Abstract

This study documents the three-year experience of a group of four women teachers who met regularly to reflect on their practice collaboratively using multimodal forms of Inquiry and expression. Prompted by the difficulty of integrating more traditional (university-based) strategies for reflection, such as journal writing, into their teaching lives, they explored their lives within and beyond teaching through conversation, poetry, photography, movement, and visual art. Their collective practice was informed by theoretical strands well established in teacher education regarding reflection and by feminist, critical, arts-based, and multimodal educational theory. In this study I document the initial formation of the group and its development into a close-knit community, and I analyze the wide variety of texts that resulted from this collaboration. I examine how engaging in artistic practices enriched the group conversations about teaching and contributed to the development of a reflective discourse that differed from traditional teacher reflective practice in three key ways: by acknowledging the presence of the body in reflection, by welcoming multiple identities and multiple knowledges, and by employing multiple forms of expression. I also examine tensions that resulted from my dual position in the group as both a participating teacher-inquirer and as a researcher-documenter. Drawing from a variety of research traditions and methodologies, including feminist research, participatory action research, ethnography, arts-based inquiry, and indigenous research, I articulate a credo for research that allowed me to address the conflicts associated with occupying both identity positions simultaneously. I offer the perspective that reflection is situated practice and suggest that a broader approach to teacher reflection is needed. I suggest that teacher reflective practice can benefit both from a multimodal approach and from the freedom to range freely between identities and life experiences rather than being limited to analysis of educational theory, philosophy or classroom experience.

Keywords: teacher reflection; collaborative reflective practice and multimodality; arts-based teacher reflection; embodied knowing; metaphor in research