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This phenomenological study examines the lived experience of an ESL teacher and his mandated change in teaching assignment. Through the use of reflection and journaling, this study examines how attitudes and beliefs towards teaching change and how ones' view of self can transform when faced with imposed change. Within the inevitable process of educational change, the study reveals the researchers' frustrations, difficulties and personal discoveries as a result of imposed change that led to new insights and understandings which, in turn, led to a better understanding of self and job. The study also reveals the importance of school administrators' understanding of the effects of change on teachers.

JOURNALING THROUGH THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

by

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The work and the world of teachers is one of rapid and intensifying change. Teachers face endless challenges as changes in policies, working conditions, community pressures and expectations, demographic compositions of the student body, turnover in school and district leadership, and overall societal conditions impact their own lives and careers. Teachers experience changes that require modification in current practice as well as more personal changes that can cause teachers to redefine their very craft or themselves as professionals. This chapter introduces educational change, specifically change that impacts the individual teacher.

There is nothing new about educational change. In fact, in education, change can be seen as the norm. The difference now, is the rate and frequency with which changes are being introduced and imposed on teachers and schools through federal and state legislation (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992).

Teachers are a focus for change, a target of change, and often, many believe, one of the major impediments to improvement and change in our schools. Understanding the role of teachers in educational change demands that we understand the nature of teaching, of the change process itself and of the interrelationships between the two.

Change can be welcomed and needed in schools as it brings the excitement of something new. On the other hand, change can be unwanted or unnecessary. Teachers who are mandated a change in level or assignment need to find a way to get on with

teaching in spite of the imposed change. Either way, change is a very personal experience. Individuals respond to and are affected by change in many different ways.

Educational Change

A primary purpose of public education in the United States is to prepare young people for life in society. As the needs, values and interests of society change, public education can be expected to change as well. Educational change is a dynamic process involving interacting variables over time, but the bottom line is that actual change depends on what teachers do and think (Fullan, 2007).

The educational system in the United States has gone through many changes in the past 65 years due in part to the introduction of federal policies. Many early educational reforms came about due to rapidly changing demographics. The role of Civil Rights and desegregation of schools put teachers in situations of change as they began to work with unfamiliar populations of students or with groups of students who were viewed as contradictory to their beliefs. Desegregated schools, second language learners and students with disabilities were changes teachers began to face in the 1960's and 1970's. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which opened the door for remedial programs such as Title I; bilingual and ESL programs (Title IV), and gender-equity (Title IX) led to significant changes in how teachers interacted with students as well as teachers' instructional practice. There was a huge shift from the exclusion of different types of learners to a more inclusive model.

The decline of the rural areas and the redistribution of students has been another type of change in schools that teachers face. The population decline in rural areas has led to the closure of schools and the consolidation of districts, which in turn leads to changes

in assignments and placements for teachers. On the other hand, the massive growth experienced in urban and suburban districts also requires changes. The opening of new schools due to increased enrollment presents many opportunities for welcome and un-welcomed teacher change.

With an increase in demographic changes, schools and teachers were faced with a rapidly changing student body. Accountability measures and curricular reforms were created to help meet the needs of the ever changing students. Societal needs and pressures led to the adoption of new science and math curricula. Districts began using outcome based measures to assess students and used performance portfolio packages. A Nation at Risk, a report commissioned in the early 1980's, blamed teachers and schools for the failing education system. This report brought about new accountability measures for teachers and schools. As a result, teacher licensing programs such as Praxis were developed. No Child Left Behind was passed into law in an effort to assure all students have the necessary skills as set by the state, to promote accountability for results, and to give parents more choices.

Regardless of where change originates, it is teachers who are faced with compliance and implementation. Teachers make or break the change agenda. When faced with the need for, or requirement to change individual teachers must discover a way to reconcile with the expected change. Teachers need to be able to work through the highly personal experience of change before they can fully implement what is expected of them in the classroom.

Teacher Change

Professional development is one process by which teachers learn and grow. There is not a lot of current research on what teachers think or feel when forced to change their professional lives. Attempts to impose change on teachers, teaching and the nature and processes of schooling have been notoriously unsuccessful as changes to teachers' professional practice involve significant shifts in beliefs and professional knowledge, and consequently, take considerable time, resources and effort (Hargreaves and Dawe, 1989).

When change is imposed on teachers, the implicit message is often not just the new idea will be better, but also that what the teacher has been doing is ineffective (Sikes, 1991). Imposed change without teacher engagement and ownership of the change brings little effective improvement in the longer term. The chance for improvement lies in the collegial efforts of teachers and their profession. The crux of change is how individuals come to terms with the reality of the change in the context of their familiar framework of reality (Fullan, 1982). Many times teachers are faced with locally imposed changes such as changes in grade level, buildings or teams. All of these changes require time to adjust and to become familiar with new surroundings.

One of the most common and serious mistakes made by both the administrators and leaders of a change process is to presume that once an innovation has been introduced and initial training has been completed the intended users will put the change into practice (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin & Hall, 1987). Administrators often forget that change can't happen without a period of adjustment. People need sustained help along the way if they're going to fully implement a new idea, and they'll require different kinds of help as their needs change. Reflective practice is a vehicle that can be used to help individual teachers deal with their own struggles involving change. A second

mistake is to assume that all users of the implementation will react in the same way. Individuals respond to change in different ways. Each person has to ability to make a decision to accept that change or to work against it.

The deeper consideration of questions involving one's professional work is believed to be fundamental to the process of changing practice (York-Barr, J., Sommers, W., Ghere, G., & Montie, J., 2001). Teacher inquiry, reflection of one's practice, can be used by teachers to untangle the complexity that occurs in their work (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003). Reflecting on one's practice is not a new idea. Seventy years ago John Dewey recognized the power of reflective action. Dewey, a constructivist teacher, believed teacher reflection would transition teachers into more inquiry-oriented classrooms (Dewey, 1933). Donald Schon (1983, 1987) describes teacher professional practice as a cognitive process of posing and exploring problems or dilemmas identified by the teachers themselves. In doing so, teachers ask questions that other researchers may not perceive or deem relevant (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003). When the need for change is identified by the individual, the possibility of actually changing practice is increased (Fullan, 2007).

Going into the school year, I knew that there would be changes but I did not expect them to be so profound. I thought I would be able to come in at the beginning of the year and make a few adjustments to my planning and delivery of instruction and things would be great. I was so wrong. It was so much more than just making minor adjustments to my teaching style. I discovered over the course of this study that I changed the way I look at myself as a teacher, how I view and understand my job and in

recognizing the critical importance of my job. I found out that being forced to change teaching assignments is hard.

My change in teaching assignment was a choice on my part, but a choice in which the options were quite limited. I could choose to accept the new assignment or I could choose to leave the district. In addition, I could choose to be bitter and angry about my situation or I could choose another path. The decision to examine this process of change through the lens of professional reflection began a journey of introspection I could not have begun to anticipate.

I was angry about this change, angrier than I admitted to myself. As I began journaling, I was forced to find a way to get control of my feelings

Background of the Researcher

Forced change has had a considerable impact on my personal and professional life. I have been teaching in the same suburban school district for six years. I worked as an elementary ESL teacher with primarily K-2 students for the first five years of my teaching career. I developed many collaborative and collegial relationships with co-workers, administrators, students and their families. I had a deep understanding of my instructional responsibilities with ESL students at the primary level. I felt comfortable in my career and in my ability to do my job well. I felt comfortable with my colleagues and felt my skills and perspectives were valued in my building. As a result, I had taken on leadership roles and chaired several school committees.

In my elementary position I worked with many small groups of students in a pull-out model each day. It was not unusual to serve up to ten groups a day of Kindergarten, first and second grade newcomers and beginning English language learners. Lessons

were designed primarily to teach social skills and beginning reading strategies and I felt I could relate well to younger elementary students. It was refreshing to see their excitement about learning. These young students' desires to succeed helped me make my professional choices; I wanted to make school a fun, safe and exciting place for students where they could come and play with and explore the English language. My comfort with this age group and proficiency level was documented in reviews. I readily absorbed new students into groups and developed strong, lasting relationships with them.

My district however, is a growing district. Over the past 10 years, enrollment has increased and in 2007-2008 a new elementary school and high school were opened. As teachers, we anticipated some change as some staff would be relocated to new sites, and new hires would be made, but I felt very secure that my position as an elementary ELL teacher would stay the same. School placements were scheduled to be announced to teachers May 17th, 2007. Tension among my colleagues began building as May 17th neared. Teachers wondered if their individual requests would be honored, if teams would be split apart or spared. There was a mixture of apprehension and excitement. I remember feeling excited with the increased space in each building and hoped I might be teaching in a real classroom at the new school instead of teaching in hall space as I had been for the past six years.

The 17th of May finally arrived and I was first in line to receive my envelope with my new teaching assignment. As I opened it, I expected to see the new elementary building, the new elementary school. I remember the shock as I read out loud in total disbelief, that I had been assigned to the middle school.

At first I thought it was a joke. Then I felt tremendous disappointment and anxiety. I had spent a lot of time at the elementary level developing relationships and creating a working teaching style for myself. I had no idea what middle school kids would be like, my new coworkers or the administration. I wondered how I would relate to older students. I wondered how I would fit into my new building as a person and as teacher. For the first time in my teaching career, I worried about being effective at my job. The situation was not negotiable; I could accept the middle school position or I could look for employment elsewhere. I was suddenly faced with an extremely difficult decision.

I knew accepting this position would constitute a major change in my teaching style; this reassignment would involve a redefinition of my self as an ESL teacher. I knew teaching elementary pull-out sessions for 25 minutes at a time with 2-3 kids would be completely different than teaching a 51 minute load-bearing, graded class of 15-20 sixth and seventh grade students.

I knew my beliefs and attitudes towards teaching in general could change as a result of this assignment; I could end up hating my job, even my profession. The fact there was no option for negotiation was particularly burdensome. My wife and I had built a house in this community and wanted to raise our family here. My wife had taken a new job in town to be closer to work. We really enjoyed our neighborhood and the small-town community feel. Our daughter had settled into day care and preschool programs and we did not want to disrupt or change her daily routine.

I was not in a position to bargain for my job and I did not want to start over in a new district. Given my families' needs, I decided to take the middle school position. It

was not a tough decision to make, but it was a tough decision to live with. My one comfort was my familiarity with the district so I would not be going into the new school totally blind. I knew this was going to be a huge change for me, but one that I would have to make the most of.

Guiding Questions

In accepting this change of teaching assignment, I wanted to document my lived experience throughout this transformation process. I wanted to document and reflect upon ways in which I was impacted by this change, as a teacher and as a person. I wanted to see if my understanding of students changed and I wanted to explore how my understanding of teaching English changed. Specifically, I wanted to explore:

1. How have my attitudes and beliefs about teaching changed as a result of an imposed change in assignment?
2. How has my understanding of self as an ESL teacher changed?

Summary

This chapter describes the way in which education in the United States has changed over the past 65 years. Change can be welcomed and needed in schools but can also be unwanted or unnecessary. Many changes arose due to changing demographics and a rapidly changing student body. Teachers also experienced changes in accountability and in curriculum. For these changes to be implemented, teachers need to have a period of adjustment which is often overlooked by administrators. Reflective practice has long been known to be a powerful tool in teacher development. Reflective practice is one

vehicle that teachers can use to help deal with their personal struggles over time. The background of the researcher is also presented within the context of a mandated change.

Chapter Overviews

In Chapter two I review the literature relevant to teacher change and reflective practice as a method of teacher development. Educational and teacher change is discussed as a welcome process and as a mandate. Some points discussed in this chapter include education and teacher change, dealing with and responding to change; and why qualitative research, specifically phenomenology, is best for this type of study. Chapter three presents the qualitative research paradigm as a means to study the phenomenon of the lived experience of mandated teacher change. Chapter four presents the results of the study. It describes the themes and personal discoveries found through journaling. I discovered that collegiality is essential to me as a teacher. Relationships within the building have a profound effect on me. I also discovered that difficulties within school programming have an effect on how I view my role as a teacher and my self. In Chapter five I discuss implications for further research and benefits or limitations for educators in a similar experience.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter two reviews literature associated with educational change and teacher change. It discusses reflective practice and its' benefits for teachers. Several individual reflection models are described.

To teachers, the concept of change is very important. Teachers are interested in bringing about changes in knowledge, attitude, values, skills and behaviors in their students. The very baseline of education is learning and change occurs as the result of

learning. Change may be exemplified by refinement, modification of or replacement of existing knowledge, attitudes or skills (Hord, 1981). Similarly, teacher change is the personal and professional responses to educational change, reforms or innovations. It is the process by which teachers learn and develop as people and teachers. Educational change also involves change in teaching practice (Fullan, 2007). Often times, the difficulty lies in determining if change is actually needed. That depends on the answer to two questions. First, is the educational change wanted, needed or valued by society? Second, are the programs effective in accomplishing the needed objectives (Fullan, 2007)?

These questions are particularly relevant to teachers who are both the agent of change and whose practice is the object of change. Beyond the technical side, change is a highly personal experience. Individual teacher change involves developmental growth in feelings and skills.

Change is most successful when it is geared to the diagnosed needs of the individual user (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin & Hall, 1987). One problem making meaning out of change for teachers is the ambiguous nature of most imposed change. Teachers are left wondering "Why should I put my efforts into this particular change?" Teachers want to know:

1.	Does the change potentially address a need? Will students be interested? Will they learn?

2.	How clear is the change in terms of what I have to do?

3.   How will it affect me personally in terms of time, energy, new skill, sense of excitement and competence, and interference with my existing priorities? (Fullan, 2007)

Educational Change

On a policy level, educational change is most often imposed. As previously discussed, changes in social policy such as desegregation, the IDEA Act, Title I,IV and IX brought significant change to states, districts and expectations for teachers. Sometimes change is imposed on districts from within teacher ranks. Dissatisfaction, inconsistency and intolerable work situations can lead teachers to force the development or enforcement of policies (Fullan, 2007). The large policy changes are often introduced to teachers by emphasizing the benefits or long-term gains of the innovation. The immediacy of the innovation, the ways in which it will be absorbed by teachers, as well as its evolution over time are unknown because planning reform and implementing reform are not the same.

Imposed change may focus upon various areas of school life and on various aspects and combinations of teachers' working conditions, practices, knowledge, skills expertise, beliefs, understandings and qualities. Imposed change is not a one-way process, for the implementation of change is influences by the teachers' ideologies. In other words, it is influenced by the beliefs and values which teachers hold about education, teaching and the schooling process in particular and life in general. This means that it is not possible to change one aspect without affecting all the others (Sikes as cited in Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). Changing the teacher involves changing the person and therefore changing the life (Hargreaves, 1988).

In cases of imposed change, teachers are in the strange position of being simultaneously both the subject and the agent of change (Dale, 1988). Teachers are required to change themselves and what they do to meet specifications laid down by policy makers who neither know them nor the contexts in which they work (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). Teachers may be required to make changes they believe to be inappropriate or impossible. The very fact that they are required to implement these imposed changes means that their professional freedom and autonomy is curtailed (Apple, 1981).

 Hargreaves (1988) states that imposed changes have their origins in economic trends, historical events, new political agendas and power changes, social and cultural events, demographic trends or technical advances. Behind these factors, pushing for change is the assumption that all is not well; students are not receiving the best education, and often, teachers or the teaching style is perceived as inappropriate or inadequate. The interpretation commonly placed on this is that teachers are lacking in knowledge, skills, competences and even personal qualities. The changes are introduced in order to remedy the deficiencies in the teachers and their teaching.

Fullan (1982) adds that the crux of change is how individuals come to terms with the realization of the change in the context of their familiar framework of their reality. The interpretation of what the change means for them influences what they do and how they do it. In order to gain some understanding of what the change means to teachers and their inclination to adapt, it is necessary to find out how they see and experience their work and how much importance they attached to it in the first place prior to the change.

Imposed change means teachers find themselves in jobs which have evolved from those originally chosen. Changes in teachers' job parameters often force them to re-identify themselves within their field. These changes can either aggravate teachers' situations or provide a glimmer of hope (Fullan, 2007). The same change can do both of these things for different teachers within the same institution depending on the perceived nature, extent and significance of the change and what is affected (Ozga & Lawn, 1988). Imposed changes can be experience positively or negatively depending on how they affect the individual's life experiences (Sikes, 1992).

Regardless of the purpose, educational change is a process, not an event. Intended and unintended consequences play out over time in ways that could not be anticipated. The inability to accurately predict reform measures makes it more difficult for individual teachers to come to terms with the effects of change on both personal and professional levels. Since change occurs over time, the concerns of individual teachers stay as they move through stages of implementing new practices in teaching. Recognizing the change process as stages individuals pass through is an essential prerequisite for successfully implementing change (Hord, et al., 1987).

Changes in classroom practice can take three to five years to be fully implemented (Hord, 1981). Comprehensive, systemic change initiatives only begin to take hold during this period of time. Teachers do not change just because a decision maker makes an announcement, new curriculum is delivered to the classroom, or the federal government issues a mandate. Rather, there is an extended period of gradual behavior or attitude change, largely dependant upon the support available to implement new programs or practice. Support needs to be systemic, with planned learning activities

that take place over time, paced in relationship to the changing concerns of the individuals involved.

Fullan (2007) describes teacher change as a change in practice. Defining change in practice is difficult as educational change is not a single entity. There are at least three components or dimensions at stake when implementing new programs or policies. At the teacher level it may include the possible use of new or revised materials such as curriculum materials or technologies, the possible use of new teaching approaches which may include new strategies or activities and finally, the possible alteration of beliefs which would include pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying new policies or programs. Fullan believes these three dimensions are strongly connected, but the sustained change does not occur without an examination of ones' beliefs.

Changing beliefs, however, is even more difficult. This often challenges or forces examinations of the core values held by individuals regarding the purposes of education (Fullan, 2007). Beliefs are generally not explicit, discussed, or understood; rather they are buried at the level of unstated assumptions. The development of new understandings is essential because it provides a set of criteria for overall planning and a screen for sifting valuable from not-so-valuable learning opportunities. The integration of new technologies, materials, strategies and teaching approaches might make their way into a teachers' classroom, but without the examination of beliefs change is most likely to be superficial and short term or situational. Long term change requires teachers' reflections not only on the techniques of changing practice or the integration of new materials but also on the deeper purpose behind reform measure and how it aligns with ones'

individual beliefs (Fullan, 2007). Changes in beliefs and understanding are the foundation of achieving lasting reform.

Change involves learning how to do something new. New meanings, new behaviors, new skills, and new beliefs depend significantly on whether teachers are working as isolated individuals or are exchanging ideas, support and positive feelings about their work (Fullan, 2007). The next section describes several models for change at an individual level.

Individual Teacher Change

Concerns-Based Adoption Model

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall, Wallace, & Dosette, 1973) holds that people considering and experiencing change evolve in the kinds of questions they ask and in their use of whatever the change is. In general, early questions are more self-oriented: What is it? How will it affect me? When these questions are resolved, questions become more task-oriented: How do I do it? How can I use these materials efficiently? How can I organize myself? Why is it taking so much time? Finally, when self- and task concerns are largely resolved, the individual can focus on impact. Teachers ask: Is this change working for students? Is there something that will work even better?

The CBAM conceptual framework is useful in understanding, monitoring, and facilitating change in an individual person. Two dimensions describe people as they first begin and then gain more experience with a new educational product, process or practice. The dimensions represent a conceptualization of the ways the concerns and behaviors of

individuals change as they become familiar with and involved in educational change. The dimensions provide checkpoints for monitoring the progress of individuals as a change is considered, adopted and implemented (Hord, 1981).

The first dimension is the Stages of Concern. Seven Stages of Concern have been identified that occur as a teacher adopts an innovation. The stages describe the kinds of concerns which the individual may experience across time related to an innovation. The range from self concerns (stages 0, 1 and 2) to concerns related to the task (stage 3) and finally to concerns for impact (stages 4, 5 and 6).The stages with descriptions are:

Stage of Concern	Expression of Concern
6. Refocusing	I have some ideas about something that would work even better.
5. Collaboration	How can I relate what I am doing to what others are doing?
4. Consequence	How is my use affecting learners? How can I refine it to have more impact?
3. Management	I seem to be spending all my time getting materials ready.
2. Personal	How will using it affect me?
1. Informational	I would like to know more about it.
0. Awareness	I am not concerned about it.

Figure 2.1
Stages of Concern: Adapted from Hall, et al. (1973, p. 15)

Movement through the stages of concern cannot be forced, but with assistance and support, can be aided. In addition to changing developmentally, the concerns will recycle in response to each new innovation. Concerns are influenced by participants' feelings about an innovation, by their perception of their ability to use it, the setting in which the change occurs, by the number of other changes in which they are involved,

and most importantly the kind of support and assistance they receive as attempt to implement change (Hord, 1981).

The second dimension of the CBAM model is the Levels of Use. This dimension describes how performance changes as the individuals become more familiar with an innovation and more skillful in using the change. Eight distinct Levels of Use have been identified:

Levels of Use	Behavioral Indicators of Level
VI. Renewal	The user is seeking more effective alternatives to the established use of the innovation.
V. Integration	The user is making deliberate efforts to coordinate with others in using the innovation.
IVB. Refinement	The user is making changes to increase outcomes.
IVA. Routine	The user is making few or no changes and has an established pattern of use.
III. Mechanical	The user is making changes to better organize use of the innovation.
II. Preparation	The user has definite plans to begin using the innovation.
0I. Orientation	The user is taking the initiative to learn more about the innovation.
0. Non-Use	The user has no interest, is taking no action.

Figure 2.2
Levels of Use: Adapted from Hall, et al. (1973, p. 11)

To educators, the concept of change is very important. Educators are interested in bringing about change in knowledge, values, attitudes, skills and behaviors. The baseline of education is learning and learning occurs if change results (Hord, 1981). Learning experiences evolve over time, take place in different settings, rely on varying degrees of external expertise, and change with participant needs. Learning experiences for different

role groups vary in who provides them, what information they share, and how they are asked to engage.

A lack of opportunity for teachers to reflect, interact with each other, share, learn, develop on the job makes it unlikely that significant changes will occur. Interaction about a change is necessary even when a new program is highly structured. Whether the change is relatively programmed in the first place or more adaptive, many valuable ideas and resources go unused. Change on the current situations is needed, for many teachers have no opportunity to stop and question their practices. When teachers have time to stop and think, they are able to consider their own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline (Fullan, 2007). Teachers can accomplish educational goals by engaging in a learning conversation. The learning conversation is a means of increasing awareness about our own learning process and of challenging our conditioned ways of thinking, being and doing (Harri-Augstein & Thomas, 1991).

Reflective Practice

There is no universally accepted definition of reflective practice. Reflective practice can be considered the practice of analyzing actions, decisions or products by focusing on the process of achieving them (Killion & Todnam, 1991). Reflective practice may be viewed as the capacity of a teacher to think creatively, imaginatively, and in time, self-critically about classroom practice (Lasley, 1992). Reflective practice may be defines as a way of thinking about educational matters that involves the ability to make rational choices and to assume responsibility for those choices (Ross, 1989). It

may involve deliberate thinking about action with a view to its improvement (Hatton &Smith, 1995).

Learning requires reflection. It can be argued that reflective practice is the process which underlies all forms of high professional competence (Bright, 1996). Reflective practices facilitate learning, renewal, and growth throughout the development of career educators (Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000). Reflection is a highly personal process, occurring as individuals find ways to deconstruct, interpret and act on their experiences. Reflection encourages independent judgment about one's own classroom as well as the larger team and school. Reflection empowers teachers, allowing them to understand themselves from internal sources and to acknowledge and accept control of and responsibility for choices. Reflection allows teachers to bring questions to the surface, adding clarity and purpose to actions in the process (Walker, 1996).

Reflection requires intent and perseverance through a systematic approach that works for the individual teacher (Greene, 1996). In order to experience growth or change, teachers move to a state of critical reflection. As one observes and writes about the classroom, patterns begin to surface. Specific questions become more obvious as patterns are thought about. This allows the teacher to focus on critical elements for student achievement. What was going on while you were doing it? What dynamics were at work? What did you have a hard time with while you were doing it? What students had a hard time, or any specific reaction to it, while it was going on?

Teachers can gain clarity if they are attentive to their assumptions and are engaged in some sort of reflection (Perrone, 1991). This act of reflection gives teachers the authority to speak. Reflection allows educators to speak intelligently about the

teaching practice. The authority comes from the close observation of children, systematic reflection on practice, and the reading of literature, both philosophical and historical from experts in the field.

Reflective practice can be considered an inquiry approach to teaching that involves personal commitment to continuous learning and improvement. A commitment to reflective practice indicates a willingness to accept responsibility for one's professional practices (Ross, 1990). By gaining a better understanding of their own individual teaching styles through reflective practice, teachers can improve their effectiveness in the classroom. When teachers study and write about their work, they make their own distinctive ways of knowing about teaching and learning more visible to themselves and others (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Teacher action may involve changes in behavior, skills, attitudes, or perspectives within the individual, team, small group, or entire school (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere & Montie., 2001).

For the purpose of this paper, the definition of reflective practice is provided by (York- Barr et.al.):

"a deliberate pause to assume an open perspective to allow for higher-level thinking processes used by practitioners to examine beliefs, goals and practices and to gain new or deeper understandings that leads to actions that improve learning for students" (2001 p. 27).

Practitioners use these processes for examining beliefs, goals, and practices, to gain new or deeper understandings that lead to actions that improve learning for students. Actions may involve changes in behavior, skills, attitudes, or perspectives within an individual, partner, small group, or school. Reflective practice serves as the foundation

for continuous learning and improvement in educational practice so children are successful in school and in life (York-Barr, et al. 2001).

Reflective Practice

actions that improve students' learning

new insights and understanding

examination of beliefs, goals and practices

thinking processes
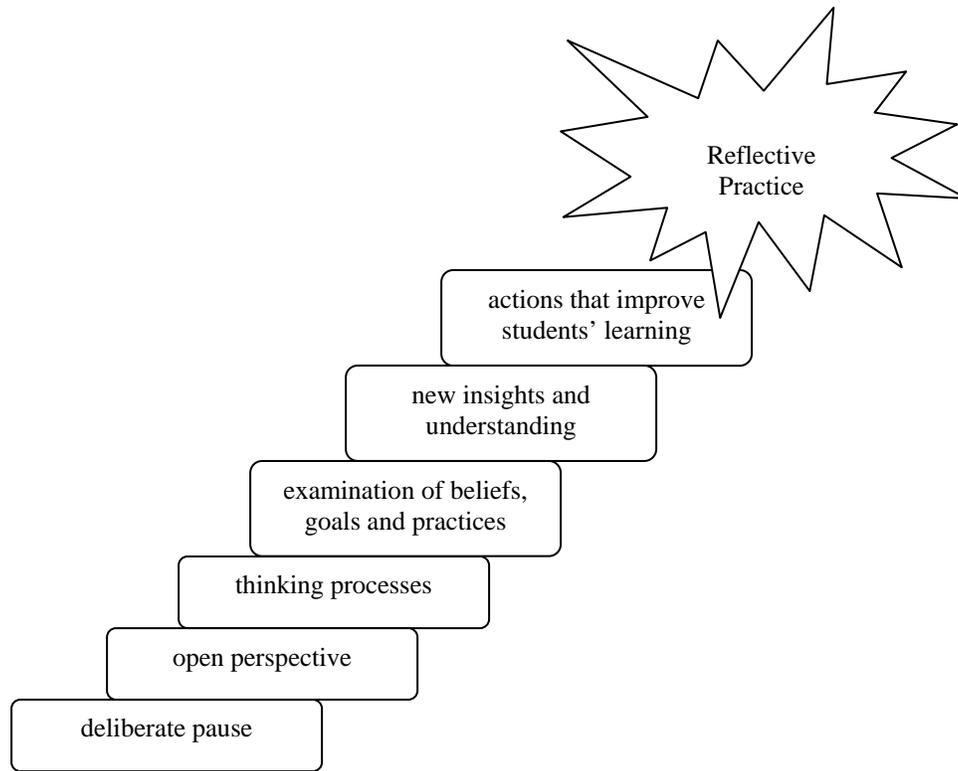
open perspective

deliberate pause

Figure 2.3
Comprehensive Definition of Reflective Practice: Adapted from York- Barr, et al. (2001, p.7)

The purpose of reflective practice is to increase learning at the individual and organizational levels so that educational practice continuously improves and student learning is enhanced (Kim, 1993). Reflective practice offers one powerful way for educators- individually and collectively- to stay challenged, effective and alive in their work. The greater the number of people involved, the greater the potential to significantly improve educational practice and, therefore the greater the potential to enhance student learning (York-Barr, et al., 2001). Reflective practices encourage teachers to rely more

on their own personal resources, as well as those of their colleagues (Perrone, 1991). The opportunities for educators to reflect on and learn from practices are limitless. Every experience presents opportunities for growth and even the most accomplished teachers can improve the practices. With ongoing development of personal capacities to expand thinking and inquiry, teachers can achieve high levels of competence and effectiveness as reflective educators (York- Barr, et al., 2001).

A reflective educator is the base of a reflective building or network of people (York-Barr, et al., 2001). The positive growth that individuals experience from reflective practice provides a more solid foundation for advocacy and for the sustained commitment required to expand the practice of reflection beyond them. As teachers develop individual reflective capabilities, they can better influence the reflection that occurs with teams and departments of which they are members. As more groups become reflective in their work, the influence of reflection begins to spread throughout the school. A critical mass of individuals who have experienced positive outcomes from their own reflective practice and from reflection within groups and teams can better support widespread adoption.

Reflective practice can be developed at the individual, team, department and the school wide level. A reflective practice spiral illustrates the four levels at which reflection can be developed (York-Barr, et al., 2001). The spiral that moves through these levels represents the interconnectedness among the levels, resulting in the culminating effect of school wide practice. The focus of discussion on reflective practice for the purpose of this paper will be at the individual level.
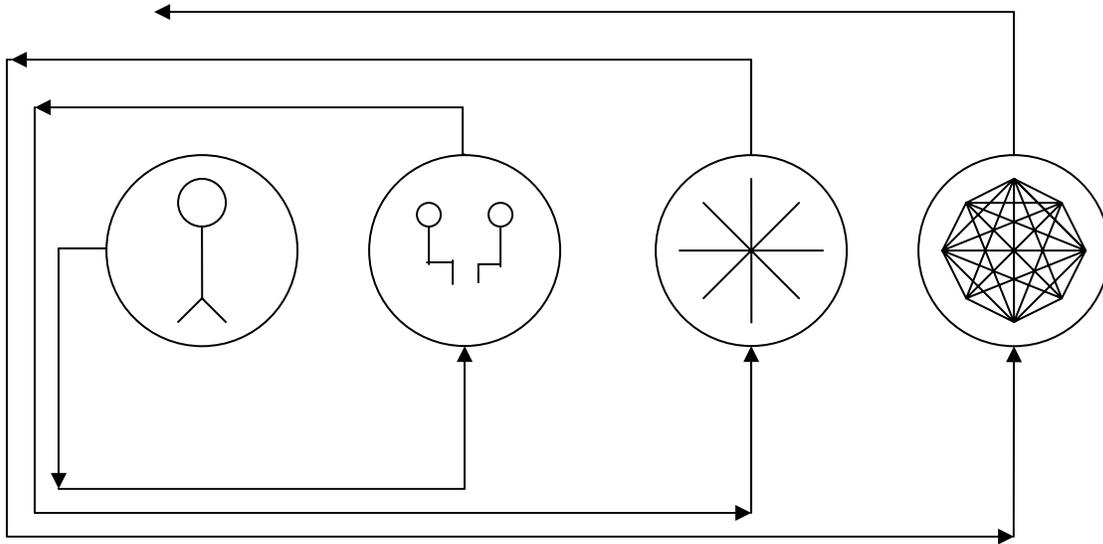
Figure 2.4
Reflective Practice Spiral: Adapted from York-Barr et al. (2001, p. 12)

The benefits of personal reflective practice are numerous (York-Barr, et al.,
2001). Reflecting on one's own provides with the opportunity to make improvements in
educational practice, given greater awareness of personal performance, increased
recognition of dilemmas that arise in practice, different ways of thinking about dilemmas
and resulting adjustments in practice. It also allows teachers to see increased student
learning and learning capacities, given improvements in personal practice. Reflective
practices give teachers increased personal capacities for learning and improvement, as the
skills and dispositions for reflective practice become embedded in a way of life and
thinking. Reflective practice can give a renewed clarity of personal and professional
purpose and give a sense of empowerment to align practice with purpose.

Individual Reflective Practice

There are many different ways to practice reflection alone: journaling, reading professional literature, developing and reviewing a teaching portfolio, and the use of audio or video tapes to observe and listen to one's own practice. There are also frameworks that structure support for reflection at the individual level. This section introduces a variety of tools and technologies available to reflective practitioners.

<u>Four step reflection process.</u> This model guides reflection on action (reflecting back) and reflection for action (reflecting forward). Reflection on action is one of the more widely used forms of reflection (York-Barr, et al., 2001). It occurs after an event when a teacher is removed from it. In reflection for action, one envisions the effects of actions or interventions on students, classrooms, or whatever the situation may be. These both focus on a specific event or circumstance. It brings the reflector through a sequenced process of thinking: description (what?), analysis and interpretation (why?), overall determination of meaning (so what?), and projections about future actions (now what?).

<u>Letting your reflections flow.</u> In this method, Bohm (1989) offers several prompts for individuals to have an inner dialogue. A recommended mode for dialogue with yourself is writing. The purpose is expression of thought, not coherent and carefully sequenced articulation. This form of writing is good practice for just letting thoughts flow onto paper. Select a prompt and let the dialogue flow onto the paper. Some possible prompts are:

- Have a written dialogue with yourself about what it means to be a teacher.

- Identify a specific event or experience and write about it from as many

perspectives as possible.

- Select any topic and do some free writing.

Reflection has direction. There are four different directions that guide reflection.

A person can internally explore various viewpoints and assumptions as well as reflect on

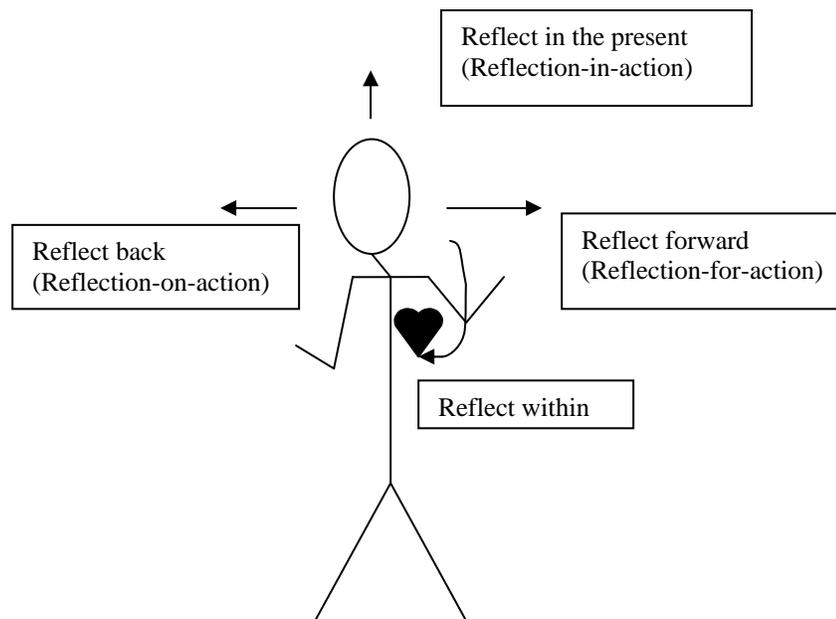(back), in (present) or for (forward) an action.

Figure 2.5
Reflection Directions: Adapted from Bohm, (1989 as in York-Barr et al. p. 49)

Five States of Mind. The five states of mind described by Costa and Garmston (1994)

offer another framework or mental model for guiding individual reflection and prompting

internal reflection. Thinking through the five states of minds can assist getting unstuck

when things a teacher is doing are not working. The first state is *efficacy*. Efficacy

involves having an internal locus of control and knowing that you can make a difference.

This is followed by *flexibility*. Flexibility involves thinking outside the box or choosing to

look at things from a different perspective. Next is *craftsmanship*. Craftsmanship focuses on continued improvement. *Consciousness* follows and means being aware of one's own process of thinking; the contexts or environments around a person; and the relationships among various thoughts, actions, and circumstances. Finally, *interdependence* recognizes that one is never working alone because they are always involved in an interdependent relationship whether one wants to or not.

Reflection techniques

Journaling. Journaling involves making invisible thoughts visible and putting thoughts down on paper. Journaling provides a means of describing practice as well as identifying and clarifying beliefs, perspectives, challenges and hopes for practice. The benefits of journaling have been identified as expanding awareness, understanding, and insights about teaching practice, making connections between theory and practice and generating new hypotheses for action (Taggart & Wilson, 1998). Journaling helps to clarify one's thinking.

Mapping. Mapping can be considered a form of journaling but shows connections and relationships between ideas and information in a more fluid presentation. Mapping is a way to visually represent an event, meeting, or lesson much like a graphic organizer. Constructing maps requires higher order thinking skills about the content and creates a framework onto which future information can be added (York-Barr, et al., 2001).

Teacher narrative. Teacher narrative is yet one more written form of reflection. It differs from journaling in that the purpose of teacher narratives is to communicate a story. They usually have more structure and focus than journaling. The stories illuminate the realities, dilemmas, joys and rewards of teaching. The benefits of reflecting on teacher narratives

include insights about motivations for teacher actions, about the details and complexities of teaching, and about the teachers themselves (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991).

Teacher portfolios. Teacher portfolios can be described as a purposeful collection of any aspect of a teacher's work that tells the story of a teacher's efforts, skills, abilities, achievements, contributions to students, colleagues, institution, academic discipline or community (Brown & Wolfe-Quintero, 1997). Portfolios offer many benefits for reflection. First, simply the process of selecting items for the portfolio is itself a reflective process. Second, teaching portfolios contain multiple perspectives that add breadth and depth to the analysis process. Third, the time spent reflecting on the teacher portfolio as a whole inevitably enlarges a teacher's point of view of what teaching is. Finally, teaching portfolios provide one way of documenting the nature of one's teaching at one point in time (Brown & Wolfe-Quintero, 1997).

Metaphors. Metaphorical thinking is a way of illuminating features through comparison. Metaphors offer teachers a way to simplify and clarify problems, summarize thoughts and to develop alternative ways of thinking about a topic (Taggart & Wilson, 1998). To be a metaphorical thinker is to be a constructive learner, one who actively builds bridges from the known to the unknown (Pugh, Hicks, Davis & Venstra, 1992).

The opportunities for educators to reflect on and learn from practice are limitless (Butler, 1996). Every experience presents an opportunity for growth. With ongoing development of one's personal capacities to create trusting relationships and to expand thinking and inquiry, teachers can achieve high levels of competence and effectiveness as reflective educators. Ultimately, reflective practice becomes part of teachers' core values and beliefs, which are central to any sustained development by individuals.

Ideas for individual reflection would be incomplete without emphasizing the value of reading and reflecting on the information. Reading professional literature is one important source for new information, ideas and insights. It is an important source of continuous professional learning and helps to renew teachers and keep their teaching fresh.

The decision to be a reflective educator is a commitment to one's own growth and demonstrates a high level of personal responsibility and leadership for continuous improvement in educational practice (York-Barr, et al., 2001). It is how one develops the expertise and insights that accumulate wisdom. Becoming more reflective is a way to learn more about who a teacher is, what is important to them, how they think, what they say and do, and how they are as an educator. Choosing reflection supports one's desire for high-quality performance.

Best practices in professional development incorporate self-reflection and reflection-on-practice. New awareness of job, self, students, building cultures, content material are not easy as they challenge the familiar and often comfortable practices of the individual. In the process of becoming more familiar with new instructional responsibilities, how will my lived experiences shape my personal values, beliefs and practices?

The goal of this study is to chronicle the process of imposed change on the thoughts and feelings of the researcher. I want to know:

1. How have my attitudes and beliefs about teaching changed as a result of an imposed change in assignment?

2. How has my understanding of self as an ESL teacher changed?

Summary

This chapter presented teacher change in education. I maintain that change is an inevitable process and that as trends in education change, so do teachers. Change is also a very personal experience. There exist very few ways to anticipate change. Teachers need tools and ways to examine their beliefs. Through imposed change or by choice, teachers find ways to adapt to new situations. Professional development is one process by which teachers learn and grow and the use of reflective practice can aid in teacher growth and development. In the next chapter, the methods for this study are presented. The research design of phenomenology is described and the specific type of research is defined.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study is designed to describe one individual's lived experience of changing teacher practice. The study seeks to identify ways in which the researcher's professional identity, practice and beliefs regarding language teaching were impacted by a mandated change in teaching assignment.   In this study, I want to know:

1. How have my attitudes and beliefs about teaching changed as a result of an imposed change in assignment?

2. What is the role of reflective practice in my professional change?

This is a natural inquiry study to examine the lived experience of changing practice over the course of an academic year. Reflection-on-practice, particularly journaling provides the format for recognizing and acknowledging changes in the life of my moving from a K-3 to a middle school ESL teacher.

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter describes the methodologies used in this study. First, a description of phenomenology; the research design used in this study is presented along with a description of the qualitative paradigm. This study uses phenomenology as a method to study the lived experience of a teacher and his imposed change in assignment. Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research and qualitative research is used to understand and explain the meaning of a social phenomenon. Second, the data collection protocols are presented and the data collection procedure is described. This study used a long-table approach to study and interpret discoveries from journal entries collected over the course or one school year.

This qualitative study uses natural science inquiry to examine the researcher's lived experience. Examining the lived experience is a study of phenomena surrounding the experience. Phenomenological inquiry focuses on finding the structure or essence of experience of a phenomenon for people (Patton, 1990). Phenomenological inquiry

focuses on how individuals put together the phenomena they experience and the process of making sense of the experience within their worldview.

Qualitative Research Paradigm- Phenomenology

Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible. There are several types of qualitative research commonly found today in education including the basic or generic qualitative study, ethnography, phenomenology, naturalistic inquiry, grounded theory and case study (Merriam, 1998).

All forms of qualitative research share some essential characteristics. First, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed. Secondly, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Next, qualitative research usually involves fieldwork. That is the researcher must physically go to the setting, site or institution in order to observe the behavior in its natural setting. Finally, qualitative research primarily employs an inductive research strategy. This type of research builds abstractions, concepts, hypothesis, or theories rather than tests existing theories. Research findings are usually in the form of themes, categories, typologies, or concepts which have been inductively derived from the data. Finally, the product of qualitative research is richly descriptive. Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

Basic qualitative studies seek to describe, interpret, or understand a phenomenon. They identify recurrent patterns in the form of themes or categories and may delineate a

process. They simply seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, process or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved (Merriam, 1998).

One qualitative method is naturalistic inquiry. This type of qualitative design is naturalistic in that the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the research setting. The research setting is a naturally occurring event, program, community, relationship, or interaction that has no predetermined course established by and for the researcher. The point of using this qualitative method is to understand naturally occurring phenomena in their naturally occurring states (Patton, 1990). Naturalistic inquiry is in effect a discovery-oriented approach that minimizes investigator manipulation of the study setting and places no prior constraints on what the outcomes of the research will be (Guba, 1978). Naturalistic inquiry studies real-world situations as they unfold naturally in a non-manipulative and unobtrusive way. There is a non-controlling openness to whatever emerges. The data of the evaluation include whatever emerges as important to understanding the setting (Patton, 1990).

The term phenomenology is a widely used term. It is sometimes viewed as a paradigm, sometimes as a philosophy or perspective and sometimes it is even viewed synonymously with naturalistic inquiry. Phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question: "What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?" Phenomenologists focus on how to put together the phenomena people experience in such a way as to make sense of the world to develop a worldview (Patton, 1990).

Phenomenology is the study of a life world- the world as one immediately experiences it pre-reflectively rather than as one conceptualizes, categorizes, or reflects

on it (Schultz & Luckman, 1973). Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday experiences (Van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenological research focused on discovery, insight and understanding from the perspective of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education (Merriam, 1998). This study seeks depth of understanding of human sciences. Human sciences study persons or beings that have consciousness and that act purposefully in and on the world by creating objects of meaning that are expressions of how humans exist in the world (Van Manen, 1990).

The insight into the essence of a phenomenon involves a process of reflecting appropriately, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). Reflecting on lived experiences then becomes reflectively analyzing the structural or thematic aspects of that experience. Phenomenological themes may be understood as the structures of experience. When a phenomenon is analyzed, the focus is trying to determine what the themes are, the experiential structures that make up that experience. Any lived experience description is an appropriate source of data for uncovering thematic aspects of the phenomenon it describes.

Phenomenological research is not mere speculative inquiry in the sense of unworldly reflection (Van Manen, 1990). It finds its point of departure in the situation. It appeals to the most common experience in order to conduct a structural analysis of what is most common, most familiar, and most self-evident to us. Phenomenology is not an empirical analytic science. Phenomenological knowledge is empirical, but it is not

inductively empirically derived. Phenomenology does not solve a problem. Phenomenological questions are meaning questions that ask for the meaning and significance of certain phenomena.

There is a sense in which the experiences given in everyday life are bits of data. All recollections of experiences, reflections on experiences, descriptions of experiences, taped interviews about experiences or transcribed conversations about experiences are already transformations of those experiences. Without this dramatic element of lived meaning to reflective attention phenomenology might not be necessary (Van Manen, 1990). The data of human science research are human experiences.

Phenomenological data is empirical data based on experience. Phenomenological research always takes its point of departure from lived experience or empirical data. This type of research does not solve a problem and focuses on talk or written or oral talk as its basic data source. The data from this source is detailed with thick description. It is inquiry in depth consisting of direct quotations capturing people's personal perspectives and experiences. The qualitative inquiry methods promote empathy and give the researcher an empirical basis for describing the perspectives of others while also legitimately reporting his or her own feelings, perceptions, experiences and insights as part of the data (Patton, 1990). The preferred method for qualitative inquiry involves description, interpretation, and self-reflective or critical analysis; aiming at explicating the meaning of phenomena and at understanding the lived structures of meanings, which are phenomenological (Van Manen, 1990).

In this study, journaling is the tool of reflection used as it is an easy way to put thoughts down on paper and it offers a private place for honest accounting and review.

Journaling allows the researcher to go back and read entries many times and to recall thoughts and different times in life. Journals may contain reflective accounts of human experiences that are of phenomenological value. Journaling makes the invisible thoughts visible. It provides a means of describing practice as well as identifying and clarifying beliefs, perspectives, challenges, and hopes for practice. Journaling helps to clarify thinking (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere & Montie, 2001). Journaling served this purpose well. Reflection and journaling provided me with an opportunity to step back from the struggles occurring daily and separate myself far enough to observe more subjectively. It became a tool to release the pressure I was feeling.

Data Collection

Reflective practice is a systematic, intentional study of one's own professional practice (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003). Inquiring professionals seek out change by reflecting on their practice. This is done by posing questions, collecting data to gain insights into their questions, analyzing the data along with reading relevant literature, making changes in practice based on new understandings developed during inquiry and sharing findings with others.

The primary format for data collection in this study is journaling. Journaling was done at a specific time each day. Entries were entered into a notebook three to five times a week during the months of October to May. The entries focused on the differences between elementary and middle school building cultures such as collegial relationships, program and administration. Entries also focused on instructional differences including

types of curriculum, students, planning and relationships. Finally, entries reflected on attitudes, beliefs and feeling towards teaching.

Setting

The context of the study is a self-contained ELL classroom at a middle school serving students in grades six and seven. All ESL classes have Spanish, Russian, and various Asian languages represented. The middle school is in a suburban district of a large metropolitan area in the upper Midwest. The district has approximately 6000 students and an ELL population of about 950. In all, the district has over 45 different languages spoken by students. A high percentage of the students in the middle school are intermediate while there are a low number of beginners and newcomers. Most students at the middle school attended an elementary school in the same district. The student day consists of seven class hours that are fifty-one minutes long. ESL classes are scheduled into students' class schedules. The researcher/teacher was in his first year teaching in this position and 2007-2008 was the first year this district had a middle school. The researcher worked primarily with intermediate level students.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of data. Qualitative analysis requires the analyst to create or adapt concepts relevant to the data rather than to apply to a set of pre-established rules. Phenomenological analysis attends to rooting out the essence or basic structures of a phenomenon.

The task of analysis is to compare one unit of data with the next looking for recurring regularities in the data. A unit of data is any meaningful segment of data. Units

of data are sorted into groupings that have something in common. The categories or themes created are concepts indicated by the data.

Theme construction is data analysis (Merriam, 1998). Themes are abstractions derived from the data. Themes should reflect the purpose of research. They should be exhaustive meaning all important data should be placed into a category or theme. A theme is the experience of focus. Themes are not objects one encounters at certain points in time. Themes are the form of capturing the phenomena one tries to understand.

Data were analyzed using a long-table approach. The long-table approach is a method of collecting, sorting and manipulating data along a long surface such as a table or wall. The analysis involved looking for categories or themes. I looked for common threads within those journal entries before I began sorting. Only those entries relevant were sorted on the wall and all others are posted off to the side until needed.

Photocopies of journal entries were color coded, cut and taped onto a large, empty wall with other entries that share common themes. I used red for journal entries discussing collegiality and yellow for relationships within the building. I used blue for entries discussing program issues and green for entries that talked about new realizations or discoveries.

Qualitative research does not validate the data in the same manner as quantitative research. To ensure validity, the researcher used peer examination. I enlisted the aid of people not involved the study to look at entries as well. Past and present colleagues were asked to view and comment on the themes presented.

<center>Reliability and Validity</center>

Concerns about reliability and validity are common to all forms of research. Analyzing data may present ethical problems. Since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, data have been filtered through their particular theoretical position and biases. Deciding what is important is up to the investigator. Opportunities exist for excluding data contradictory to the investigators' views. Peer reviews were used to ensure validity and reliability of journal entries and themes discovered.

Ethics

A human subject form has been completed and all work was filtered though a review board. The human subjects form was turned in and is on file with the Human Subjects Research subcommittee. All students, teachers and administrators remain anonymous. In planning, conducting and analyzing, the researcher worked to ensure accuracy.

Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology used in this study. A summary of qualitative research was given. Phenomenology was chosen as the qualitative method of research to study the lived experience of the researchers' change in teacher practice. The long-table approach to data collection describes the process in which the researcher elicited data from journal entries and presented it in the form of themes and personal discoveries. In the next chapter, the results of this study are presented.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The intent of this study was to examine the lived experience of an ESL teacher faced with a mandated change. I was forced to change from elementary to a middle school teaching assignment. In this study, I wanted to know:

1. How have my attitudes and beliefs about teaching changed as a result of an imposed change in assignment?

2. What is the role of reflective practice in my professional change?

This chapter presents the themes and personal revelations that emerged from the data and presents reflective discussion on the themes.

Results

I discovered that collegiality is very important to me. I need to feel apart of a teaching community. My interactions with other staff have an impact on my job and it is important for me to feel accepted where I am and in what I do. I also discovered that I need to have positive relationships with administrators, other staff and with students. In addition, I learned that a person can get through change. It takes a lot of time and hard work but it can be done. Finally, I learned how to grow. I learned how to grow personally, by developing relationships when I had the chance and professionally, by doing what was expected of me in light of the adversity I experienced. I grew by being able to experience little positives and successfully overcoming the challenges brought by changing levels.

Over the course of the school year, my journal entries showed a change in focus. In the beginning of the year, many of the entries focused on my struggles with teams, learning communities or lack there of, my grief over leaving my previous school, and my sense of loneliness. These entries describe my struggle during the first few months of the year. They describe how difficult it was to do the same things I had absolutely loved for the previous five years.

While some of the feelings of resentment did not go away, I found by January and February my entries changed focus. I found more entries dealing with relationships with students, my view of my new job and the critical nature of it, curriculum and program design. The focus was no longer on how sad or angry I was. I began to look more at what I can do about my change in a positive way and how to turn the ship around in a sense.

By the end of the year, while some issues still remained, like my dysfunctional team, I found that I really felt proud be a teacher and felt my work was important. I found

that change is really hard to deal with but with the right tools, I can and still do make a difference at my new building. I discovered that what made change hard were all my frustrations over the course of the year. Through reflecting and journaling, I found a way to use those frustrations to learn and grow as a person and as a teacher.

Collegiality

During the months of September to November, I really struggled to feel like I fit in. I found that I need to be a part of an effective team and learning community. I need to feel attached to some part of the building. I found that I was in the grieving process over leaving my old school.

One discovery is that teaching collegiality is critical to me. I need to be a part of a teaching community. This is something that I did not know about myself. I took for granted the relationships I had among my ESL colleagues at my previous school. The collegiality between my new teaching team and previous building is so different. The dynamics of the two are complete opposites and I was very frustrated with my new team often during the year. Here is an example of a journal entry documenting this frustration.

> My team is dysfunctional. We can't get along together and I am not sure
>
> what to do about that. We have power struggles, can't seem to ever be eye
>
> to eye and instead of being adults about it, some of us just ignore these
>
> barriers we are experiencing. We need to remember why we are here- the
>
> kids. I can't believe I have to feel this way so early in the year.

The working relationships in buildings between me, students and other staff members are very important. I think the biggest issue in my team being dysfunctional was the fact that we did not know each other heading into the year. There was no time for us to get together to talk about what we wanted for the school year. Our building is divided into teams on each grade level. All meeting time during workshop week was used for team time, not departments. We did not have the opportunity to meet as an ESL department. That missed time was crucial to our working relationships. All three of us have very different teaching styles and we all taught vastly different levels last year. We each brought unique experiences to the table and we could not find a way to mesh them together. Another frustration from my journal is:

> I feel really miserable here. I truly, truly hate that fact that I can't go to my team members and talk to them without someone getting emotional, defensive, or angry at something. We all teach so differently and many of our conversations end up in arguments. We just could not seem to get past our differences. No compromises. No deals. Just complaining and moodiness. I just wish we were all more on the same page when it comes to how we run our classrooms. I can not imagine having to feel like this for the rest of the year. We are only a month and half in. This is going to be one hell of a year if this keeps up.

I worked with students from both grade levels and all the teams in the building which made it difficult to feel connected to any of them. Feeling like being part of a team and connected to someone or something is important to success for students and staff. Those feelings of collegiality are critical for me. There was not a lot of cross grade level

communication and the lack of communication made collaboration difficult for those staff who worked with both grade levels. I didn't feel connected to the building. This next entry shows a frustration within the building.

This building seems so segregated. Sixth grade and seventh grade are two entirely separate groups with very little to do between them. We specialists are in an even tougher place- trying to find where we fit in between them all. I'm not sure if I am Falcon, Owl, Hawk, Eagle, sixth or seventh grade or all the above. I wish I could be apart of one, but I guess this is the life of a specialist.

The lack of adult conversation during the day was terrible. I had no one to bounce ideas off of, vent to or just chit chat with during passing time. Often times, I wondered if people even knew who I was standing at the top of the stairs by myself. A journal entry showing sadness within my job follows.

Would people even notice if I were gone? If my kids were seen and I was out of the building, who would even know? I miss my old team. One that I feel a part of and know we are all heading to the same place. This is an absolute nightmare. Had I know this was how it would be, I might have considered leaving. I'm not sure how much more of this I can take. It has to get better than this at some point…. Doesn't it?

In addition to the frustrations I had with relationships was the physical seclusion of my room from other parts of the building. Add this to the feelings I already had and I felt ready to cry some days. The other teachers in my department are ten to twelve rooms down the hall. This did not allow for easy communication. I missed being able to stand

by a door and chat with teachers as students moved between classes. I don't have anyone near me nor did anyone really come down my way. Some journal entries showed anger towards my situations.

I HATE this! It's difficult to feel like I even fit here. I'm on a team based on advisory students and I am not even on the same floor or wing as those teachers. The teachers nearest me are on different teams and grade levels and teach different subjects. My department people are way down the hall on the far end of the floor. It feels like me, the stairs and sixth grade lockers. Sometimes I feel like I am stranded out at sea with nothing in sight for miles. I just want to go home.

As the year went by, I noticed a change in my journal entries. They no longer consisted totally of my ranting and raving about how miserable and unhappy I was. There were still a few of those from time to time but a majority of them now had the feel of my change with student relationships, the importance of my job and the importance of curriculum and planning. They had more of a feel for kids than for just me.

Journal entry from beginning of the year	Journal entry from middle of the year
October 30, 2007	January 10, 2008
I feel really miserable here. I truly, truly hate that fact that I can't go to my team members and talk to them without someone getting emotional, defensive, or angry at something. We all teach so differently and many of our conversations end up in	It is so interesting to see how former students from my previous school have turned out and how they have progressed. Some of these reunions are exciting and others are quite sad…

arguments…

Figure 4.1 Comparison of Journal Entries

School Programming

The students of middle schools themselves bring challenges teachers must face as well. Varying needs in academic, personal and social settings all must be considered and dealt with in a manner different than in an elementary school. Students at this level often times seem harder to reach or don't seem to care as much. Teachers must balance meeting affective and academic needs as well as providing stability in the classroom. An example from the journal discussing middle school students follows.

> Middle school kids are an entirely different breed. They are too young for elementary ideas and are certainly not junior high yet. The issues, needs and concerns they bring with them are interesting to see. They are certainly challenging but fun to work with.

At times, at the elementary level, it seemed important just to check in with them to see how they were doing. Now I see that it is much more than that. Teachers need to do the check-ins but also need to connect with students and be an active part of their total education. I found it more difficult to connect with students as whole at this level. Another example of a journal entry about students is:

> I've found that I am making extra efforts at times to reach and make connections with many of my students. They are not the 'love you always' kids from elementary. I know it is important to try but it can be so draining.

I look back in time and think of specific students and how I might do things differently with them with the time I had. I often wonder how their lives might be different had I done things differently when working with them. A journal entry showing this follows.

Oh, how I wish I could go back in time with some of them and do things differently. I now see just how important their time in the elementary levels is. These students need to feel success so often and use it to carry them as they get older.

As I delved into my journal entries, the use of reflection allowed me to see things from a different angle. I worked through the first part of the year feeling alone, wishing others could feel like I did. I knew going into the year that many people would be making changes, but I thought mine would be the biggest between levels. This journal entry shows again shows a frustration.

I really think I might be the only person who feels like I do here. I know there are others who made a change but they came from the fifth and sixth grade building. I made the largest jump in levels and I wish others could stand in my shoes to see what this feels like. This is, with out a doubt, the least fun I have ever had at a job- EVER! I'm not really sure how long I can feel like this and not crack.

At my previous school, all specialists were made to feel important and accepted in the building. I don't feel like that at the middle school. Our program design is not the most efficient, and I think it reflects on the department as a whole by making us look as if we don't know what we are doing. I don't feeling like I don't understand or can't do my

job. I take great pride in my work ethic. I feel segregated from other staff members as a result of those insecure feelings I get from how poorly we look as a team. Here is an entry documenting a frustration in direction.

> I'm not sure where my department stands within the building. There is no communication from the principal or assistant principal. I'm new to this level and it seems there is zero direction or guidance… I'm tired of looking stupid in front of the rest of the staff when we have to present department goals or when we end up conflicting each other at meetings.

The stakes at this level seem higher than at the elementary level, and I struggled with the way our program was designed to achieve them. It was difficult to find the right balance between the use of ESL curriculum and mainstream curriculum to best meet students' needs. It was also tough to figure out when to allow time for my class to become more of a guided study with the way student schedules were. This journal entry documents the pressure related to accountability.

> It seems that there is so much more at stake every time students come into my room. I feel responsible for student success in my classroom and on all the standardized tests we take. Students are closer to finishing school here than they are to starting it, so we really have a finite amount of time to get kids where they need to be.

After looking at the frustrations I had discovered with my collegial relationships and being part of a teaching community, program model was the next biggest frustration for me. The model we used at the middle school was just not effective for our kids. Another journal describing my opinion towards the program design follows.

I really dislike the design of our program. It just doesn't seem to be that

effective. There is no study hall, which means no guided study for any of

our students. Our intermediate and transitional kids are seen every other

day. Most of these kids still need a lot of help with other classes so my

curriculum gets pushed to the side. There has got to be a better way to do

this!

When comparing middle school to elementary, the elementary program design

seemed more like tutoring as we used 30 minute blocks. With passing times, this dropped

to about 21 to 23 minutes of teaching time. At the middle school, I now have 51 minutes

to work with students and sometimes in not quite enough time. There are so many more

things that need to be taught and there is little time left. This entry again describes the

pressures associated with accountability.

Even the fun, little fluffy things have to have a point and be related to the

curriculum. These classes are important for the future as the have a ripple

effect on where students want to go or what they want to do. It's amazing

how much reading is needed at this level. Students need to be able to read

in every class. It makes my job that much more important. This is a great

opportunity to make sure I implement content and language objectives into

every lesson.

Another major frustration throughout the year within program design was with

student schedules. Some of the classes my students took seemed unnecessary and my

department was not able to make many adjustments in schedules. An additional entry

focusing on the problems in the program design follows.

Some courses seem unnecessary due to students' lack of English and the amount of reading that is needed for each of those classes. I wish we could do the scheduling for our kids. Some of them could really do without certain classes and that flexibility in our program would be very beneficial.

Finally, beginning in April, I began to notice a huge change in my journal entries. There were only a few random complaints, but most of my entries from April through the rest of the year focused on the feelings from doing my job. It was an amazing change and one that just seemed to happen.

New Insights and Understandings

Through the discovery of the frustrations in my journal that led to the revelations discussed earlier, I began to look at myself in a new light. By realizing the importance of collegial relationships and by seeing how important my job is and the pride I get from doing it, I can say that I am truly a different person from who I was when I taught in an elementary building. Through careful reflection, I have found that I do make a difference and I have unique talents to bring to my new building. It takes time, hard work and patience. An example of a journal entry documenting one point of growth is:

I feel like a different person at this point in the year. I've had almost a full year to work things through. I have a lot more confidence and a feel for how things are going to work here. I have learned so much about who I am, how I work and what I need to be successful this past year. I can't wait to be able to put it all into use next year. I know it will help. I do know that I can make this change. It is going to be difficult, challenging,

stressful and all of that, but I know I can make it. My transformation as a

person and as a teacher is in process. The things I did and learned in my

first five years of teaching so have a profound effect on who I am and

what I do now. The next few years are critical. I need to have faith, trust

and discipline.

It took a long time and a lot of hard work, but I was able to get through the year. I

know I am a different person and I will do good things at the middle school. Through it

all, I learned that this was a very difficult, but good change.

I became aware of new information that I think is critical to my continued growth

and success in teaching at the middle school. The new observations I discovered about

myself involves collegial importance, the meaning and importance of my job, and the

sense of pride derived from teaching at this level. It is important for students and staff

alike to feel connected to and involved in the school community. This entry shows some

more of the transformation I became aware of.

I've finally discovered a way I fit into this building. I am just like the kids

trying to find a way to fit into this school as it is all new to them. I am

looking for who I am as a teacher, colleague, and team member. I don't

really feel accepted yet but I do know that I matter and it will take some

time for me to realize what my talents are and what I bring to this school

that is good.

After I was able to recognize this most important change, I was able to say that I

am a different person and teacher. It was a difficult process, one that I would not wish on

anyone, but one that many others will undertake at some point. The rewards certainly outweigh the challenges.

Summary

In this capstone, I studied my lived experience of mandated change in teaching assignment. I sought to discover how my attitudes and beliefs about teaching changed and my understanding of self changes as a result of a mandated change. I used journaling as a means to study my thoughts and feelings over the course of the school year. Data from the journals was grouped into themes of collegiality, school programming and new insights and understandings. Revelations were discovered and will be used to make decisions for the upcoming school year to help me understand how to be proactive to identify and work through times of frustration within my team and program. The overall goal of my study was to examine the journal entries to help me find ways to make the next school year feel more successful than the previous one.

I found that I fit here at the middle school, very well, and I will continue to be a valued and respected part of this teaching community. Reflection will continue to be an important part of my teaching, even after I have assimilated into the middle school culture.

Conclusion

I learned a great deal about myself from examining my journal after changing assignments. I learned how important a team is and the relationships that are developed within a building. I learned the importance of reflection. Learning requires reflection and reflective practice facilitates learning, renewal, and growth throughout the development

of a career. I learned the importance of continued growth, both professionally and

personally. All of this learned information helps shape an individual faced with a

mandated change.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Implications

One implication for teachers is that all teachers will experience some type of

change during their teaching career. Educational change is inevitable. Imposed change

carries official authority which sometimes challenges professional experience, judgment and expertise. Imposed change may take the form of new curriculum, assessments or in the case of this study, a mandated change in assignment. Teachers need to understand the complexity of change. If teachers can find ways to work through change in a positive way, have support structures and people in place, it will help them grow professionally and personally. The use of reflection in the form of journaling is one way teachers can learn from their change.

A second implication is for school districts and administrators. They can also benefit from this study. They can understand what effects mandated change has on a person. Many times, administrators do not think of the repercussions of mandating change for individuals. Different groups within the organization perceive and experience the change in different ways. It is the balance of these different groups' beliefs and values that is crucial for the organization as a whole.

This capstone can serve as a resource for teachers who are faced with similar situations. Teachers of today and tomorrow need to do much more learning on the job or in parallel with it- where they can constantly test out, refine and get feedback on the improvements they make. They need access to other colleagues in order to learn from them. The teaching profession must become a better learning profession.

Limitations and future research

Change is a highly personal experience. Every person has different experiences and everyone who encounters change responds in different ways; therefore we can generalize this experience to everyone undergoing imposed change in a job. This study is limited in the fact that it only researched and chronicled the changes of one teacher over

the course of one school year. Ideally, the study would use multiple teachers experiencing change and use a longer period of time to gather data. This would provide consistency within the results.

To truly understand the effects of imposed change on individuals more research on imposed change is necessary. I have had discussions at my school about having new teachers and those who have changed assignments keep a journal similar to the one used in this study to chronicle their personal changes. It could be used to develop a cohort of sorts for mentoring those who have made these kinds of changes. Also, those of us who have made these changes can be used as resources for teachers others experiencing change.

Conclusion

Change is education is inevitable. The way that change takes place in schools has large implications on the manner in which it is accepted and implemented in schools. Administrators need to think about the personal effects of change on teachers when imposed changes are made. Every individual responds differently to change and their own time, support and tools to work through their challenge of change.

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