



Carmen Gallego-Domínguez has presented two papers - research documents and have been accepted for presentation at the next AERA Congress to be held in the month of April in the city of New York (United States of America).

Novice Teachers' Experiences In High Needs International Contexts

Abstract

Beginning teacher attrition in high needs contexts has wrestled with various factors such as poverty, culture and race. Exploring novice teachers' concerns is integral to figure out ways to sustain them in the profession. This symposium integrates multiperspectival focuses on novice teachers experiences in high needs contexts across continents. The first paper discussed novice teachers' professional learning with mentors via reflective diaries in post-colonial Dominican Republic. The second paper explored a teacher's "stories to live by" in high poverty rural China. The third one focused on teachers' experiences in diverse urban-like suburbs of the U.S. The fourth paper addressed cultural factors influencing novice Israeli-Arab teachers' learning strategies in induction. The fifth paper attended to teachers in Roma community of Spain.

Session Summary

Teacher attrition, especially beginning teacher attrition in high needs contexts, has been a critical issue in many countries. The shortage of teachers in schools is more a matter of failing to sustain teachers. Teachers' experiences intertwine with various factors within increasingly diverse classrooms, schools and communities. Exploring those novice teachers' stories, challenges and concerns lays the foundation to beginning teacher retention. Currently, migration has become much more frequently in the global village and many countries are investing efforts to deal with diverse population from different cultures, economic and social backgrounds. Teachers are the fountainhead in classrooms to deal with issues related with diversity. Five studies in this

symposium focused on novice teachers' experiences in high needs contexts across four continents: 1) teachers' professional learning with mentors in post-colonial Dominican Republic; 2) a teacher's "stories to live by" in high poverty rural China; 3) teachers' experiences in urban-like suburbs of the U.S.; 4) cultural factors influencing novice Israeli-Arab teachers' learning strategies in induction; 5) teachers' challenges in Roma community of Spain. Those five studies untangle issues beginning teacher have encountered from multiperspectival lenses in order to cast multiple layers of meanings on novice teacher support and retention, nationally and internationally.

The 90 minutes paper symposium will unfold in the following manner:

Introduction of Session: (5 minutes)

Paper 1: Beginning Teachers' Professional Learning Through Teachers' Diaries With Mentors: The Dominican Republic Case (13 minutes)

Paper 2: A Digital Narrative Inquiry Into A Beginning Teacher's "Stories To Live by" In Rural China (13 minutes)

Paper 3: Suburban Expectation Versus An Urban Reality: U.S. Beginner Teachers Experiences Teaching In Diverse Suburbs (13 minutes)

Paper 4: Cultural Factors Influencing Israeli-Arab Novice Teachers' Learning Strategies During Induction (13 minutes)

Paper 5: Challenges And Concerns Of Beginning Teachers In Romania Community Of Spain (13 minutes)

Discussant: (10 minutes)

Question Period (10 minutes)

Paper 1: Beginning Teachers' Professional Learning Through Teachers' Diaries With Mentors: The Dominican Republic Case

In this study we would like to answer the following research questions: (a) What are beginning teachers' concerns regarding their relationship with mentors? (b) Do classroom teaching is connected with the relations between beginning teachers and mentors?

Induction is a key stage in the professional development of beginning teachers. It has become urgent to attend to teachers' needs in high needs schools (Cheryl, 2017). There have been many studies that have been carried out in relation to the subject of our study (Schmidt, Klusmann, Lüdtke, Möller, & Kunter, 2017). Mentoring is a process of an experienced teacher with specific training being in collaboration with one or more beginning teachers. The mentor activities with beginning teachers include planning, observing and mediation on education (Orland-Barak, 2014).

Participants were asked to write digital reflective diaries. The data of this study came from digital diaries that six beginning teachers wrote during their first year in an induction program in a high-need school in the Dominican Republic. Schools are in an area of special attention. High levels of crime and citizen insecurity characterize the near context. That influence life inside schools: high levels of absenteeism, violence, abuse, etc. These circumstances make the work of beginning teachers more complex and need to implement student retention strategies. Each beginning teachers, with mentors help, wrote around 38 pages of diaries, 67,500 words in total.

We analyzed the diaries content through two research questions, and findings are presented in the following:

a) It was not uncommon that beginning teachers questioned their abilities to teach. The mentors feel useful as support for teachers' beginners, showing their experience and helping them to overcome the difficulties encountered at personal or classroom level. Mentors and learners establish good relations also in the personal field, which helps teachers to sustain in the profession who collaborate closely and collaboratively in the construction of joint practices.

b) Along with emotional support, mentors justify their activity in the accompaniment and support for the improvement of the teaching of beginning teachers' classes. Several are the topics discussed in the newspapers such as problems, difficulties and concerns, training needs, interactive teaching and planning of it. For some beginning teachers, the teaching experience implies a true personal challenge. Among the concern of beginning teachers are two aspects related to the environment of classroom management: the discipline and motivation.

We can conclude that the challenges encountered by the beginning teachers include the discipline, motivation, lesson planning and technology use, which align with existing research findings (Vaillant & Marcelo, 2015). Mentors play an important role in the socialization of beginning teachers by providing emotional and professional supports (Schmidt, Klusmann, Lüdtke, Möller, & Kunter, 2017). The orientation that is perceived through their narratives is

focus of what we might call “pedagogy of care” and “matriarchal orientation”. The mentor appears as a figure on the scale between the needs of beginning teachers’ staff and requirements of didactic orientation, emotional, psychological, support development of teaching skills, and administrative management.

Paper 2: A Digital Narrative Inquiry Into A Beginning Teacher’s “Stories To Live by” In Rural China

Many of the most challenging issues in the education of China are rooted in its rural areas with high poverty. The number of teachers in high-poverty areas dropped from 4.7 million to 3.3 million from 2010-2013 (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2015). Among those who are teaching in rural areas, 36.7 percent are considering leaving the teaching profession (Chinese Rural Education Research Center, 2016). These numbers indicate that teacher attrition in rural China is more a matter of failing to sustain teachers. Furthermore, 51.2 percent of rural teachers began teaching without knowledge of poverty-ridden context. Additionally, there were 61 million rural children living with the absence of their parents in 2013, while 46.74% of those parents were working in labor intensive fields in cities, entailing issues on children’s physical and mental development. Therefore, teachers frequently also play parents’ roles when they teach. Rural teachers’ overloaded work is worsened by the high-accountability evaluation system. The insufficient resources for professional development leave rural teachers on their own to survive. This study tells and retells a novice teacher’s stories of gaining his own growth when teaching in a rural school with a shortage of resources.

This study employs digital narrative inquiry as an approach to explore a beginning teacher’s “stories to live by”, experiences of sustaining himself. Digital storytelling, integrating stories with images and videos of participants’ daily lives, provides a space for teachers to reflectively see what happened in his personal and professional landscapes, to develop inquiries that have not occurred and to empower people to make choices regarding how they want to relive their stories in the future. Fei, the participant teacher who began teaching in August 2016, has recorded his experiences daily with students in and out of classroom via pictures and videos for one year. Fei talked about his own views and experiences presented in the digital materials, selected materials together by negotiating with his students and made a digital story on his own.

This digital inquiry process developed Fei’s multilayered understanding of what were the schooling lives that his students liked and did not like and how might those likes and dislikes connect with students’ lives outside school. Fei started questioning his previous assumptions of what should be done in classroom and what he thought was best for students. The digital inquiry process created a visual and reflective space that narrowed the gap between the participant teacher who came from city and students who lived in poverty. The growth and changes in the digital inquiry process also helped Fei find ways to enrich his “best-loved self” (Schwab, 1978) in the future. However, the digital inquiry process did not operate as a straight road, but as a route of Fei coming back and forth and negotiating the identity of who he was and what he wants to be. The study provides the implication that when given the chance, teachers in high needs contexts use digital inquiry to create space for self-educating, fostering their connections with students, and sustaining themselves.

Paper 3: Suburban Expectation Versus An Urban Reality: U.S. Beginner Teachers Experiences Teaching In Diverse Suburbs

As urban neighborhoods are gentrified the urban natives are often displaced and must find other housing, the suburbs being one. This study will explore the impact this migration has on suburban school districts. The nation is on the cusp of a great community shift and this is creating cultural issues in not only the gentrified area schools, but the suburban area schools as well (Klineberg & Braswell, 2012). Poverty is a major concern for any school district. The suburbs are the home of the largest and faster-growing poor population in the US (Kneebone, 2010). The socioeconomic changes have created an interesting dynamic in suburban. These demographic changes often lead to increased teacher attrition.

The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to explore what factors contribute to beginner teachers' identity as they navigate landscapes that are different from their expectations. Many beginning teachers want to work in the suburbs because they believe the better schools are found in these areas. However suburban schools have become more urban in nature due to demographic changes. The goal of the research is to find themes that can help prepare new teachers to work in diverse settings and increase teacher retention in urban and suburban areas.

Narrative inquiry is a method of research used to explain lived and told stories (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). This exploratory study will take the experiences of teachers and investigate their internal and existential condition, through storying backwards and forward. Narrative inquiry will allow for the teachers participating in this study to re-story their experiences and allow me to identify educative happenings (Mitton-Kukner, Nelson, & Desrochers, 2010). Narrative inquiry serves as the best way of understanding experiences because it attends to teacher experiences (sociality) that occur in context (place) over time (temporal) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Focusing on three participants stories (two white females and one African-American female), two common themes emerged. 1) The new teachers wished they were better prepared to work with diverse student populations. 2) The new teachers had to reconcile their expectations and realities to create their teacher identities. This research can help create more comprehensive diversity education in teacher education programs as well as contribute to the ongoing discussion of teacher identity.

Paper 4: Cultural Factors Influencing Israeli-Arab Novice Teachers' Learning Strategies During Induction

Novices learn within communities of practice while sharing experiences with veteran teachers (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Although collaboration is an effective condition for workplace learning (Jurasite & Harbison, 2010), teacher learning depends on the school leadership, organizational structures and culture (Avalos, 2011). Additionally, more culturally grounded variables might clash with teachers' organizational commitment at the workplace, as found in the Arab community in Israel (Cohen & Abedallah, 2013).

The Israeli Arab community is an ethnic minority (Abu-Saad, 2003) in high needs (OECD, 2016), characterized by collectiveness, patriarchy and conservatism (Barakat, 1993). While this community is affected by processes of modernity (Sherman, Shapira, Arar, & Azaiza, 2010), preservice teachers who are trained in a westernized, democratic teacher education system still face difficulties to implement western educational approaches in Arab schools (Eilam, 2002). This gap between the culture of teacher training and the school culture could be problematic for Arab novices' learning during their socialization into the school culture at the early stages of teaching (Zeichner, 2012). Therefore, this study focuses on how cultural factors influence the learning strategies used by Arab novices in Israel, during the first year of teaching.

This study took place in the context of induction in Israeli Arab schools, as part of a wider national research funded by the Israeli Science Foundation (ISF). Participants included 22 Arab novices during their first year of teaching in Elementary, Junior and High schools.

In this presentation, we focus on the analysis of qualitative data of 22 in-depth semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996). The interviews focus on novices' learning, specifically the involved processes, strategies and agents. The analysis integrated meaning categorization (Kvale, 1996) and thematic analysis (Creswell, 2003). During this process, a qualitative computer based analysis software (ATLAS) was used for organizing, coding and searching for texts associated with specific codes (Creswell, 2014).

The findings reveal three predominant cultural factors informing novices' learning strategies: First, participants feel that the collegial space at school is unsafe and judgmental and fear of being misunderstood and rejected by colleagues when expressing opinions, disagreement, and difficulties. Therefore, they avoid sharing difficulties and rely mainly on solitary learning strategies, often turning for advice to family members or friends teaching in other institutions.

Second, novices perceive their superiors as authoritative and avoid disobeying their requests. Consequently, they take up multiple incompatible assignments that limit their availability for learning to teach and bring them to adopt survival strategies.

Finally, novices express their mistrust of traditional practices such as frontal teaching and hierarchical relationships with pupils. Participants criticize those practices and describe their colleagues as unreliable learning resources. Therefore, they avoid accessing veteran colleagues and turn to independent trial and error learning strategy.

Our findings provide new insights on novice teachers learning in high needs traditional communities and reveal the influence of cultural factors at the workplace on novice learning strategies. The study calls for designing culturally-sensitive induction frameworks to support schools in establishing collaborative learning environments which enhance constructive novice learning strategies especially in high needs communities.

Paper 5: Challenges And Concerns Of Beginning Teachers In Romania Community Of Spain

We are living through times of change that are constantly challenging the capacity for balance, inclusion and innovation. The value of societies is directly related to the level of education of their citizens (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Marcelo, 2009). It is necessary to establish formal and informal ways for citizens and professionals to be constantly learning (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). The role of teachers continues to be crucial for the development of societies, and it is essential to consider how we can help teachers to sustain in their profession and to contribute to their schools (Craig, 2017).

The aim of this study is to know how beginning teachers learn and what teacher education deficiencies are when they teach in schools with special needs. Two novice teachers participated in this qualitative study. One teaches mathematics and literacy teaching in primary and the other in child education. The two schools are located in a neighborhood whose population is mostly the Roma origin, with needs that require special attention. In both schools, school absenteeism is high and parents pay little attention to the education of their children. We have adapted the Jordell (1987) instrument to the characteristics of this study. The dimensions for the interview analysis were: experiences during the first year, changes and learning, concerns, collaboration network and teacher education.

During their first year of teaching, these teachers affirm that it has been a great challenge and that they have learned through experiences. They use the concepts "growth", "personal satisfaction" and "learning" to describe short but intense career. The two teachers point out the need to improvise permanently in the classroom as well as the little control they can exercise there being major learning experiences. . The biggest concern during this first year has to do with social aspects, that is, how to build connections with students and their families. The two teachers have sought acceptance by administration constantly. On the contrary, the relations with the other teachers have been characterized by respect and companionship. Teachers help each other to overcome obstacles and resolve conflicts between students. Finally, regarding teacher education, the beginners assure that it was not enough to deal with the reality of their schools. They did not think themselves as master teachers, especially in such a complicated context. They learned teaching by doing. There is also insufficient training on innovative methodologies. In the same way, they point out the mentors and another professional as indispensable to teacher learning, improvement and transformation.

To conclude, we propose the need for an induction program to support beginning teachers in schools of Romania community in Spain. Mentors need to accompany beginning teachers in

induction. Also, the program counts on the commitment of the whole school, families, community, and policy.

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