
Book Review

Narratives on Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Perspective

Edited by Andrea M. A. Mattos
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Novice teacher educators, especially doctoral students in schools of education, should have comprehensive understanding of the knowledge and practice of teaching prospective teachers. Zeichner (2005) points out that teacher education is treated as a “self-evident activity” (p. 118) in many universities in the U.S., meaning that teacher educators’ prior teaching experience as a teacher can be easily transformed into the practices that are needed to teach prospective teachers. Yet the expertise required for teacher educators should be different from the kind needed for teachers (Zeichner, 2005). Learning to be a teacher educator does not only involve developing the practice of teacher education, which includes teaching courses and supervising student teachers. It also involves having profound understanding and knowledge of the issues and research on teacher education (Wilson, 2006; Zeichner, 2005) and one way to accomplish this is to read various empirical and conceptual studies written by teacher educators (Zeichner, 2005). However, in the field of teacher education, there is limited literature that specifically addresses the study of teacher educators’ learning and practice.

This book, *Narratives on Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Perspective* (Matttos, 2009b) caught my eye because it is one of those few books inquiring about teacher educators’ learning

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and practice. Given its title, I was particularly curious about how the authors explore teacher educators' learning to teach by using narrative inquiry as a common framework. Moreover, as an international doctoral student studying teacher education, I am particularly curious about global teacher education practices, not only those practices in the U.S. and Korea, my home country. Having a further understanding of teacher education practices in other countries would add breadth and depth to my own knowledge of learning to teach as a teacher educator.

Andrea M. A. Mattos (2009b) edited a compilation of fourteen studies about teaching and teacher education that use Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry as a common theoretical framework. Clandinin (2009) explains in her foreword in this text that "narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience" (p. xi). Additionally, narrative inquiry requires a perspective that human experience is socially constructed and can be retold by stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The three "commonplaces" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2009) of narrative inquiry, which denote temporality, sociality, and place, are thoroughly and simultaneously explored throughout the inquiry. In this way, narratives not only present the stories of people's lives but also envision the future possibilities for their lives (Clandinin, 2009).

Taking note of the commonplaces of narrative inquiry is particularly important as the chapters in this book are grouped in two parts—stories of discovery and transformation and stories of hope—to particularly address the temporality of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2009). The chapters in stories of discovery and transformation focus on teacher educators' inquiry on their past and present experience of teaching to improve their current practice. Through this inquiry, teacher educators find meanings in their experiences that help them transform their practice as well as student teachers' learning in practice. For example, Garbett and Heap (2009) from New Zealand use narrative inquiry as a means to reflect on their team teaching experience in a science education course and propose implications to improve team teaching.

The second part, stories of hope, also looks at teacher educators' past and present experiences but also focuses on framing their narratives to be more explicitly geared toward their future practices. It is well presented in Li's (2009) discussion of how the cultural conflicts that she faced as a Chinese immigrant in Canadian teacher education framed her identity and led her to have hope as a beginning teacher educator. As Clandinin (2009) points out, the narratives grouped in these two parts address different aspects of temporality by focusing on either improving teacher educators' current practice and learning or informing their future practice.

While Clandinin (2009) is most concerned with temporality aspect of the narratives in this book, I am keener to consider the different places in which these narratives are constructed. These fourteen studies from various social and cultural contexts, including Canada, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, and the United States, present diverse aspects and issues of teaching and teacher education. Yet when I mention places, I do not mean only geography. This term also indicates the various contexts where teacher educators' and teachers' stories are lived and told, from subject area teaching to teacher educators' team teaching, faculty peer-coaching, and curriculum development. All of these studies explore various aspects of teaching and teacher education, including change of teacher and teacher educator's knowledge and practice, identities, attitudes, and understanding of social justice.

At a glance, these topics do not seem to be very different from what is being studied in the U.S. teacher education context, but their substance is quite different and very interesting. For example, as part of stories of discovery and transformation, Hooley and Ryan (2009) describe their experiences of designing a preservice teacher education program in Australia for Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers. They seek to link indigenous ways of knowing with the privileged non-indigenous knowledge taught in traditional Australian curriculum since indigenous teacher suffer various cultural challenges in the program and schools. The researchers attempted to use narrative inquiry as an overarching framework of their "two-way inquiry learning" curriculum because narrative inquiry can incorporate varieties of learning experiences of both groups of teachers. As a narrative includes series of events, narrative inquiry is thought to be a useful tool to interpret various experiences that student teachers have encountered in the program and schools. By combining narrative inquiry with the Australian model of the two-way curriculum of teacher education, Hooley and Ryan (2009) believe that this new hybrid curriculum can help the privileged non-Indigenous teachers and Indigenous teachers recognize and integrate the knowledge and culture of Indigenous communities. This study can be a good comparison with the cases of teacher education curriculum development in the U.S. to be responsive to non-hegemonic teachers.

Another example from the stories of hope (Mattos, 2009d) considers Brazilian preservice teachers' narratives. Their narratives suggest that, despite all the threats to their teaching profession, including low-salary, long working hours, and poor-behavior and attitudes of students, these preservice teachers still find hope in their profession. They recognize the problematic situation in Brazil that places teachers in vulnerable positions, but the preservice teachers still believe that they can bring

about change as teachers and that it is their job to improve the current educational environment in Brazil. As a reader, this story implies that “teachers as agent of social change” is emphasized well beyond the borders of the United States. Teacher educators from other countries also care about addressing this notion in teacher education, although in Korea this idea is relatively new.

The variety of places of the narratives is not the only benefit that this book gives to readers. Since all of these chapters are based on narrative inquiry framework, they also show multiple ways of how narrative inquiry can be used to study teaching and teacher education. Given that one’s experiences are significant part of constructing narratives, interviewing people or writing journals seem to be the most appropriate ways of collecting participants’ stories. However, the authors in this book explore a variety of ways that narrative inquiry can be performed. Many of them use interviews or written materials from participants (Blake & Haines, 2009; Larsen, 2009; Mattos, 2009b; Mattos, 2009c; Miller, 2009; Sillito, 2009), but they also collect artifacts (Moore, 2009), draw a road-map (McCallum & Prosser, 2009), implement Collective Memory-work (Ovens, 2009), incorporate image theater, visual arts, and storytelling (Mark, 2009), and rely on observation (Quartaro & Cox, 2009) and authors’ self-study (Garbett & Heap, 2009; Hooley & Ryan, 2009; Li, 2009) to explore one’s experiences.

An interesting example is McCallum and Prosser’s (2009) use of “river journey” as a means of collecting data to understand South Australian preservice teachers’ professional experience. While McCallum and Prosser (2009) interviewed the participants, all of whom were preservice teachers, the researchers also provided a blank drawing of a river to the participants to “map their personal-professional experiences” (p. 96) from Week 1 through Week 6 of their field experiences. Participants were encouraged to describe their experiences on this blank river drawing in multiple ways, including simple texts, such as stories, captions, or poems, or drawings. The finished “river journeys” were used to analyze participants’ significant moments in their teaching experience in conjunction with the interviews. In this way, the researchers began to understand how preservice teachers defined “critical incident” in their paths to professionalism and when these incidents occurred (e.g., at what stage of practice) in terms of the preservice teachers’ learning process. This river journey could be a more effective way to capture several teachers’ procedures of learning than constructing individual or focus group interviews. Using various means to collect data in narrative inquiry provides further understanding of how narrative inquiry can be performed to explore various issues in different contexts in teacher education.

There are, however, a few points that weaken this compilation of narratives from teachers and teacher educators. Given that the subtitle of this book is “An International Perspective,” it is deceiving to name it that way, because most studies are collected from Western or Western-identified countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and Brazil: there are six studies from Canada (Larsen, 2009; Li, 2009; Miller, 2009; Moore, 2009; Sillito, 2009; Quartaro & Cox, 2009), two studies from Australia (Hooley & Ryan, 2009; McCallum & Prosser, 2009), two studies from New Zealand (Garbett & Heap, 2009; Ovens, 2009), two studies from Brazil (Mattos, 2009c; Mattos, 2009d), one from Northern Ireland (Mark, 2009), one from United States (Blake & Haines, 2009), and none from Asian or African countries. As a reader from Korea, I understand that the editor may have had challenges and restrictions in collecting studies from all different regions such as in East Asian countries in which qualitative research, particularly narrative inquiry, is not wide spread. However, I have no doubt that including studies from those Asian and African countries—though only few of them exist (e.g., Horan, Sailors, Martinez, Skerret, & Makalela, 2012; Sato, 2002; Shi, 2002; Xu & Connelly, 2009)—would add variety and richness to this volume as these countries have different systems and policies supporting teacher education than do Western countries. For example, East Asian countries such as Korea, Singapore, and Japan have centralized systems for teacher education as opposed to most western nations. Finland is also known for having standardized system for teacher education, providing teacher’s diploma only as university degree (Sahlberg, 2012). Including narratives from these countries would offer additional perspectives on teacher education that could be utilized to improve the situation in other countries.

While I appreciate the values of various stories in this book, I wish the editor had provided a synthesized story or narrative. Andrea Mattos (2009a) does provide an introduction that discusses the meaning and importance of narrative inquiry and a brief introduction of each chapter. This offers a useful start to understanding authors’ various narratives. However, there is no conclusion, summary, or any synthesized chapter that frames this work within the field of teacher education. It is the readers’ responsibility to understand what these narratives bring to their learning in the field of teacher education. Thus, we are left with a myriad of questions. Why do the readers need to care about these international perspectives? What are the implications of these inquiries? What are the points that teacher educators can learn and use for their practice?

In the foreword, Clandinin (2009) points out that collaboration between researchers and participants throughout different points in time and across places is significant in narrative inquiry because ongoing

collaboration enables the narrative inquirer to understand the complexity of participants' different life experiences. Similarly, the collaboration of authors and readers creates another kind of narrative that connects authors' stories of their experiences to those of the readers. I assume that the primary aim of all authors in their inquiry is to encourage readers to reflect on their own experiences in teacher education. They also aim to influence the way that readers think about their experiences. Nevertheless, there is no bridge in this book that links authors' narratives to readers' own narratives.

Regardless of those few concerns, this book is still a valuable piece for anyone involved in teaching and teacher education, and for anyone who wants to know more about the narrative inquiry approach. This book is dedicated to teacher educators' efforts to improve their knowledge and practice (Zeichner, 2005), as well as broadening and deepening readers' perspectives by including international contexts and perspectives.

Reviewed Book

Mattos, A. M. A. (Ed.). (2009). *Narratives on teaching and teacher education: An international perspective*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 236 pp. ISBN 9780230612334.

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