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Stories from the Field: How Preservice Teachers Experience the Internship Transition



Study Structure

- ∞ Six-year longitudinal study beginning their last semester/s of coursework
- ∞ Continued through:
 - General education internship
 - Special education internship
 - First 3 years of professional teaching
 - Picked up during 5th year for reflection
- ∞ Six participants total
 - Made the transition into (and out of) internships during 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years

Study Purpose & Research Question

STUDY PURPOSE: To explore how preservice teachers who have developed anti-deficit and social justice thinking are able to navigate and implement these conceptions within their complex contexts

RESEARCH QUESTION: How do preservice teacher experience transition from university student to student teacher in systemic organized structures?

Identified Needs Within the Literature

- ∞ “The perspectives, questions, and voices” of prospective teachers” (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005, p. 16)
- ∞ Longitudinal studies (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Pinnegar, et al., 2011)
- ∞ Social and situated learning of preservice teachers (Anderson & Stillman, 2013, p. 57)
- ∞ Changes in preservice teachers (Anderson & Stillman, 2013, p. 57).

How This Study Helps Address Research Needs

∞ Longitudinal

- Six-year study
- I have known the participants for 8 years.

∞ Preservice Teacher Voices

- Relies on the participants' constructions of their transition experiences.

∞ Context

- Positioning theory addresses how participants are affected by their lived experiences, university training, and teaching contexts.
- Examines how the preservice teachers operate as both learners and teachers.

Why Address this Transition?

- ∞ Intransigent student achievement gaps
- ∞ High percentage of new teacher turn-over
- ∞ Common solution is to train preservice teachers in social justice/critical pedagogy/CRT/CSP
- ∞ Does not account for socialization processes, positioning, and external, institutional structures

Participants

- ∞ All had been in two classes and practicum with me
- ∞ Dual certification in elementary education (K-6) and special education (K-12)
- ∞ Some have additional certification in ESL, early childhood education (K-2)
- ∞ Entered student teaching in 2012-13 & 2013-14 school year
- ∞ All started and ended six years of research with me
- ∞ All have remained in teaching, though half have almost left at some point

Participants

- ☞ **Bryan** – 28, six years in college, began as fire-fighter in community college, changed schools & districts, has begun MA
- ☞ **Adele** – 28, five years in college, began in nursing, parents are educators, moved multiple times across country, married with two children, completed MA
- ☞ **Maxwell** – 29, six years in college, highly involved in athletics, changed states, married with two children, begun MA
- ☞ **Rose** – 27, four years in college, always wanted to be a teacher, moved back to east coast, married with one child, transitioned into resource position, has begun MA
- ☞ **Anne** – 28, six years (gained 3rd cert), transferred, from very rural, low-income background, works with ED students, completed MA, starting PhD
- ☞ **Danielle** – 27, five years (gained 3rd cert.), rural & small town roots, same state, returned home, married, wanting to begin family

Conceptual Lens

☞ Positioning Theory

- Informed by Harré & van Langenhove (1999)
- Allows examining of inherent power structures

☞ Six Modes of Positioning

- First order
- Second order
- Moral
- Personal
- Tacit
- Intentional

Methods

☞ Skyped interviews

- Monthly prior to student teaching
- Monthly during internships
- Post-internships TBD by participants (still mostly monthly)
- 2-3 times in 5th year

☞ Mind maps/illustrations

- 1st completed prior to student teaching
- 2nd completed between week 10-14 of internships

☞ Participants' reflections/journal entries

☞ Existing artifacts

☞ Informal conversations

☞ Researcher reflective and analytic memos

☞ Text messages and social media added later (technology changes)

Methodology

∞ Narrative Inquiry

- Informed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) narrative frameworks
- Situated “in the midst” of multiple intersecting plotlines
- Participant constructed
- Researcher as co-constructor

∞ Visual Methodology

- Informed by Prosser (2007, 2011) and Clark-Ibáñez (2004)
- Extended concepts to encourage participant narrative construction

∞ Thematic Analysis

- Informed by Riessman (2008) and Clandinin & Connelly (2000)
- Large scale ideas that emerge, but are not isolated from context

Data Analysis

- ∞ Categorized themes constructed from transcripts & reflective journals
- ∞ Themes have been classified as related to:
 - Background/personal story
 - University/training experiences and beliefs
 - Teaching experiences and beliefs
 - Tensions (interpersonal, intrapersonal, institutional)
 - Positioning (self, others, or being positioned)
- ∞ Individual participants' narratives
- ∞ Member-checking
- ∞ Cross-case analysis

Results

- ∞ Individual narratives for each participant
 - Early background and habitus
 - Teaching philosophies and beliefs
 - Key tensions that emerged in conflict with beliefs
- ∞ Cross-analysis of the six narratives
 - Used Harré and van Langenhove's (1999) six positioning modes as a framework
 - Identified two key storylines that emerged from the participants' experiences
 - *Stops and Starts (positives of positioning)*
 - *Tensions and Conflicts (negatives or “dark side” of positioning)*

Bryan's Story

- ☞ Transition as emotionally linear moving from “happy and humble” to “excited and anxious” to begin teaching
- ☞ Impacted by emotional experiences and “vibes” – teacher’s reaction to 9-11, Sandy Hook shootings
- ☞ Operated from philosophies of caring and “fun”
- ☞ Good teaching is characterized by strong rapport
- ☞ Key tensions included:
 - tight, prescriptive curriculum
 - low-level reading materials
 - lead teacher with different teaching dispositions

Adele's Story

- ☞ Positioned between two spaces – university student and intern - competing for her time, energy, and resources
- ☞ Gained social and cultural capital from parents – gave her a more critical view
- ☞ Operated from philosophies of proactivity, need for planning and organization
- ☞ Good teaching is characterized by excellent classroom management and routines
- ☞ Key tensions included:
 - redundant, unimaginative curriculum
 - contentious first grade team where she felt she had to “take sides”

Maxwell's Story

- ⌘ Worked two jobs while student teaching
- ⌘ Became a mid-year teacher (January start)
- ⌘ Impacted by involvement in sports
- ⌘ Saw transition as based on existing skill sets – motivators and stressors
- ⌘ Operated from “Line Six” philosophy
- ⌘ Good teaching is being accountable for student learning and “no student is by themselves, ever”
- ⌘ Key tensions included:
 - other people rejecting being on “the team”

Rose's Story

- ∞ Desire to work with
- ∞ First internship was in charter in rural Pennsylvania (Amish country)
- ∞ Problem-posing, inquiry-based learning background
- ∞ Teaching philosophy – “Everyone deserves a chance.”
- ∞ Key tensions included:
 - “Stepford wives” teaching script from Direct Instruction program
 - Oppressive “coach” and “mentor”
 - Excessive testing

Anne's Story

- ∞ Desire to work with special education children
- ∞ Internship in very rural, very poor western area
- ∞ “Delightful” general education internship
- ∞ Teaching philosophy – “You gotta help the ones who need you.”
- ∞ Key tensions included:
 - Cooperating teacher put into compromising positions
 - Others placed her in professionally (and personally) risky situations
 - Not sure what “normal” teaching was

Stops and Starts

- ∞ Positive side of positioning
- ∞ *First order positioning* as learners
- ∞ Accepted *moral positioning* as learners
- ∞ Mistakes = learning process, not a reflection of ability or potential
- ∞ Developed “failure resistance” (Dweck & Molden, 2005)

Stops and Starts

Subheading	Dominant Positioning Mode Used	Position	Expectations/ Responsibilities	Interaction/Result
Assignments, Grades, and Jobs	2nd order, intentional	University student	Complete assignments for coursework	Complete assignments, but sometimes begrudgingly and only to level required. Work to pay tuition and internship becomes more important than university assignments Move off-campus and quit on-campus job
Eager to Teach	1st order, moral, tacit and intentional	Learner, Student teacher	Expect feedback and support from supervisors and lead teachers	Caught between eagerness and fear; what know and can apply with what don't know Frustration when supervisors did not provide feedback and guidance
Starts and Stops and Starts Again	1st order, moral 2nd order repositioning (in relation to students)	Teacher Learner	Student learning, conveying information in way students can understand Reflection and improvement	Must straddle both positions simultaneously and sometimes caused problems when others took up 2nd order positions and challenged their roles Gained failure resilience as result of seeing themselves as learners and mistakes as part of the learning process
Making Adjustments	1st order, intentional	Reflective Teacher	Student learning and outcomes regardless of other forces	Able to reflect on performance and make changes to improve either at point of use or for later instruction
Working with Parents	1st order, intentional	Ally	Work with parent for benefit of child; learn from the parent	Actions taken to benefit students with better services or instruction Conflict when child was suspected of not being safe with parent - law required different moral position to protect child

Tensions and Conflicts

- ⌘ Negative side of positioning
- ⌘ Viewed by others as passive receivers of knowledge
- ⌘ Faced tensions and conflicts
- ⌘ *Intentional first order positioning*
- ⌘ *Second order positioning*
- ⌘ Impacted by institutional and other individuals' positioning
- ⌘ Disempowered because needed recommendations and positive evaluations from supervisor and cooperating teacher; at the “mercy” of supervisors

Tensions and Conflicts

Subheading	Dominant Positioning Mode	Position	Expectations/ Responsibilities	Interaction/Result
University Influences and Models	1st order, moral 2nd order, intentional	University student	Learn content and material presented by instructors	Also learned about how to be and not to be a teacher from observation. Emulated teachers and professors with whom they had affiliation and whose classes they enjoyed; rejected teachers' and professors' methods in whose classes they felt frustrated, devalued, or were a waste of time
Making an Impression	1st order, intentional	Student teacher	Be compliant, follow directions, do a good job in line with university and lead teacher expectations	Sought to impress supervisors and lead teachers for recommendations and job opportunities
In the Midst - I Do What My Lead Teacher Does	1st order, moral, intentional 2nd order, intentional	Student teacher Learner	Passive absorption of information from supervisors and lead teachers Fit into existing structures	Confusion, lack of history, lack of power lead to subversion of position and often silence Challenge ideas, but not in public way and even if disagree, coalesce to what lead teacher wants
Not My Place to Butt In	2nd order, intentional	Student teacher	Listen, learn	Speak and act out of hierarchical context, challenge status quo in subtle or overt ways
We're All in Transition -	Shifting positions between 1st order	Student teacher	Raise test scores, followed	Positioning influenced by positioning of lead teacher, administrators, and school by federal

What New Teachers Need

- ☞ **A high-quality, non-evaluative, regular mentor**
 - Does not have to be from same area
- ☞ Reassurance that they don't have to do everything all at once
- ☞ Help with life/work balance
- ☞ To know they are “not by themselves – ever.”
- ☞ Help in knowing how to manage parents
- ☞ A helpful filter in knowing what is and is not important to address in curriculum and instruction
- ☞ To be valued and given a voice in instructional planning and implementation
- ☞ **Reiterative practice in implementing critical pedagogy and CSP to “survive” the socialization process**
- ☞ **A veteran's perspective of what “normal” in school looks like**
- ☞ **NOT to be kept in the dark, set up for failure, scorned, or condescended**

Why this Matters for PDS

- ∞ Teaching shortages are a result of issues with teacher retention, not teacher recruitment (Pederson, 2017).
- ∞ Established policies and hierarchies, where novice teachers' skills and voices are subverted, can provide **hostile environments for our most vulnerable in the profession** (Morrison, 2013, 2014)
- ∞ Examining the interconnectivity of districts and teacher preparation programs helps identify changes that can be made to better support early career teachers, necessary because **teacher quality is one of the most consequential factors to impact student learning** (e.g. Callahan, Griffo & Pearson, 2007).
- ∞ By understanding the structures in which novice teachers are positioned, we may begin to help them navigate, if not deconstruct, the barriers that exist in our current educational institutions (Morrison, 2013, 2014).

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