study, researchers sought to elucidate the connections that students were making (or not making) between the arts and teaching based on their course work (e.g. written reflection, papers, journals, discussion, etc.).

Literature Review

Pre-service Teachers' Definitions of Art and Teaching

Pre-service teachers' understanding and perceptions towards the arts have been researched in a multitude of ways. What is most prevalent concerns pre-service elementary teachers' readiness to teach through the arts and how that readiness is (or is not) fostered in a teacher education program (Donahue & Stuart, 2008; Grauer, 1998; Kowalchuk, 2000). There are also quite a few studies out there championing the visual arts as a way into reflective practice both within art and in other disciplines as well as a way to decipher meaning from teaching experiences (Cuero & Crim, 2008; Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2003). There are still more studies that examine the reflective practice of pre-service teachers and how that can improve their developing craft (Dianovsky & Wink, 2012; Garmon, 2004; Pedro, 2005; Mortari, 2012; Schon, 1987).

While some researchers speak to the reflective practices of pre-service teachers, others examine how pre-service teachers' beliefs affect their teaching. For example, Grauer (1998) found that pre-service teach-

ers' sense of competence to teach a subject was transformed by their beliefs and knowledge about that subject. While that may seem a natural connection, it is important to note that what the students believed about themselves as competent within art education affected their beliefs about art education. Teacher educators wanting to help develop art advocates should take heed. Garmon (2004) along with others put forward purposeful reflection and self-awareness as factors in changing perceptions and developing identities of pre-service teachers. These changes occurred with guided practice in course settings, not unlike the context we present.

Additional factors focused on in-class activities are presented in the literature. Cuero and Crim (2008) discuss the importance of aesthetic response to enhance literacy in the classroom. Danko-McGhee and Slutsky (2003) collaborated in a study bringing together the arts and their interest in Reggio Emilia, a discovery based approach to early childhood education, as a forum for finding new ways to connect early childhood education and the visual knowledge. They found that requiring their methods student to present new knowledge visually was challenging and productive. Donahue and Stuart (2008) found it important to present pre-service students with opportunities to create and play with art curriculum in order to avoid narrow definitions of learning that they might encounter outside the classroom. They had to become advocates for their own practice.

What is less evident in the research is exactly how pre-service elementary teachers define teaching and the arts, and if those definitions can change during the course of an art methods course. Duncum (1999) suggested that teaching art as basic content isn't enough; art must be taught as a way to make meaning in visual form. This type of philosophy is grounded in a broader definition of art that invites the process and practice of creativity as well as product-oriented ideas. What is of interest to this study is how that philosophy leads to potential changes in how pre-service teachers define art and teaching as well as what connections are made (or not made) between those concepts.

The Connections between Arts and Teaching

Published connections between arts and teaching are growing in the academic field. While much is still to be done in evidencing the multitude

of complex connections between the arts and teaching, many authors and researchers are finding important connections for prospective teachers in considering what the arts have to offer. Simpson, Jackson, and Aycock (2005) describe the connection between art and teaching quite simply: “teaching is a complex undertaking that demands the best artists... “what it takes” can be learned: people do” (p. 4-5). The same authors explore the notion of teacher as artist through the works of John Dewey and the sensibilities that connect identities of teacher and artist. These sensibilities include things like attending to process while in the midst of process, working with knowledge gained from experience and using it professionally, creatively considering perspectives outside of oneself simultaneous to one’s own. These vital connections spell out an integrated process that weaves together teaching with passion and creatively considers how learning works for one’s self and one’s students. This connection to self as artist and teacher is completely relevant as we consider the developing identities of pre-service teachers and how they learn to reflect on their own experiences (Baer, 2013).

Gradle (2007) weaves together ideas of teaching art and creating proof of growth and process, encouraging reflective dispositions in pre-service teachers. She describes connections between students performing their thoughts and long-lasting understanding of reflective teaching and continual practice at being in process. Grumet (1993) talks about “pulling knowledge into new relations” and the necessity of the other in that process. This is not unlike how an artist pulls ideas and inspiration from multiple sources, playing with it until it makes sense in a personal way. It is the reflection not only on our own actions and experience, but that of others’; our students; our peers; the collective human experience. Identity is a continual, creative construction that cannot be done in isolation.

Hansen (2005) describes openness to the potential in educative experiences, asking both teacher and student to look, listen, and feel for the possible. “Rather than a dazzling spectacle or show, creativity in teaching can be understood as a quiet, steady habit of generating and realizing meaning” (Hansen, 2005, p. 67). Hansen describes the creative teacher who knows teaching and learning to be processes only understood through time and creative sensibilities to the nuance of a situation. Eisner (2002) echoes this call for closeness to experience in his arguments for a return of the arts to classrooms in all disciplinary areas (see also

Dewey, 1934). It is an empathic sense of life and desire to participate with others in that visceral experience that can drive together the qualities of good teaching and creative work in the arts. It is also this connection that is the goal of *Arts in the Elementary Curriculum*, seeking to enable pre-service elementary teachers to engage in that connection and seek it out for themselves.

Research Questions

The central question of this study was: Do pre-service elementary teachers' definitions of art and teaching change while taking an art methods course? How might they change? To further understand the process, researchers asked: What, if any, connections are pre-service elementary teachers making between the arts and teaching? How do pre-service teachers connect or distance themselves from the concept of artist/teacher?

Methodology

The purpose of this research was to explore how pre-service elementary teachers' definitions of art and teaching changed while taking an art methods course. This research followed a qualitative case study research design. The phenomenon in this study was the change in pre-service teachers' definition of arts and teaching in the context of an art methods course. The boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident; therefore, a case study design is appropriate to this study (Yin, 2003). The case in this study is the process that pre-service teachers used to connect the definitions of art and teaching. The unit of analysis was bounded in the context of an art methods course in the fall 2010 semester at a Midwestern university. The research questions and purpose of the study required an explanatory case study design, as recommended by Yin (2003), to explain the intervention of the art methods course activities.

Sampling

After the course was completed and the grades were turned in, the pre-service teachers in the art methods course were given the option to allow their journal entries, discussions, comments and in-class activities to be used in this research. The sample in this IRB approved study were twenty-three pre-service teachers that participated in an art methods course and signed an informed consent form for their data to be used.

Data Gathering

Data was gathered in two parts: First, in the first class session of the semester, the students were asked to complete the sentences "Art is..." and "Teaching is"... in their own words on their private online journals. Private online journals were embedded in the learning management system (LMS) Blackboard to ensure student privacy and access. The purpose of this activity was to allow students to provide their perspectives on arts and teaching before engaging in class activities that might influence their definitions. Students were not given a time limit to complete this assignment or a word/page limit. Their responses reflected their opinions and previous experiences. Second, succeeding a semester of readings, discussions, journal entries, and in-class activities, students were asked to complete a final assignment that explored the communicative qualities of the arts and their relationship to teaching and learning. This data came in the form of a three-page statement on their understanding of the concepts of art and teaching along with their current definitions for each term.

Data Analysis

Analysis was conducted by mining data from documents (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 1998). The term "documents" is used in qualitative research and in this paper as an umbrella term "to refer to a wide range of written, visual and physical material relevant to the study at hand" (Merriam, 1998). Data was obtained from the students' journal entries and final assignment. The open-coding analysis strategy was used as proposed by Creswell (2008) followed by the pattern matching and

explanation building analytic techniques recommended by Yin (2003). Each researcher carefully reviewed the data in each line of text and separately identified ideas, patterns, and commonalities in the text. Then, each of the researchers coded the entries and themes emerged. Data were sorted and coded a second time to group the themes from the first open-coding. Both researchers met and discussed the emerged themes and identified the strongest ones among them.

Results and Discussion

As researchers looked across the data, three main themes were identified as students' definitions of art and teaching changed from the beginning of the course to the end. They were: Finding connections between art and teaching, finding connections to self, and becoming a teacher. What follows are more specific descriptions of each of these themes, accompanied by student data.

Finding Connections between Art and Teaching

The first theme that was identified by researchers as students sought to define the arts and teaching, was: finding connections between art and teaching. In the initial definitions of art and teaching that students provided there was little crossover as they considered the two terms. When asked to define art, students tended to focus their comments in three areas: discipline labeling (painting, drawing, dancing, etc.), self-expression, and creativity. When asked to define teaching, students spoke about the act of teaching, the teaching environment, and a teacher's characteristics/role. Here are some representative examples of what students wrote:[1]

- “Art is something that is pleasing to a person’s senses.”
- “[Art] is a way to be creative and get out your feelings.”
- “[Art is] the expression of language, music, pictures, and dance.”
- “Teaching is a way to pass on knowledge, experiences, encouragement, thoughts, information, ideas.”
- “Teaching can be used formally, such as in a classroom or recrea-

tional setting, or informally, such as in a social setting.”

At the close of the semester, students wrote about the art and teaching as much more interconnected than they had previously. In fact, as researchers analyzed students’ writing, it became more difficult to discern which concept students were defining as they began to draw overt connections between teaching and the arts.

- “With art helping us create ourselves as a person, it is important to think of art and teaching as one.”
- “Both teaching and art use creativity to teach someone else something.”
- “I have started to create a web of ideas for how to create a learning environment that awakens joy in creative expression and knowledge.”

In the first example art is described as determinate of our identity, and then group with teaching “as one”. This link suggests a change from the more disparate, original definitions. In the second example, art has now become a teacher or a tool for teaching. The definition has expanded from a simple aesthetic product to something that functions creatively to interact with another person; to teach. The teaching definition has expanded as well to include creativity. In the third example, the student refers to expression *and* knowledge, drawing together what Eisner (2008) describes as ways of knowing. The terms appear together here, suggesting an understanding of the connectedness between both creative expression and the concept of knowledge.

Finding Connections to Self

The second theme that developed was students finding connection to self. As suggested above, students were beginning to find a connection between art and identity. In the initial definitions, students spoke about both art and teaching as if it existed outside of them; more so with art than teaching, as students had, overall, had more experience considering themselves as teachers rather than artists. They would write things like:

- “Art is something a person creates...”
- “[Art is] a free expression of someone’s feelings...”
- “[Art] can serve as an outlet to people...”
- “[Teaching is] an interaction between 2 or more persons...”
- “Teachers teach because they care...”

They were using their own words (rather than quoting philosophers or artists), but still described the concepts at a distance. In their final definitions, students embodied the concepts more readily. Whereas before, a student might have discussed what a teacher did or should do, they now spoke about what they, themselves, wanted to do in their future classrooms. Many spoke about the artistic process personally rather than listing off different types of media or materials that they thought artists used. They described specific experiences in the arts and teaching that exemplified their definitions. They also individually and collectively identified themselves as developing artists and teachers.

- “I need to appreciate what I can create rather than what I cannot.”
- “We should follow our strengths.”
- “I have developed my creativity.”
- “I need to be both a teacher and artist.”

Even the simple switch from saying “they” or “someone” to saying “I” or “we” identified a shift in thinking. Students were considering themselves as interconnected in this process of considering art and teaching as relevant.

Becoming a Teacher

The final theme that brought synthesis to many students’ definitions of art and teaching was in how researchers saw students describe becoming a teacher. This theme grew out of a developing understanding the students displayed concerning both art and teaching. In experiencing and writing about the arts and teaching, students began to merge their ideas and discuss the experience of becoming a teacher through creativity and a more articulate understanding of process. They were not only describ-

ing characteristics of what they believed a teacher to be, but envisioned their future space and role in the classroom through a developing identification of being an artist as well as a teacher. Here are some representative examples of comments from students:

- “Students should be able to create what they want...they should have a safe environment to do this without people judging others ideas and respecting everyone’s creations. This kind of environment can only exist in a classroom with the help of a great teacher.”
- “I know that I can always learn from my students, and they can learn from me as well. I have a new and different perspective...Now I know that no matter what subject I may teach in the future, that I will let the “creative juices flow” and give my students the experience and practice they deserve in the classroom every day.”
- “My personal transformation is still occurring to this day and will continue until who knows when. My artistic abilities are not the best but my personal outlook is changing...I am learning to enjoy art and not focus on the overall outcome of the product. It is the process that should count most because that is where the transformation occurs. I will continue to work on my abilities and incorporate art into my current and future teachings.”

These comments are reflective of a developing understanding of how art and teaching are interrelated. Students describe a close connection with themselves as teachers and what they envision for their future practice. This consideration, we believe, comes from a growing relationship with self as teacher/artist fostered by engagement with the arts and teaching as connected, relevant ideas. Eisner’s (1991) description acts both an illustration of the outcome of such engagement and the goal of *Arts in the Elementary Curriculum*:

Teaching is artistic in character in many of the ways in which all art is artistic: it provides a deep sense of aesthetic experience to both perceiver and actor when it is well done (Eisner, 1982). It requires the teacher to pay attention to qualitative nuance - tone

of voice, the comportment of students, the pervasive quality of the teaching episode. It requires the teacher to attend to matters of composition in order to give the day or lesson coherence. It often requires flexibility in aims and the ability to exploit unforeseen opportunities in order to achieve aims that could not have been conceptualized beforehand. Teaching is a constructive activity whose efforts result in forms that can provide what the fine arts are intended to provide: a heightened consciousness and aesthetic experience (p. 17).

Thus the goal in investigating and evidencing the connections between the arts and teaching serve many paths. Beginning teachers can begin to build an identity that allows for creativity, self-knowledge, and confidence in the nuances of their experience. This developing identity that holistically considers the self as teacher/artist then serves to better equip future elementary students to consider themselves as creative beings, holding the potential for meaningful experiences in the classroom.

Limitations and Implications

This study included a few limitations in regards to the methodology and procedures. The study was conducted over one academic semester; a longer time period of two or more semesters could be considered in future research. Additionally, the instructor of the course was a co-researcher in this study. However, this study had two researchers which assists in minimizing bias and provides the instructor with familiarity and understanding of the participants. Furthermore, the researchers would have liked the opportunity to conduct individual interviews with the participants; however sufficient data was available from the multiple texts provided by the participants.

Further study and evidence on these topics can give further validity to considering teaching as an artful task and the arts as a teaching opportunity. The qualities and characteristics of both art and teaching deserve the time and offer insight into creating educators with a sense of creative and meaningful purpose. The results of this case study reveal students' growth and transformation of their perceptions of the arts and teaching.

Students began the course with little to no crossover in the definition of the terms “art” and “teaching” and completed the course with a more in-depth understanding of how the arts and teaching connect. They also began to more intimately identify themselves both as artists and teachers, capable of creativity in the classroom. Finally, their ideas began to synthesize for researchers as they described becoming a teacher. This movement in thinking is reflective of a course goal to encourage students to consider the interconnected of the work of art and the work of teaching. Researchers began the study with the assumption that there were connections between art and teaching and suspected that students developed awareness to those connections while taking an art methods course. However, researchers lacked evidence for how students defined art and teaching and through student coursework, found elucidation of those changing and growing ideas.

The implications for this study lie in how pre-service teachers begin to build an identity for themselves as creative practitioners in education. While engaging in a course that sought to encourage students to consider themselves capable of creative, artistic work, they began to merge their ideas for how that creative work played a role in their teacher self. Their definitions became more connected to themselves rather than segregated to what they initially believed was the role of art and teaching. Through purposeful reflection and artmaking (i.e. coursework for *Arts in the Elementary Curriculum*), pre-service elementary teachers made connections between art and teaching, between themselves and their practice, and more clearly articulated the power of those connections. These connections may enable the development of creative teaching habits and attentiveness to one’s practice whether in art or in teaching. In reflecting on this study, practicing teachers can be reminded of the creativity inherent in their daily practice and the potential for meaningful experience when their own teaching/creative identities are called into consideration. Teacher educators are also reminded of the necessity of enabling the development of their students’ (and their own) teaching identity reflective of Eisner’s (1991) description of teaching’s artistic character. It is necessary to continue to ask: What is art? What is teaching? What do they have to do with each other? Why should I care? Even (and especially) seasoned educators can find a renewed sense of purpose when we question the very foundation of our practice.

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Transforming Field Experiences to Create Authentic Teaching Opportunities

Connie Schaffer and Kelly Walsh

Abstract

For teacher candidates and the programs that prepare them, student teaching is a visible experience. For candidates, it culminates their investment of time and money and represents the completion of a significant, albeit early, career goal: becoming a certified, licensed teacher. For the university, the performance of their student teachers reflects program quality. When all goes as planned, both the candidates and program relish their successes. When all does not go as planned, where does the responsibility lie? Is it always an issue of individual candidate performance? At what point should the program assume some level of ownership? This article outlines one secondary education program's on-going journey to resolve these questions. After examination of the issue, the program identified the need to improve its pre-student teaching field experiences. Using the framework of instructional coaching, the program is redesigning its field experience addressing critical issues of supervision, duration, and connections to course content.

Key words: *field experiences, supervision, instructional coaching, teacher education program improvement*

Introduction

Failure is not an option. This line is often used when the investment of time and money is great and the stakes are high. Student teaching is an experience when failure should not be an option. Considering the time and money teacher candidates invest to reach the point of student teaching and the highly visible nature of the experience, even a small

number of unsuccessful student teachers could be problematic. For one Midwestern, metropolitan university, having a growing number of teacher candidates removed from student teaching was not acceptable. The purposes of this study are to describe the (a) identification of the programs with early field experiences with contributed to failures in student teaching, and (b) efforts to improve field experiences in order to reduce the number of teacher candidates failing student teaching.

The Stories

The teacher candidates sat around a table at the student teacher meeting intently listening to the description of the upcoming semester. The expectations for the student teaching experience were the same for each, (1) engage students with well-prepared lessons; (2) advance student achievement in your content area; (3) maintain a reasonably ordered classroom; (4) work collaboratively with other professionals and accept their feedback; (5) constantly reflect on ways to improve your teaching. However, when their university supervisor asked them to describe their previous experiences teaching and working with middle and high school students, it became evident that they had extremely varied experiences—even though they were enrolled in the same teacher preparation program.

Although their pedagogy courses had been similar, the field experiences they had completed as required within their program had little, if any consistency. Some teacher candidates had only observed in a classroom while others had spent time teaching in front of a class. Some had gotten feedback from the classroom teachers they work with, others had not. No matter what their past experiences had been, at this point, everyone had been assigned a school and they were all supposed to be ready to student teach.

Jenny's Story

One of the students seated at the table, “Jenny,” had always been an academically successful student. Her love for history began in high school when her Advanced Placement European History teacher got her

thinking about history beyond dates and places. In college, Jenny loved her courses on medieval history the most and through friends discovered Renaissance Fairs. Jenny was hooked. In her education courses, Jenny always tried to create lessons about her favorite historical period and even dressed in costume as part of her delivery. She wanted her students to be as excited about history as she was. Jenny thought student teaching would be easy.

Student teaching did not go as expected. Jenny was assigned to two sections of American Government and two sections of American History. She had wanted to teach World History or Western Civilization—instead she had landed in her two least favorite courses. Jenny quickly became bored with her teaching and her students. She struggled to relate the content to her students and relied on lectures as her primary mode of instruction. Jenny hated going to school. She did not like what she was doing and had no motivation to do well. Students became disengaged and behavior issues started to grow. Her cooperating teacher and university supervisor gave Jenny feedback and eventually put her on an assistance plan. Having no experience receiving feedback or reflecting on her teaching, Jenny chose to ignore any attempts to help her. Eventually, Jenny was removed from student teaching because of her failure to improve. Financially drained and unable to reconcile how she could enjoy her courses and yet be so miserable during student teaching, Jenny struggled to chart a new career path.

Jack' Story

“Jack,” another student teacher at the meeting, wanted to be a teacher. He came from a family of teachers, with both parents currently working as principals. While not an honors student, Jack had met the academic requirements for the teacher preparation program. Jack was excited to be assigned to two American Literature and two British Literature classes in student teaching.

Jack struggled from the start. He loved the students and was good at building relationships with them but had difficulty getting them to take him seriously. He just could not get them to stop talking. Jack was also struggling with lesson planning. He had so many ideas that he could not get everything narrowed down. No matter how long he spent on a lesson,

the students did not understand what he wanted them to do. Jack thought his learning objectives were clear, but his cooperating teacher would make him rewrite them. Jack would finish teaching a lesson only to find out the students did not understand what he had just taught them. Having limited experiences with the realities of day-to-day teaching, he found everything was taking so much more time than he ever thought it would. He was falling behind in grading, and parents were starting to complain about their children's grades. Jack's cooperating teacher and university supervisor worked with him on writing detailed lesson plans that included a variety of learning strategies and formative assessments. Jack's performance would improve for that lesson but he could not replicate this when forced to plan alone. Due to his lack of improvement, Jack was eventually removed from student teaching. The emotional sting of failure was most painful when he delivered this news to his parents.

The Problem

Jenny and Jack are hypothetical students representative of the problem that faced a large teacher preparation program. Approximately 1,100 education majors were enrolled in the program completing traditional, initial certification programs in the areas of early childhood, elementary, middle grades, and secondary education. The middle and secondary education programs included the content areas of business, science, social studies, health, language arts, mathematics, and several world languages. The secondary program also included pre-service teachers in art, music, and physical education pursuing comprehensive certification covering PK-12 grades.

The problem was significant. The program averaged 250 first-time student teachers each academic year. Of those, approximately 40 percent were secondary education majors. In a three-year period, 29 secondary student teachers needed significant remediation during student teaching and were in jeopardy of not passing. The specific concerns leading to the remediation were consistent. The students were struggling with skills related planning, teaching, and classroom management. The program remediated this situation by asking university supervisors to

increase their observations and feedback. It also asked its PK-12 partners to offer additional modeling and supervision that often involved building administrators and extended beyond the support typically offered to student teachers. The student teachers on remediation were required to complete supplemental work and attend added meetings in order to meet the expectations of their plan.

Of the 29 secondary education student teachers on remediation, 11 did not successfully complete student teaching. They were relegated to graduating without certification or completing additional remediation and repeating student teaching. If they graduated without certification, they had to redefine their future careers. Having prepared to teach in PK-12 settings, they would be unable to do so. If they elected to repeat student teaching, they incurred significant tuition costs and were delayed in their ability to generate an income. Both options made them outliers from their peers who had successfully completed student teaching. Upon closer examination, the apparent problem was the program's early field experiences. Earlier field experiences could have helped teacher candidates identify deviancies or the lack of desire to be an educator.

The program's model of the field experiences leading up to student teaching could best be described as a shotgun approach—pull the trigger and a spray of pellets came out, hopefully hitting something. The university pulled the trigger and depending on the course, the section, even from candidate to candidate, the experiences fell where they may. There was no guarantee that a teacher candidate would have a field experience in which they were able to actually teach students and receive meaningful feedback regarding their teaching. They were just as likely to have an experience in which they were relegated to sporadically visiting a classroom and doing little more than observing. Because they may not have had the chance to teach during their field experiences, they had little opportunity to reflect on their career choice and determine if teaching was the profession they wanted to pursue.

Teacher candidates, if they had a field experience, had no university supervision so the opportunity to receive and implement feedback to improve their skills was also left to chance. The well-intended PK-12 teachers who hosted the teacher candidates were reluctant to voice concerns regarding their performance. They did not want to prevent a college student from passing a class or graduating. When they had concerns, rather

than share them with the candidate or the university, they would often minimize the teacher candidate's contact with the PK-12 students, resulting in endless hours of observations that did little to develop the candidate's teaching skills.

From the program's perspective, with no framework for the field experiences, there was no intentionality and articulation of skill development, making it impossible for teacher candidates to measure their growth as they moved through the teacher preparation program. It was also difficult to create meaningful connections between pedagogical courses and field experiences because the experiences of candidates were so varied.

An unsuccessful student teaching experience has the potential to be emotionally, physically, cognitively, and financially exhausting for a teacher candidate. For the cooperating teacher, in addition to the time and energy spent supporting a student teacher and their own sense of failure when the experience has a negative outcome, they are faced with helping the PK-12 students (and perhaps parents) navigate the aftermath in terms of lost instructional time and the possibility of diminished student achievement gains. The university must deal with the expenditure of resources used to remediate a struggling student teacher, which includes increased communication with the school district when problems arise and paying for additional supervision. This is not to mention the university's need to address potential damage to the reputation of their program. If the number of struggling and failing student teachers is too high or becomes a pattern, placements for future student teachers may be jeopardized.

It is clear that whether it involves helping teacher candidates such as Jenny to critically examine her desire to become a teacher or as in the case of Jack, to more thoroughly develop his skills, preparation programs carry a great responsibility in reducing the "failure factor" at the time of student teaching. Student teaching is simply too late in the program for these deficiencies to first surface.

Although this is the story of one secondary education program's journey to improvement, teacher preparation programs across the nation are under increasing pressure to reexamine field experiences. There is a growing body of research that provides guidance for programs who wish to make innovated changes.

Literature Review

Field Experiences

Field experiences are an integral component of teacher preparation programs accredited through the major professional accreditation bodies, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council. This practice is likely to continue as these organizations merge to form the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). These pre-student teaching experiences are defined as early and ongoing opportunities in which teacher candidates integrate theory from pedagogical courses with the practice of PK-12 classroom teaching. Teacher candidates accomplish this through observing, assisting, tutoring, critiquing, instructing, and conducting research in off-campus or virtual settings (CAEP, 2013; NCATE, 2008).

National Recommendations for Change

Professional education organizations are calling for these experiences to be transformed and to become linchpins of broader reforms being demanded of teacher preparation. NCATE along with the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Council of Chief State School Officers, (CCSSO), and National Education Association (NEA) have criticized existing field experiences models and called for new approaches (AFT, 2012; CCSSO, 2012; NCATE, 2010; NCTQ, 2011; NEA, 2011). Teacher preparation programs must respond to these recommendations for several reasons. First, their constituents (teacher candidates, PK-12 educators, university administrators, governmental agencies, and external funders) are using the above-mentioned reports to inform their financial and policy decisions. A second reason teacher preparation programs should attend to the reports is that they provide a stimulus for programs to evaluate and improve current field experience practices.

However, in the process of program improvement, teacher preparation programs must go beyond simply responding to the calls to make "sweeping" (NCATE, 2010) and "wrenching" (Darling-Hammond, 2005)

changes. To do so, the teacher education community must contend with the broader query, "What are the best practices related to field experiences?" Reviewing best practices involves the examination of factors such as the purpose, delivery, supervision, and resource allocations that underlie field experiences.

Best Practices for Field Experiences

Guided opportunities. The purpose of field experiences is to offer opportunities, guided by university faculty, in which teacher candidates have authentic learning experiences, apply what they have learned in their programs of study, and develop the effective teaching skills most likely to impact PK-12 student learning (AFT, 2012; CCSSO, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2005; NCTQ, 2011; NEA, 2011; Singer, Catapano, & Huisman, 2010; Zeichner, 2010). The experiences provide opportunities for teacher candidates to come "face to face with their entering beliefs and assumptions" about schools, teachers, and the future students they will teach (Banks et al., 2005, p. 266). This self-confrontation provides the foundation that moves the development of teacher candidates beyond an apprenticeship of observation based on their personal experiences as PK-12 students (Lortie, 1975) to that of preparation based in professional pedagogy and real-world experiences. The "realness" of the experiences can help a candidate either affirm or re-evaluate their decision to pursue teaching as a career.

Reflection to frame learning. Additionally, most field experiences involve reflection as teacher candidates frame their learning in the context of their experiences in the PK-12 schools and "grapple" to connect the theoretical concepts introduced in university classrooms to the practices found in PK-12 schools (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Scherff & Sizer, 2012). However, when university faculty provide ongoing support to this reflective process, the connections between the campus and the PK-12 classroom become more coherent (Scherff & Sizer, 2012). In examining the purpose of field experiences two components emerge: (1) the delivery model must purposefully connect theory to teaching and (2) teacher candidates need university support and guidance during field experiences.

Purposeful course integration. In terms of delivery, optimal field experiences are purposefully integrated with university coursework (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005). Teacher candidates develop a greater understanding and are better able to apply the theory introduced in university coursework when they are simultaneously participating in field experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Zeichner 2010).

School-university partnerships. To accomplish this, "teacher education must venture out further and further from the university and engage ever more closely with schools in a mutual transformation agenda, with all of the struggle and messiness that implies" (Darling-Hammond, 2005, p 302). Although the collaborative work to form meaningful partnerships may be complicated, school-university partnerships show promise in improving teacher candidates' ability to work in school settings and enhancing the quality of feedback regarding their performance (Dean, Lauer, & Urquhart, 2005; Sykes & Dibner, 2009). The significance of this school-university partnership is that it leads to shared decision-making and oversight regarding teacher candidate and cooperating teacher selection (National Council for Accreditation of teacher Education, 2010; Commission on Effective Teachers & Teaching, 2011). This leads to better communication between all of the involved parties, which, in turn, will "bring accountability close to the classroom, based largely on evidence of candidates' effective performance and their impact on student learning" (NACTE, 2010).

Appropriate supervision. Supervision of teacher candidates participating field experiences can strengthen the linkages between university coursework and PK-12 classrooms and may create the ideal conditions to form a third space (Zeichner, 2010). The concept of third space has been used to describe a learning space in which two perspectives or patterns of interaction intersect and create an opportunity for learning to occur (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Turner, 1997). The supervision of field experiences within the framework of the third space could create an environment where there are more linkages within authentic learning environments.

Teacher preparation programs can no longer rely on unsystematic experiences that may either place teacher candidates in classrooms in which they experience effective teaching or regrettably, in which they

experience ineffective teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Feldman & Kent, 2006; Zeichner, 2010). Programs must carefully consider the guidance and supervision received by the teacher candidates while they are completing field experiences and should not rely primarily on the cooperating PK-12 educators to provide this supervision and guidance (Scherff & Sizer, 2011). Effective teacher preparation programs have faculty who both teach and supervise teacher candidates, immersing themselves along with the candidates in the school site (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Preliminary evidence from several studies suggests that guidance and supervision impacts the teacher candidates' level of comfort and sense of preparedness to teach (Feldman & Kent, 2006; Schaffer, 2011; Wyss et al., 2012).

Despite the potential impact of supervision, teacher preparation programs have struggled to provide this type of guidance during field experiences. Even in student teaching, the highest profile field experience, supervision is often assigned to part-time graduate assistants or adjunct faculty (AFT, 2012; CCSSO, 2012; NCATE, 2008; Zeichner, 2010). Although part-time supervisors may serve capably, the nature of being part-time limits the integration between a program's coursework and field experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Zeichner, 2010). The use of part-time supervisors also does little to foster the K-12 school-university partnerships that may improve field experiences (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Dean, Lauer, & Urquhart, 2005; Feldman & Kent, 2006; Sykes & Dibner, 2009).

Beck and Kosnick (2002) outline three reasons why few teacher preparation programs involve full-time faculty in the field experience supervision. First, the time commitment of supervision is overwhelming and creates a distraction from other responsibilities of tenured and tenure-tracked faculty. Second, the contributions of supervision may be minimized by faculty. Third, the value of supervision is marginalized by university administrative structures.

Instructional Coaching

When seeking to enhance early field experiences and address some of the historic challenges associated with supervising these experiences, the teacher education program described in this article launched significant

field experience changes on the framework of instructional coaching. Within the PK-12 environment, instructional coaching has been a widely adopted practice to improve the instruction of in-service teachers. Embedded within the PK-12 classroom and using communication and relationship building skills, instructional coaches assist in-service teachers with the implementation of effective teaching strategies. Through modeling, observations, and reflective discussions, instructional coaches become partners with teachers and administrators with the goal of improving student academic achievement (Knight, 2007).

While some view instructional coaching as remediation for struggling in-service teachers, it is argued that coaching is not only beneficial for "weaker teachers" but can "help all teachers move forward" in their professional development (Knight , 2007, p. 140).

Research Question and Methodology

The research question "How does the redesign of early field experience impact teacher candidates during student teaching?" provided the focus for this action-research. Action research provided a lens for two faculty members to examine field experiences within their program. Information was gathered and analyzed from those within the program, leading to knowledge that could be applied within the context of the program (Mills, 2011). Multiple data sources were used to insure both a rich data pool and triangulation. Data was collected from four sources: (a) teacher candidates; (b) cooperating teachers; (c) instructional coaches; (d) faculty members who were involved in the program. Data from teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and course instructors were collected from the electronic submission of the early field experience final evaluation instrument. Journals, reflections, and lesson analysis projects were key assessments of the pedagogical courses that teacher candidates submitted electronically or in hard-copy. Cooperating teachers were surveyed at the end of the field experience as part of the program evaluation and feedback. Teacher candidate focus groups were also conducted for program evaluation and feedback.

Moving From the Old to the New

Implementing instructional coaching at the university level required several prerequisite steps. First, coaches had to be hired and formally trained in instructional coaching. Yet even after adding four full-time coaches, the program faced the realities of coaching hundreds of teacher candidates. To manage this and address issues related to the previous "shot-gun" approach, partner schools were recruited into the model. By having multiple candidates in one partner school, the coaches could strengthen the relationship between the university and the schools and maximize their impact by coaching rather than driving from site to site. Finally, field experiences were embedded into the schedule of pedagogical courses. Rather than parallel delivery of the field experiences and courses, the field component now comprised approximately 30 percent of courses' scheduled contact time during which the teacher candidates reported to the partner schools rather than the university.

The structural changes were not insignificant. They required the reallocation of faculty salary lines to allow for the hiring of full-time coaches, establishment of partnerships with PK-12 schools, and redesign of courses. Once made, the operational changes set the stage for early field experiences to be supervised, tied to course work, and delivered with the increased amounts of time and opportunity.

Instructional Coaching

The teacher preparation program set out to pilot a number of changes including using instructional coaching as the guiding framework to strengthen the connections between theory and practice and provide on-site supervision of teacher candidates completing early field experience. Similar to PK-12 settings, the teacher preparation program believed the instructional coaching model could be an innovative way to provide on-site support to teacher candidates during field experiences. Instructional coaches were PK-12 teachers who were recruited and hired from surrounding school districts. They represented a variety of levels and content areas and taught in both urban and suburban school districts. They were required to have a master's degree. Once hired, they completed two

days of instructional coaching training with Jim Knight, a leading expert on instructional coaching in PK-12 settings.

Teacher candidates, like PK-12 teachers, represent various points along a spectrum of skills, and may benefit from instructional coaching regardless if they are struggling, excelling, or performing somewhere in between. By focusing on teaching practices related to (1) behavior management; (2) curriculum and content; (3) effective instructional strategies; (4) formative assessment; instructional coaching provides job-embedded support that enhances the effectiveness of all teachers, regardless of their starting point as a professional (Knight, 2007).

Prior to the field experiences, coaching procedures and expectations were explained to teacher candidates and school partners. The instructional coaches periodically attended the courses. This allowed them to build relationships with the teacher candidates and make connections between the field experience and the course content.

Supervision

The structural changes resulted in teacher candidates being placed in partner schools at the beginning, middle, and end of their programs, and at each level, the instructional coaches provided on-site support and guidance while the faculty provided periodic supervision. From the candidates' perspective and at a very basic level, the coaches were a familiar and friendly face for the candidates as they acclimated to their PK-12 partner schools. The coaches also monitored the teacher candidates' professionalism and helped with tasks such as videotaping their lessons.

At a more complex level, by being embedded in the partner schools, the coaches developed a strong understanding of the context of the teacher candidates' experiences. Coaches could use this knowledge to help the teacher candidates develop lessons that included strategies that were effective for that particular setting. The coaches also served as on-site liaisons with the PK-12 classroom teachers making certain teacher candidates had opportunities that were developmentally appropriate – not too challenging to overwhelm them or too limiting to marginalize them.

Finally, in terms of reflection, the coaches asked teacher candidates questions and listened carefully to their answers. They asked candidates to reflect on their own teaching and guided them to identify strengths and areas for improvement as well as provided their own feedback to the candidates. The coaches then monitored and helped the candidates to implement the feedback. Beyond observing and providing feedback on the teacher candidates' classroom instruction, the coaches watched for subtle signs from candidates that might indicate that the candidate was not comfortable or enjoying the experience. This prompted serious and important conversations with candidates regarding the realities of teaching. As one candidate stated, "this took away the mystery of teaching" (course reflection, fall 2013).

From the program's perspective, the coaches provided consistent, day-to-day supervision in the schools freeing the faculty members to continue to meet their other university demands. The coaches shared information from the practicum experience with the instructors, which allowed the faculty to prioritize their time when they were able to be in the schools. If a candidate struggled, the coaches alerted the faculty member, who could then provide added support to the candidate.

Course instructors provided supervision to the teacher candidates by observing them in their field experience classrooms, watching recording of the candidates teaching, and reviewing the written feedback of the instructional coaches. The communication between the instructional coaches and the instructors was critical. Based on this communication, instructors could target their limited supervision time to help those teacher candidates most in need of their guidance and intervention.

Course Content

In addition to supervision, changes to the course content had to be made across the program. Theories and pedagogical expectations studied in teacher education courses had to have application in the classroom. The old system had no clear focus of skill development resulting in repetition of information, gaps of knowledge, and deficits of skills for the teacher candidates.

The first step for the instructors was to create an intentional curriculum map for the courses with the beginning, intermediate, and final field experiences generating a clear articulation of the skill development of the teacher candidate at each level. It removed the repetition, filled in the gaps, and scaffolded the appropriate skills for each level. For the candidates, it gave what they were learning on campus more purpose when they went into the classrooms for their field experiences. “What I saw in at my school really reinforces what we are learning here. It all makes a lot more sense now,” explained a teacher candidate after his field experience (focus group, fall 2013).

The second step was to create assessments that tied the field experience to each course’s objectives and to weight the field experience assessment the same for each section as a matter of equity for the teacher candidates. Although the details may have differed, all of the field experience assessments asked the teacher candidates to study a lesson taught and analyze how well the students met the learning objectives based on their performance on the formative assessments. The candidates also reflected on their lessons identifying what went well and what needed improvement, connecting both to their coursework.

Duration

An on-going issue with the former approach was the non-sequential nature of the field experiences. Teacher candidates were rarely in the classroom at the same time from one day to another or even one week to the next. Because candidates were given the latitude to set their own schedules, the experience seemed to be random and nonsensical.

The answer to this problem was to create an authentic teaching experience for the teaching candidates at each level of the program. This meant they would need more hours and a set time to be in the field so they could have supervision and support from the instructor and instructional coach. Working with the advisors, the instructors were able to set up a structured field experience with each pedagogical course. Each course was redesigned to allow for release time from the class for the field experience allowing instructors time to supervise their own students in the field.

This approach has transformed the field experiences for the teacher candidates. First, they have time to build positive and appropriate rapport with students. Besides learning names, the candidates are able to learn about the students as individuals. The candidates also have time to get to know their cooperating teacher better. Because the candidates were in classrooms for several weeks, they could see a unit develop. They could see different types of formative and summative assessments used by the teachers. The candidates could also observe how school works day-to-day. One candidate remarked to his instructional coach that he had never thought about late students until he had one. The student disrupted his teaching because he was not prepared for late students. However, the candidate knew not to let that happen again and was ready for the next time. Even though these are issues discussed in the education courses, sometimes it takes a real-life experience for it to hit home (coaching conversations, fall 2013).

The teacher candidates also had opportunities to practice their classroom management skills. Doing role plays in front of your peers in a college course is not the same as working with real PK-12 students, especially when one is also trying to teach a lesson. These field experiences gave the teacher candidates opportunities to practice and get feedback from their cooperating teacher, university instructor, and instructional coach. More than one teacher candidate returned to campus declaring, “I finally feel like a real teacher” (course reflections, fall 2013).

Next Steps

To discover during the final semester of college that one’s chosen career path is not going to work out can be emotionally and financially devastating for the teacher candidate and a blemish on the reputation of the institution. For teacher candidates like Jenny and Jack, better field experiences could have helped before they reached student teaching. For Jenny, being required to reflect on her interactions with students in classrooms and the content she was teaching would have given her the time to think about herself as a classroom teacher. Jenny would have worked with her instructional coach to process the experience and to dis-

cuss the realities of teaching; she would have discovered early on in the program that teaching secondary social studies was not the career for her.

Jack was overwhelmed by everything his cooperating teacher and university supervisor were asking him to do in a short amount of time. A purposefully constructed field experience would have prevented Jack from failing his student teaching. Having skills intentionally scaffolded over education courses would have given Jack time to practice his skills and receive specific feedback from a coach and his instructor giving him opportunities to improve his instruction. By student teaching, Jack would have been comfortable with the realities of teaching day-to-day and would have found success in the classroom.

The initial response from the teacher candidates to the changes in the field experiences has been extremely positive. Candidates return to classes excited about teaching, talking about “their students,” feeling connected to the school community, eager for student teaching, and motivated to continue on with their learning. The potential impact of coaching is not just hypothetical. However, the program is in its first year and there is still much to learn regarding the effectiveness of the changes. There are four questions to pursue: (1) How does the program evaluate the various delivery methods of supervision, course content, and duration? (2) How can field experiences be used to prepared teacher candidates for the widely accepted Stages of Concern outlined by Fuller (1969)? (3) How do the teacher candidates perceive the impact of the instructional coaches? (4) Is there a reduction in failures in student teaching? Each question forces the program to consider what impact the field experience changes are having on the teacher candidate. Teacher preparation programs must educate their candidates to be ready for the difficult challenges of today’s classrooms and one way to make that happen is to change the field experience. This program has only begun to examine the changes in the field experiences and there is still much research to conduct, but hopefully, the teacher candidates will enter student teaching with a more authentic experience of what it means to be a teacher.

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Currere and the Beauty of Soulful Classroom Moments

Jessica Sierk

Abstract

Drawing on Pinar's (1975, 2011) work on *currere* and the author's own experience as an educator both in the K-12 and higher education arenas, the author argues that curriculum is a living entity and should therefore be allowed to deviate from the "plan" that most people think of when the topic of curriculum arises. Gaudelli & Hewitt's (2010) idea of "the beauty of soulful moments" is also used to illustrate the utility of such deviations. Dewey's (1934, 1938) themes of improvisation, participation, communication, and experience, as well as the idea of "the unexpected turn" also serve as backdrops to discussing curriculum and learning. These ideas are explored through the use of the author's narrative about her journey as an educator. Issues of space, time, and intention are discussed, while the current trajectory of K-12 education toward standardization, accountability and scripted teaching is problematized. The author explores the concept of *currere* and its potential to breathe new life into the educational process.

Keywords: *classroom communication, curriculum, learning, standardization*

Introduction: One Educator's Journey

My K-12 teaching experience had a short lifetime of three years. As I finished my third year of teaching, I barely recognized myself. The narrow focus on test preparation and accountability left me with little time and energy for the improvisation that is the lifeblood of the living nature of the act and art of teaching. I still loved helping my students realize their unique potentials. I still believed deeply in the work I was doing, but something had changed. I had become cynical and jaded. I had

stopped believing that education had the power to change the often inequitable status quo of our society. The bureaucratic nature of the institution of education had stolen a crucial part of my identity. I carried this cynicism with me as I started my doctoral studies. However, through my encounters with the ideas of Dewey, Pinar, and Eisner, among others, and my experiences teaching in the realm of higher education, I have come to reclaim what was originally mine: a passion for and sincere belief in the power education can hold for students and teachers alike. This repossession is encapsulated in the following quote from Dewey (1938): “Improvisation that takes advantage of special occasions prevents teaching and learning from being stereotyped and dead” (p. 78-79). One could say that the disconnect I was feeling at the end of my K-12 teaching experience was due to the fact that my teaching was, in the words of Dewey, dead.

However, my life as a teacher has since been resuscitated. Macintyre Latta (2013) states, “The space generated a movement of thinking that invited and valued my participation” (p. 104). I now realize that space was the missing variable in my K-12 teaching experience. Although I always had a physical space to work within, there was not much curricular or creative space with which to play. Reeves (2010), drawing on Sawyer (2004), describes expert teaching as “disciplined improvisation, wherein teachers plan instruction using their knowledge of content, students, and context while simultaneously opening space for improvisation around that plan, space that invites digression and the ‘collaborative emergence’ of learning” (p. 245). Leaving room in the curriculum for students’ interests is of the utmost importance. The idea of *currere* allows for this space in the curriculum.

Currere’s most literal definition stems from Latin, in which it means “to run.” *Currere* is used here to represent a postmodern philosophical approach to education that acknowledges personal and temporal dimensions of the learner, and the effects such dimensions have on the curriculum. Utilizing *currere* in the classroom, then, recognizes that all students have unique pasts, presents, and futures. It allows for students’ biographical idiosyncrasies to mold and shape classroom life and practices. *Currere* acknowledges that curriculum is a living entity and therefore should be allowed to deviate from the “plan” that most people think of when the topic of curriculum arises (Pinar, 2011). Gaudelli and Hewitt (2010) men-

tion “the beauty of soulful moments” which, to me, is a perfect way of framing instances that illustrate such deviations. Students and teacher, in effect, co-create the curriculum in a *currere* classroom. “To run” implies movement. *Currere*, then, suggests a dynamic entity, constantly changing as it continues to develop.

The current trajectory of K-12 education is aimed at standardization, accountability, and scripted teaching (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Derthick & Dunn, 2009; Eslinger, 2012; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). In an era when improvisation and exploration are devalued, it is essential to consider the question: How can *currere* and the beauty of soulful classroom moments be utilized to breathe new life into the educational process? Potential answers to this question will be explored through the lens of existing literature and the author’s own journey in both the K-12 and higher education arenas.

Leaving Loose Ends

Within the last decade, teaching has become more and more tied to accountability measures. The practice of “teaching to the test” has become rampant in classrooms across the country. Barone (1983) states, “The use of objectives in this way is the educational equivalent to revealing the punch line before telling the joke” (p. 23). One can imagine that the joke would not be as enjoyable if the punch line was revealed too early. In the same manner, education that strictly relies on external objectives, to the exclusion of all else, is often less gratifying and less intellectually stimulating. How then, can *currere* flourish in this testing culture?

Eisner’s (1991) work presents an alternative to the current system’s unyielding approach to standards. “Teaching that is not hog-tied to rigid specifications often moves in directions and explores ideas that neither the students nor the teacher could envision at the outset” (p. 46). This notion suggests the idea that there is more to learning than is generally included in your typical standardized test. These tests, as students and teachers have come to know them, only account for a handful of educational possibilities. Pateman (1997) compares life’s infinite possibilities to art, stating that “not all the permissible moves are prescribed in ad-

vance” (p. 7). Similarly, when used as one measure of student success, rather than an end-all-be-all, students are encouraged to go above and beyond what the test is able to measure.

Benchmarks meant to serve as a minimum boundary now function to delimit student achievement. Eisner (1991) suggests that “goals are not stable targets at which you aim, but directions towards which you travel” (p. 47). To assume that goals are stable targets implies that learning is something that has a definite end. However, there is an infinite amount of knowledge in this world and one cannot possibly ever know everything there is to know about everything. Therefore, to consider goals as “directions towards which you travel” allows us to instead view learning as a process that is never fully accomplished. The summative nature of standardized tests directly contradicts this train of thought. Therefore, these measures of student achievement should be seen as a snapshot in time. We must all recognize that there is a broader realm within which these snapshots are captured. Such measures only give us a narrow view of what students are capable of, as any teacher can attest.

The strict adherence to scripted curricula is problematic as it does not allow for the influence of students and other contextual factors. Dewey (1934) asserts, “Those who carry on their work as a demonstration of a preconceived thesis may have the joys of egotistic success but not that of fulfillment of an experience for its own sake” (p. 144). Dewey’s idea of “a demonstration of a preconceived thesis” may be thought of as a bow that is already tied, or in the context of classroom procedures, a lesson that does not allow for student-derived digressions. If teachers leave some ends loose in their lesson preparation, the end result may surprise them in its complexity and ingenuity. One way of leaving loose end is through the incorporation of open dialogue and communication as a classroom norm.

Dialogue and Communication in the *Currere* Classroom

Communication cannot freely occur when one is subscribing to a scripted curriculum. The *currere* classroom, in contrast, allows for the free exchange of ideas via open dialogue and communication. Pinar (2011) describes communication as “an ongoing social ceremony aspiring

to shared understanding while engaging difference and protecting dissent” (p. 19). This type of exchange cannot be planned ahead of time. Rather, it must be lived in the present moment. It allows for and respects conflict, tackling it head on rather than sweeping it under a metaphorical rug. It is authentic, honoring students’ responses and building off of the knowledge students bring to the classroom context. Allowing for this kind of communication in the classroom means relinquishing some control as a teacher; this is not to say that nothing is planned in such situations. “Strong professors prompt, guide, enrich, but often simply observe student conversation” (Barone, Berliner, Blanchard, Casanova, & McGowan, 1996, p. 1122). Through thoughtful prompts and watchful guidance, teachers are still able to move the class in the direction it needs to go. However, the path taken to get from point A to point B may look different than the teacher originally expected.

Information and knowledge is shared through processes of communication. Dewey (1934) stated, “Communication is the process of creating participation, of making common what had been isolated and singular” (p. 253). The richness of curricular conversations is increased by the exchange of different opinions and points of view. This resonates with my experience of teaching multicultural education. It is through agreements, disagreements, new ideas, shared opinions, and differing perspectives that true learning occurs. In educational ventures, teachers often rely solely on one perspective for insight and information (e.g. the required textbook). However, the world is made up of many different viewpoints, and students must be prepared to encounter viewpoints with which they agree, disagree, or had not previously considered. Therefore, giving students opportunities to share their viewpoints allows for the widening of others’ horizons. It also allows for the student sharing their viewpoint to practice articulating their opinions. This exercise gives students the opportunity to find and hone the language they use in explaining what they believe and why, an important life skill for all to possess.

Education is a means by which we socialize our youth. Schooling aims to impart certain values and reinforce a shared culture and experience so that students may become productive citizens who contribute positively to society. According to Dewey (1934), “[I]t is by activities that are shared and by language and other means of intercourse that qualities and values become common to the experience of a group of mankind” (p.

298). This is not to say that everyone comes away from the dialogue in complete agreement, abandoning their original train of thought. However, it does mean that everyone comes away with a new understanding that has been influenced in some way by other people's ideas.

Many times, boisterous conversation, that often occurs when students disagree with one another, is not welcomed in classroom settings. Such conversation is seen as disruptive and off-task. However, Dewey (1938) states, "Enforced quiet and acquiescence prevent pupils from disclosing their real nature" (p. 62). In not giving students adequate opportunities to openly express themselves in classroom settings, we are often-times asking them to be something they are not. We are sending the message that who they are as a person is not something that fits within classroom expectations. In communicating ideas with others, students are able to add their unique twist on the curriculum, making it something that is meaningful to them... something with which they want to engage. Open dialogue and communication often occurs extemporaneously. This process is not predictable, rather it is quite messy.

The Messiness of Creative Teaching

To the untrained eye, the *currere* classroom may be seen as chaotic or disorganized. Barone (1983) speaks of "spontaneity in teaching" and "instantaneous responses" (p. 25) as essential to teaching as a creative practice. These elements of the *currere* classroom occur when teachers take advantage of their students' unique interests and questions. May (1991) argues that "unusual events" that naturally occur in the world of teaching and learning are "extraordinarily meaningful to students for a variety of reasons" (p. 146). These unusual events are usually overlooked by students and teachers alike... ruled as things that "don't fit," things that are outside the realm of what counts as teaching and learning. However, these moments of eccentricity are what we often remember of our own schooling experience. They stand out from the dull moments that tend to blur together... the note taking, the cramming for tests, the filling out of worksheets, and the reading of textbooks.

Taking tests and completing rote tasks, such as filling out worksheets, is oftentimes not a natural inclination students possess. However,

learning is an innate ability that students constantly engage in, whether they are conscious of it or not. Dewey (1934) states, “An activity that was ‘natural’ – spontaneous and unintended – is transformed because it is undertaken as a means to a consciously entertained consequence” (p. 65). In traditional classrooms, teaching generally revolves around what is natural for the teacher. However, the level of influence students are allowed to have on that practice depends on the level of openness that teacher possesses. Eisner (1992) states:

The arts teach that goals need to be flexible and that surprise counts; ...that being open to the unanticipated opportunities that inevitably emerge in the context of action increases insight; and that purposeful flexibility rather than rigid adherence to prior plans is more likely to yield something of value (p. 594).

If the teacher is flexible and open to surprises and unanticipated opportunities, as suggested by Eisner in his discussion of the arts, then the students are able to develop the teacher’s natural inclination into an intended, designed part of the class through the manipulation of that particular classroom practice. This manipulation creates something that is unique to that group of learners... something that can never be recreated in the same, exact way, and something that feels natural for both the teacher and the students.

This act of manipulation mirrors Dewey’s (1934) idea of “the unexpected turn,” something that is not originally envisioned, but that saves the work from becoming habitual, routine, and lifeless. In this respect, the students’ manipulation of the teacher’s natural inclination to teach represents an unexpected turn. No one knows what the end result will be until that end is reached and they turn to look back at where they have been. This element of surprise keeps students guessing and wondering... reverent of the educative experiences they are living. Dewey suggests, “To generate the indispensable excitement there must be something at stake, something momentous and uncertain – like the outcome of a battle or the prospects of a harvest. A sure thing does not arouse us emotionally” (p. 69). The uncertainty present in the *currere* classroom maintains students’ interest while encouraging them to press on. The spontaneity of

engaging with “the unexpected turn” alters, or contaminates, the classroom environment.

Contaminating the Classroom Environment

In the current testing culture, the classroom environment is largely used as a place to administer the information necessary for students to pass standardized, high-stakes tests. Dewey (1938) states, “The history of educational theory is marked by opposition between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formation from without” (p. 17). Development from within allows for individuals to choose their own educational pathway; whereas, formation from without imposes a standardized educational pathway on all students, regardless of their own unique interests. Although written over 75 years ago, Dewey’s sentiment still rings true. Through policies like No Child Left Behind and the imposition of the Common Core, formation from without has become an increasingly prevalent influence on educational realities across the nation. However, individual teachers have been known to tug back in the form of development from within in this perpetual game of tug-of-war.

Educational policy, as a method of formation from without, may dictate that certain things should be happening in classrooms, and those things usually do happen to varying degrees; however, to expect full fidelity to policy would be foolish. Dewey (1934) states, “There is no experience in which the human contribution is not a factor in determining what actually happens” (p. 256). Teachers and students, whether they intend to or not, alter educational policies to meet their needs and the needs of the particular classroom, district, and regional contexts within which they reside. Pinar (2011) states, “There is no ‘pure’ school subject to be transmitted uncontaminated by those who study and participate in it” (p. 6). There are certain topics that obviously must be taught in each specific subject area; for instance, teaching the types of triangles in geometry or the difference between a noun and a verb in English language arts are seen to be essential components of such classes. Nevertheless, how one goes about teaching these concepts effectively contaminates the “pure” subject.

Similarly, students may choose to follow exactly what the teacher says, does, or demonstrates. Conversely, they may deviate from the teacher's approach, making their own path. Dewey (1938) describes "the plan" as "a co-operative enterprise, not a dictation," stating that "the teacher's suggestion is not a mold for a cast-iron result but is a starting point to be developed into a plan through contributions from the experience of all engaged in the learning process" (p. 72). The teacher, in this situation, acts as a facilitator. Students' ways of doing are honored as having a place in the inner workings of the curriculum. They are allowed to "contaminate" the classroom environment. Teachers, too, are allowed this right as they attend to the medium of curriculum.

Attending to the Medium of Curriculum

Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines medium as "the materials or methods used by an artist." Therefore, the "medium of curriculum" may be seen as the materials or methods used by an educator. May (1991) wrote, "Curriculum is the dynamic interaction of persons, artifacts, and ideas in a particular context over time – it is not a script. It has no formulaic and definitive beginning, middle, and end" (p. 143). The dynamic nature of curriculum means that it is always changing, never static. More specifically, in a classroom, the cast of characters is not always constant. New students come midway through the year, students move out of the district, substitute teachers come and go as needed, all changing the trajectory of the curriculum as a living entity. New artifacts and ideas are introduced, also altering the learning route taken. Forks in the road emerge as new directions are discovered through changes in the curricular environment.

Successful navigation of these forks in the road requires that teachers be open to and skilled at improvisation. Sawyer (2004) argues that this improvisation allows students to participate in the co-construction of their own knowledge in ways that scripted, teacher-centric instruction does not. Continuing with the analogy of forks in the road, if a route has been preselected, the possible forks in the road that could be taken would still exist; however, they would be mere sights on the journey, taunting all who desired to take them as the car passed them by. Taking the im-

provisation out of teaching reduces the act and art of teaching and learning to something one-dimensional and superficial. Attending to particularities, and allowing students to traverse the forks in the road, adds dimension and depth to teaching and learning.

One argument, that is often alluded to, against improvisation in the classroom is that there is not enough time to allow students to go down these proverbial forks in the road. However, as Dewey (1934) suggests, sensitivity to a medium does not “lug in extraneous material” (p. 207). In being sensitive to the medium of curriculum, teachers should carefully consider what information, skills, and knowledge is pertinent to their subject area and to the particular group of students that will be tasked with engaging with it. Students should also play a role in this decision. What do they want or need to know? What information interests them? How will what they learn in this particular class help them meet their individual and collective goals? In asking students these questions, teachers will begin to see what material is extraneous and how to best use their limited time with students. In essence, students lead teachers to the core of the matter.

Following the Leader and Leading the Follower

Who, then, is the leader in a *currere* classroom, and who is the follower? According to Walker (2003), teachers should not force students to “follow adult interests” (p. 62); instead, teachers should follow the interests their students possess. Curriculum is often centered on what adults think students should know or be able to do. It is a rare occurrence for a student’s interest to play a central role in the development of curriculum. When students’ interests are considered, they are often relegated to the periphery, a minor consideration at best. Students are expected to follow the teacher. We underestimate students’ ability to lead the way; after all, how could they possibly know how to get from point A to point B having never travelled that road before? As anyone who has ever visited a new place can attest, even if you do not know the way, you can manage to find what you need. You may not travel the most direct, efficient route, but through trial and error, many wrong turns, and possibly even a helpful stranger’s directions, eventually, you will arrive at your destination. So is

the case with following students' interests in the classroom and in the curriculum.

The teacher's expertise is not null in this scenario, however. Barone (2001) describes the teacher's role as follows:

It is the role of the educator consciously to select and arrange features of the classroom environment so as to increase the likelihood of such encounters... she must never coerce students into particular activities, or attempt to force upon them 'correct' descriptions of their selves and their world (p. 129).

The same curricular objectives can be accomplished while following students' interests. Teachers are tasked with creating a classroom climate and an instructional framework that allows for students' identities to be known, appreciated, and developed. Students are forced to "do school" in classrooms that do not honor who they are as individuals, classrooms that do not leave space for student identities to influence the curriculum. Students in this position are playing a role in an act of fiction. The teaching and learning that occurs in such situations is inauthentic and contrived. Students are not deeply impacted by this type of education, because they are removed from it. In order for education to have a profound effect on students, they must be invited to engage in the curriculum as they truly are, not as we wish they were.

Conclusion: Returning Anew

Returning, then, to my journey to becoming the educator I am today. You may ask yourself why I share my meager story in conjunction with the theoretical work of great minds like Pinar, Dewey, and Eisner. In the words of Pinar (1975), "I discern that the theme of my current situation differs from, say, yours, but the fact that we are both facing an issue is the same" (p. 14). In one way or another, we are all affected by the current trajectory of educational policy.

In my own journey as an educator, I feel as though I have, in a sense, come full circle. Since the beginning of this journey, I have experienced many ups and downs. Comparing my experience as a student in multicul-

tural education and my experience as an instructor of the same course, I cannot help but recognize that I am not the same person that started this journey several years ago. There are bits and pieces of the original me that remain. However, there have been chunks of me that have been broken, rearranged, replaced, and altered forever. I have wished that I knew then what I know now. However, was I ready to hear these messages at that time? I now realize that I got exactly what I needed when I needed it the most.

The phrase “come full circle” is misleading, however. When the circle is closed, one may think that the journey is complete. There is a sense that you’ve returned to the place from which you began, and I would argue that you can never do that. I have in fact returned to the physical place, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, from which I began this journey. However, since I am a different person in many ways, I am not experiencing it in the same way. Although I came back knowing many of the professors, they have also changed and our interactions demonstrate the inadequacies of the phrase “come full circle.”

A better phrase may be “returning anew.” Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary defines return as “to go back or come back again” and anew as “in a new and different form.” These definitions, when put together, embody what I feel I have accomplished at this stage in my journey... I have come back again in a new and different form, rejuvenated from having experienced *currere* and the beauty of soulful classroom moments.

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Teaching with Poetic Insight: A Practitioner Reflection and Dream of Possibility

Dorothy Marie Bossman

Abstract

This reflection focuses on the case of a student who failed my English class when I was concurrently a PhD student and a middle school teacher. The pedagogical insight imbedded in the story of our time together adds to the literature on teacher content knowledge Shulman (1986) called *the missing paradigm*. The piece takes an unorthodox approach to a case study based on the twofold identity of the author as a researcher intrigued by the complexity of teacher thinking and an educator driven by concern for a particular student. This case reflects back on my experiences teaching this young man, whom I failed to bring out from under an oppressive system (Friere, 1970). The reflection unfolds into a fantasy of an emerging, poetic curriculum I wished I had created for this student, rather than assigning him a failing grade. This approach to curriculum could “allow students their full humanity and allow me to stay alive as a teacher” (Ayers, 1993). Based on Dewey’s conception of a poem as “a universe” that is “self-enclosed and self-limiting,” (1934, p. 250), I construct a metaphorical understanding of my ideal teaching as a poetic creation. Through a careful rebellion against constraints created by policy and school governance, my teaching could be a model for students, whom I hope will become “strong poets” (Bloom, 1978) with the confidence and space to write their own beautiful learning agendas.

Keywords: *at-risk students, teacher manner, pedagogy, curriculum*

Introduction

In the presidential address to the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association in 1985, Lee S. Schulman asked, “How

long have we been burdened by assumptions of ignorance and ineptitude within the teaching corps?” Next, he presented a bold idea; the academy needed to include the expertise of classroom teachers in the burgeoning corpus of pedagogical knowledge. He urged researchers to work alongside teachers as they engaged in “systematic inquiry in their classrooms,” in order to construct an authoritative collection of cases to serve as “prototypes, parables, and precedents” from which researchers, teachers, and teacher educators could draw wisdom and expertise (Shulman, 1986). Other scholars have sought to improve the status of teacher research and practitioner knowledge (Avery, 1987; Cazden, Diamondstone, & Naso, 1989; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Giroux, 1988; Schon, 1987; Latta & Wonder, 2012), but the assumptions that divide teachers and researchers persist.

This separation became palpable for me during the four years in which I was a PhD student and a secondary English teacher. At the university and at work, I struggled to counter aspersions about educational researchers and classroom teachers. I became a dual outsider, emboldened by an indignant urgency to defend the legitimacy of my expertise in both contexts. Work colleagues spoke disparagingly of education professors (and graduate students) who do not understand the reality of school and fellow doctoral students condemned classroom teachers for a lack of interest in research. It became apparent that teachers and those who conduct research about teaching still lack respect for each other. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) concluded more than a decade ago, “those most directly responsible for the education of children have been disenfranchised. (p. 5)” In my experience, nothing has changed; teachers do not consult researchers for their expertise and scholars of education have marginalized themselves from contexts in which education actually occurs.

The piece that follows is an example of the reflective practice I engaged in as a teacher and a researcher. This case illustrates the “metacognitive awareness” and “reflective understanding” Shulman (1986) called on teachers to employ in their inquiries. I begin with an “intellectual biography,” (Schon, 1987) which narrates the development of my pedagogical approach; then I recall my interactions with one seventh-grade student whose deficits as a learner had been codified by a list of “limiting labels” (Ayers, 1993). The reflection describes my fruitless at-

tempts to help this young man succeed within a standard, linear curricular paradigm. My thinking about that failure unfolds into a dream of a poetic curriculum that could have encouraged this troubled student to speak out and “to become more whole and fully alive in the classroom” (Ayers, 1993, p. 43). The implications of my case form a “pedagogic creed” (Dewey, 1897), which asserts what I have learned about what ought to transpire in a secondary English classroom.

In *Art as Experience*, Dewey claims that “a poem presents material so that it becomes a universe” with a “self-enclosed and self-limiting” nature (1934, p. 250-251). This art form has always been enchanting for me. The first poet I loved was Dickinson, who taught me to “dwell in possibility”¹ of words. As a teenager, I wrote cathartically, following the lead of Auden, who illustrated the dramatic therapy of claiming that “the stars are not wanted.”² Later, when I studied literature in college, I came into contact with more poetry, and continued to love it. Poems still stay with me like kind words from faraway friends. Wordsworth encourages me to find power when the “world is too much with [me]”³ and Sandburg shows me the joy of detail with his whimsical depiction of fog “on cat’s feet.”⁴ Poems also serve as mementos of pivotal moments in my life and they have comforted me when “things fall apart.”⁵ Now that I am a public school teacher, it is easy to entangle myself into battles over education legislation, the role of testing, the nature of curriculum, the status of teachers, and the aims of education. Dewey’s reminder that a poem “becomes a universe” invites me to *pause* and to linger on the potential of words again.

It is a difficult time to be an English teacher. Our content area has become a locus for standardized testing, so we spend a large amount of time teaching reading *strategies*. This focus on decontextualized skills comes at the cost of fostering an intimate connection between reader and writer (Wilhelm, 2008). The students and I need space to build this connection, hence my visceral reaction to constrictive mandates. Per Dewey (1934), “anger appears to be a reaction in protest against fixed limitation of movement” (p. 217). Thus, I can articulate my frustrations at the ever-narrowing confines of my practice, but I wonder how my students are feeling about their futures. There are predetermined expected outcomes for school, but they are usually assigned to students without regard for their interests, history, or talents. Students who cannot or will not follow

the standard narrative for academic success are too easily labeled as failures, along with their teachers, schools, and communities (Ravitch, 2010; Labaree, 2010).

My teaching is the most rewarding when I can practice teaching in the manner of an independent artist, akin to what Bloom (1973) called a “strong poet.” Barone (2001) proposes that schools should help all students become strong poets, writers of their own lives. Despite the pressures of assessments and curricular regulations, Barone suggests, a school should create space for each student to act as “a strong storyteller, continuously revising [his or her] life story in the light of [his or her] own experience and imagination” (p. 125). The vision of a young person composing a unique, imaginative path through education is beautiful, but realizing this dream in the “technological, bureaucratic, often dehumanizing systems of schooling” (Barone, 2001, p. 121) is not simple. In my practice, I have witnessed students who do not feel empowered to speak for themselves at all.

This paper considers my experiences with Cole,⁶ one victim of a failure-focused, dysfunctional educational situation. Before the year started, the seventh grade resource teacher told me that Cole was a “difficult student,” pointing to a list of acronyms (BD, ODD, and LD) that followed his name on the class roster. When I met Cole, he did not speak or smile when I tried to get to know him. Also, he came to class empty-handed every day and he would not walk up to the front of the room to pick up materials. Cole would not respond to questions or make eye contact, even when I called on him directly. Despite his being labeled as a student with behavior disorders, Cole did not disrupt class; it was easy for me to overlook him, much easier than it was to get him to participate.

Later, Cole was placed in my homeroom, which had become a class for students who were considered likely to fail upcoming standardized reading tests. In this smaller group, Cole began to talk and even smile a little. Building on this connection, I hoped that I could help him enjoy my subject and find some success at school. He actually participated in a few homeroom activities voluntarily; he liked those that involved making some kind of picture in reaction to a text. In English, we began reading poetry and writing about it (founded on their teacher’s enthusiasm for the subject matter). I exposed students to poets I loved, and they shared some of their work or their favorites poems with me. Many of my stu-

dents were excited when we examined the lyrics of popular artists as forms of poetry, but Cole stayed silent in that context.

Several months later, I had assigned a reflective essay for which students were asked to pick a poem in our textbook and explain why it moved them. In the computer lab, I noticed that Cole was typing, something I had never seen him do. As I looked closer, I saw that he had copied down a line from the poem “Dreams” by Langston Hughes: “For if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly” and the rest of his document was blank. When I asked if he had more to write, Cole shrugged and said, “I don’t know how to tell about this metaphor.” I sat down beside him excitedly and pushed him to explain. “That part about the bird. It is the kind of thing I like in poetry; I just don’t know how to explain how pretty it is.” I was stunned. After that, Cole didn’t say anything more and no amount of prompting could get him to type any more than that line. But that moment of understanding we had shared was magical.

Despite the fact that Cole had yet to produce any measurable work, I was overwhelmed with pride. Although there was a new spark that thrilled me, I could not use his lingering on one line of poetry as evidence that he deserved a better grade. After the year was over, as I reflected back on this event, it highlighted the wrongness of the way I was assessing students. According to the standards under which we were operating, both Cole and I failed. I could never prompt Cole to write a paper (and he did not pass my class or any reading test), but my glimpse of his thinking that day made me wonder about what he had locked away. If I had fought against the constraints placed upon my teaching and placed Cole at the center of his learning, what could I have seen in him? Dewey (1934) celebrates the hard work of an artist shaping a medium when he observes that “resistance that calls out thought generates curiosity and solicitous care, and, when it is overcome and utilized, eventuates in elation” (p. 62). If I had acted as strong poet, what could I have done for this student? If I had taken more care to construct a poetic curriculum, would I have seen this young man feel elation?

Below, I consider what I would do if I had had the chance to travel back in time to create a curriculum *with* Cole. This piece is a reflective fantasy; in it Cole and I do not fail. It also includes strategies that allow teachers to share ownership and creation of educational outcomes with

students. It is written as a progress report for a unit, which includes many of the elements of reading, speaking, and research that were covered in the mandated 7th grade curriculum. It is fictional, but it illustrates the possibility of curriculum reconciliation with poetic insight.

Week One: Expression of Self: For the self-introduction, students made presentations and Cole played a song for the class, Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song,” rather than give a speech. Later, he told me that the song explains how he feels “so hopeless sometimes about the world.” At the end of the week, Cole answered some peers’ questions about Marley, using his expertise.

Week Two: Points of Conflict: We read several short stories that offer radical ways of thinking and Cole chose one that was meaningful to him, “Thank You Ma’am” by Langston Hughes. When asked to find a conflict, he chose the one faced by the young protagonist. Cole shared his connection by drawing a cartoon, in which he was looking at an I-pod surrounded by dollar signs and question marks. “He [Hughes] wanted to steal from that lady because he wanted shoes and I would do anything to get an iPod,” Cole wrote on the back.

Week Three: Expanding our Understanding: For a reading assignment, Cole set out to find other stories in which the main character is a criminal. From my list, he chose to read Malcolm X’s autobiography (even though it is long) and “Reformed Reformation” by O. Henry. He also added the movie *Catch Me if You Can* and a book of Hughes’ poetry to his project.

Week Four and Five: The Process of Inquiry: Cole began with some research questions:

1. Who were O. Henry, Hughes, and X? How did they get in trouble?
2. How did they go from being criminals to authors? (Can that really happen?)
3. Why do kids start stealing?
4. How can somebody change from a life of crime?

The class also learned to assess the quality of internet sources, many of which Cole used in addition to his selected texts, to conduct research during class and at home.

Week Six: Presentations and Activities: Cole presented his research on a Power Point. He asked the class for ideas about confronting juvenile crime. Several wanted to have an expert come to class, so Cole asked our school resource officer if he could join us. Cole and another student wrote questions, which they gave to students who wanted to speak up in class. The officer's visit was interesting for all of us!

Cole's progress as a "strong poet:"

Cole showed his musical intelligence, which helped him feel confident.

Cole explored ways to respond to stories, such as his cartoon.

Cole is shy, but talked to the class and adults outside of class about his questions.

Cole organized an educational experience for us.

His words: "I didn't know I could do so much. Stealing is a real problem, but there are actually things kids can do if they need help. I found some cool things out about those writers and I didn't get scared when I presented."

Reflection

The supportive classroom environment and the flexible teacher depicted in the fictional report are unlikely to exist within an environment of mandated curricula and high-stakes testing. This scenario grants the teacher and the student aesthetic space in which to build an "integral experience out of the interaction of organic and environmental conditions and energies" (Dewey, 1934). A poetic teacher responds uniquely to her students as they experience the curriculum; the materials the teacher brings and the activities they pursue together cannot be scripted into tightly written plans. On this emerging path of learning, Cole does not fail; instead he is engaged, uplifted, and challenged by his experiences with the English curriculum. Teachers following poetic insight empower

their students to express themselves and to control the direction of their own learning, which requires rebellion against the “banking concept” (Freire, 1970) of curriculum that renders students as passive recipients of knowledge.

Dewey (1934) reminds educators that young people need to know that “the future is not ominous but a promise; it surrounds the present as a halo” (p.17). I should have defended my student’s right to succeed and made space for him to express himself, regardless of the mandates I would have had to violate. Then, perhaps, I would have been able to see more of the sensitive poet inside him. If young people leave our classrooms with a vision of life “as an on-going project with no final end in view, a project comparable to the creation of a work of art” (Barone, 2001, p. 131), we have not failed. These young people will be emboldened to speak for themselves, based on what they have learned from their teachers. The world needs to witness the future these young poets will create once they have left our classrooms. According to Dewey (1934), “[t]he moral prophets of humanity have always been poets.” (p. 362), so we must listen.

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Explanatory Notes

¹ Dickenson, E. (published 1951). Poem 657 or "I Dwell in Possibility"

² Auden, W. H. (1938). "Funeral Blues."

³ Wordsworth, W. (1807). "The World is Too Much with Us."

⁴ "Fog" (1916) by Carl Sandburg

⁵ "The Second Coming" (1919) by William Butler Yeats

⁶ The student's name has been changed.