Chapter 12

One Teacher’s Journey:
Evolving Teacher Identity and Practice and the Changing Sociopolitical Context of Education

Amber Bechard
University of Redlands, USA

ABSTRACT

As our sociopolitical context evolves, student populations and teaching expectations become more complex. Teachers who entered the profession under one pretense are finding themselves faced with an entirely different set of circumstances: demographic shifts, increasingly diverse learners, curricular mandates, high-stakes accountability, technological advancements, globalization—the list continues. As the educational environment evolves, so must teacher identities. Contemporary teachers are tasked with creating an entirely new lens from which to develop new techniques and design more complex lessons to reach the diversity of students in their classrooms. This chapter traces one teacher’s evolving identity and practice amidst the changing sociopolitical context of education. The author’s autobiographical narrative depicts the impact of influential mentors, transformative moments in international teacher travel experiences, vignettes from 28 years as a classroom teacher, and specific instructional techniques developed to ensure effective student engagement in a pluralistic environment.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1894-5.ch012

Copyright ©2017, IGI Global. Copying or distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of IGI Global is prohibited.
As our sociopolitical context evolves, student populations and teaching expectations become more complex. Teachers who entered the profession under one pretense are finding themselves faced with an entirely different set of circumstances: demographic shifts, increasingly diverse learners, curricular mandates, high-stakes accountability, technological advancements, globalization—the list continues. As the educational environment evolves, so too must teacher identities. As discussed by Leonard and Roberts (2014), “The present environment is changeable and not permanent. This gives professionals experiencing the dissonance between their constructed lives and present conditions hope that there is a way out of the ‘terror’” (p. 315). Contemporary teachers are tasked with creating an entirely new lens from which to develop new techniques and design more complex lessons to reach the diversity of students in their classrooms.

Autobiographical narrative is a powerful tool in educational research, effective for self-empowerment and self-affirmation (Xin, 2007) and supports teacher transformation (Cranton and Cohen, 2013). “The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). Education is meant to transform, an opportunity for teachers and students to recreate themselves and their world. As the world changes, the scope of teacher transformations must broaden. Educators must integrate topics of international interest in their lessons and be able to support global human differences. “Educators in all countries would benefit from deconstructing their self and teaching identities in order to better understand potential difference students may bring to the classroom and how they may best serve all of their students” (Hale, et al., 2009).

This chapter chronicles my evolving teacher identity and practice amidst the changing sociopolitical context of education. This first-person narrative depicts the impact of influential mentors, transformative moments in international teacher travel experiences, vignettes from 28 years as a classroom teacher, and specific instructional techniques developed to ensure effective student engagement in a pluralistic environment. I confronted daily failures, challenges with colleagues, and established institutional practices, parents, and curricular and standardized testing demands, and I share here the successes I achieved and the concrete strategies I developed. I will also discuss my decision to seek professional development and advanced degrees to ensure an evolving expertise. Educational practitioners and researchers will gain an understanding of the real issues teachers face, recognize the complexity of meeting diverse student needs in challenging educational environments, and examine one teacher’s efforts to remain a relevant educator amid the changing socio-political context of education.
The Promise and Limitations of Assistive Technology Use among Children with Autism
www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-promise-and-limitations-of-assistive-technology-use-among-children-with-autism/151230?camid=4v1a

Meeting the Needs of Exceptional Students: The Importance of Technology in Teaching and Implementing Universal Design for Learning Principles
www.igi-global.com/chapter/meeting-the-needs-of-exceptional-students/88145?camid=4v1a