Post Lesson Debriefs as a Site of Teacher Identity Formation

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Outline

- Context
- Literature Review
- Empirical research foci
- Research design
- Preliminary findings
- Preliminary discussion

Context

- Narrative as a form of knowledge
- Narrative as a "primary act of mind" – Hardy (1968)
- Paradigmatic and narrative forms of knowledge – Bruner (1986)
- Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences – Polkinghorne (1988)
  - narrative understanding particularly suited to a domain in which subjectivity, experiences, meanings, intentions, histories are central
- Teachers knowledge of their practice and themselves is arguably best understood as narrative

Context

Research into narrative (or story) and teachers' knowledge and identity

- Most prolific body of work and well developed theoretical frame: Connolly and Clandinin and their collaborators e.g. Clandinin and Connelly (1995); Clandinin and Connelly (1996); Clandinin et al (2006) ; Connelly and Clandinin (1999)

- Recent work specifically on narrative and teachers' identity e.g. Gaudelli and Ousley (2009); Soreide (2006); Watson (2006)

Literature

- Search was for literature on teacher education and narrative or story
- Literature reviewed was published in refereed journals between 2005 and 2011
- Any frequent cited earlier literature was also reviewed (this included books as well as journals)
- Literature eventually took in work looking at more experienced teachers too

Literature

Findings from literature review:

- Frequent normative attitude to teachers' narrative knowledge valuing it as more authentic or empowering than knowledge in other forms or from other sources

- A sense that narrative knowledge has a function in integrating different aspects of teachers' lives and identities

Literature

Findings from literature review:

- Variable consideration of the source of teachers' narratives beyond the teacher

- A prevalent sense that teachers retain ultimate agency in the construction of their knowledge and identity even where the narrative resources they use are limited or the narrative 'landscape' is inhospitable

Literature

Findings from literature review:

- Where tension or conflict exists between differing narratives of knowledge or identity resolution remains in the hands of the individual teacher

- Resolution of tensions or conflicts tends to produce more inclusive (and better?) narratives

Literature

Findings from literature review:

- Narratives are generally told in very supportive and respectful contexts

Empirical Research Foci

- A more fine grained look at narrative formation in process

- Specifically, narrative making in post lesson observation discussions involving trainees, mentors and university tutors

  - Ochs and Capps (2001): single teller, finished narratives with high 'tellability' vs. multiple teller, incomplete narratives with (perhaps) low tellability

Research Design

- Secondary PGCE course
- One secondary school
- Final School placement, mid placement tutor visit
- Video recordings of post lesson observation discussions involving trainee, school based mentor and university tutor (9 in total)
- Recordings were transcribed for analysis
- Recordings are across a range of subjects (PE, RE (x2), Art, Mathematics, Geography, English (x3)

Research Design

Transcripts were analysed in relation to the following questions:

- Where does narrative authority lie in these narratives? Does it remain with the original teller or does it end up with someone else?

- Do students teachers retain control as agentive subjects of the narratives or do they become objects in someone else's narrative?

Research Design

Transcripts were analysed in relation to the following questions:

- Do we see the reconstruction of student teachers' narratives or do we see their displacement?   That is to say, do 'restoried' narratives combine the different perspectives of the differing narratives or does one narrative effectively push out another?

- Do we see more inclusive and richer narratives or do we just see different narratives?

Preliminary Findings

- Overall students get relatively little space to narrate their own experience

- Invitation to students to narrate is often an 'opening move' in the discussion but space for student narration typically diminishes quite rapidly

Preliminary Findings

- Passages of trainee narration are typically preceded by a setting of a narrative focus by tutor or mentor so that what is considered significant or deserving narration is not selected by the trainee

- There is a high level of 'addressivity' (Bakhtin 1981) in trainee narrations in that they are very consciously formed in response to the views or positions of the other interlocutors

Preliminary Findings

- The narratives rarely make connections outside the classroom but tend to be narratives of a narrow technology of teaching (this is in part a result of the ways that foci are set by mentors/tutors

- Narratives are rarely synthesised, the mentor/tutor narratives tend to displace trainee narratives

Preliminary Discussion

The early formation of teachers' narratives of practice and identity is in a context in which they are apprenticed to certain forms of narrative making through the direction, approval and supply of narrative forms of apparently more authoritative narrators. To appear competent as teachers they must accept and/or internalise the narrative making practices of these more authoritative narrators.

Preliminary Discussion

Because of their genesis these narratives are not primarily constructed through the agency of the beginning teachers. The style of these narratives as narratives of a narrow technology of teaching militates against them being a means to integrate diverse aspects of teachers' lives. It is not clear why they should be more authentic or empowering for these beginning teachers than other forms of knowledge.

Preliminary Discussion

This particular site of narrative formation seems to differ from most of the sites and narratives researched in the current literature.

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