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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the thirty-fifth issue of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, devoted to rural, northern, and Indigenous education. Our authors for volume 15 are current and past BU Faculty of Education graduate students and professors. I thank these educators for sharing their experiences.

- Shelley Kokorudz' research report describes her Ph.D. rhizomatic research with adults who have been dropping out and dropping back in to high school.

- Tanya Polasek's refereed article weaves original, found, and fusion poems into a conversation about teaching poetry.

- Susanne Lee's refereed article recommends tiered intervention at the school level to counter common barriers to mental health care support in rural environments: availability, accessibility, and acceptability.

- Jamie Blyth's refereed article explains how to use play-based learning to enrich and extend the learning of all students.

- Nicole Harwood's refereed article explores the meaning of the term *resiliency* within the context of schooling during COVID-19 and beyond.

- Simone Miranda's refereed article reminds educators of the elements necessary for principal feedback to support better teaching practices.

Also included in this issue is our "Celebration of Scholarship," to honour graduate students who completed their M.Ed. degrees with theses in 2022.

As well, this issue features a "Focus on Faculty" reflection on teaching by Marion Terry.

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RESEARCH REPORT

Tales of Re-entry to Adult High School Programs:
A Rhizomatic (De)(Re)Tangling

Shelley Kokorudz

Ph.D. Abstract

This rhizomatic research is an experimental wondering and wandering with a Deleuzian-Guattarian mindset. The purpose of this study is to de-re-territorialize *affective* adults who have been *dropping out* and *dropping back in* to high school. Adults who are *dropping out* and *dropping in* often find themselves placed at society's margins. These margins occur outside of the (ir)rational system of education that purposes to shape its body of students, its *product*, its graduates, through the attainment of a high school diploma. The re-entry (*dropping in*) process is the focus in this study. Thus, attention is given to possible (re)consideration of re-entry high school programs by *(dis)(re)tracting* the territorialized views of these adult learners.

The concepts offered by Deleuze and Guattari enable a range of potentiality found in the rhizomatic connections *becoming* produced in the intra-relational assemblage among participants and researcher. In viewing the adult learners as *affective*, their own subjectivities are continually *becoming*, but the researcher is also impacted by the *becoming* possibilities of the emerging assemblages. Rhizomatic (non)methodology informs rhizo intra-relational (non)method referred to as *intra-view* (St. Pierre, 2019; Masny, 2016) and facilitates the unfolding of the discussions that occur *among* participants and researcher. The researcher's memories, personal teaching diary, relevant reading throughout the writing, and former teacher-student relationships with the participants inform the emerging rhizome. Rhizomatics intra-weave *cartographies* in creation of the dissertation and challenges the researcher/the reader in becoming *(dis)(re)tracted* to think something new within re-entry programming that is contingent upon openings created by thinking frames of post qualitative research.

Rhizoanalysis in this dissertation raises questions, not conclusions (Honan & Bright, 2016; Waterhouse & Arnott, 2016; Masny, 2017; Reinertsen, 2017; St. Pierre, 2019), about high school re-entry programs. The *cartographies (dis)(re)tract* the researcher to think about the striated constitutions of re-entry programs that seem to ignore the life experiences of re-entry adult learners and fail to consider *other* curricula that may be more reflective of adult learner interests and needs. Why do they drop back into a system that looks so similar to the one from which they dropped out? The only thing different is the physical setting and the age of learners. Are they not merely encountering the same requirements of a system which they once exited? What are the merging possibilities that might affect re-entry high school programs to be experienced/designed differently than those which exists for teen-aged students?

The assemblages emerging among the participants and the researcher in this study *(dis)(re)tract* the researcher to think more about the potential possibilities for re-entry high school programs, including (re)consideration of the curricula and required number of credits necessary for completion. In addition to the *(dis)(re)tractions* dwelling around the topic of re-entry, the assemblages and processes continually produce the transforming researcher in her own *becoming* as a post qualitative/post human philosopher. Her experiences as an educator, her re-entry to a doctoral degree in Philosophy later in life, and her *becoming* journey in academia become entangled in the rhizome. These entanglements wind and unwind as the rhizome moves and fills the blank pages of the experimenting dissertation.

Final Thoughts Emerging From the Rhizome

The rhizome that emerges out of the intra-related assemblage of (non)data generates complexity around the adult learner dropping back into high school. Despite the varying life events that affect these learners, the re-entry program remains unaffected to deliver a curriculum, a right of passage, that validates their life experience and learning that has transpired. They drop back in to the same rigid requirements that define graduation credentials rooted in curricula that was developed for the teen learners in high school spaces. Their re-entry is a rather unilateral approach to educating a multitude of learners. The concept of multi-schooling and multi-curricula is non-existent for the re-entry learner. The re-entry program does not fit the experiences of these adult *becoming* learners.

Diversity in classrooms exists at all age levels. Notions of differentiated instruction exist to promote learning for all within inclusive classroom spaces. But, when I reflect on the events of the adults in my study, the curricula designed for teenaged learners is not relevant to these adult learners. This notion causes me to pause and wonder beyond these learners. I think about the vast diverse populations of learners in schools, and I wonder if differentiated instruction and notions of inclusion are truly meeting the needs of all learners. Do educators and policy makers really understand all needs of diverse learners? Are we fooling ourselves? Do we need to be *(dis)(re)tracted* to something else? As I find an exit in this rhizome, national statistics are being released that puts the province in which I live at the very bottom of performance in science, mathematics and literacy among fifteen year old learners in our country. I am becoming *(dis)(re)tracted* to think about something else. What about the concept of multi-schooling in mulit-spaces? What might that look like? What might it look like across multi-ages? Could we be doing something better in our education of people – not just re-entry learners, but all learners? Nothing changes until something changes …

About the Researcher

Dr. Shelley Kokorudz is an associate professor and chair in the Dept. of Educational Psychology & Student Services in the Faculty of Education. She graduated with her Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Manitoba and later completed her Master of Education from Brandon University. In 2020, she completed her PhD at the University of Regina. She is excited to be currently developing a research agenda around nature-based approaches to teaching and learning. Dr. Kokorudz is also very involved with the faculty's PENT program, focusing on the education of Indigenous pre-service teachers.

REFEREED ARTICLES

"I HATE Poetry!"
Understanding Through Unlearning: A Poetic Inquiry

Tanya Polasek

Abstract

Engaging the methodology of poetic inquiry, this paper explores both the teaching and learning of poetry. Through a combination of interpretation and reflection, the reader embarks on a journey from the author's childhood experiences with poetry to the experiences of her students in an ELA class. Pinar's method of currere provides a lens to explore the ideas of understanding through unlearning. Weaving original, found, and fusion poetry into a conversation with relevant literature, the author hopes to inspire other teachers to approach poetry in their lives and their classrooms with a sense of wonder and curiosity.

Through my understanding of Pinar's (1994) method of currere, I endeavour to interpret my understanding of the hate my students feel towards poetry and my own reaction to it. By exploring a specific educational experience in my classroom and working through the four steps outlined by Pinar (2004): "the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetical" (p. 35). Through this method, I aim to engage in a "complicated conversation" (p. 37) with myself as I work to understand my own historicity with poetry and reflect on how my students might come to new understandings of themselves about and through poetry.

Using a combination of my own original poetry, found poetry, and fusion poetry, I explore how the process of unlearning might contribute to understanding. According to Green et al. (2021), "a found poem is created from existing literature through taking words and phrases and rearranging them to form a new composition" (p. 2). Fusion poetry is also utilized when the poems stretch and move past the source text. As Green et al. noted, the idea of fusion is a nod to Gadamer and the "fusion of horizons which points to perception and coming to an understanding but also how one is changed by one's engagement with something previously alien" (p. 2). Poetry and poetic language have allowed me to capture and illuminate key moments, feelings, and images throughout the interpretive process.

Hating Poetry

"I HATE poetry!" Brendan's voice pushed through the chatter as I walked to the front of the class to begin the lesson, a classic poem already projected on the board.

Where once I might have rolled my eyes in exaggeration and exasperation, shaken my head, and replied, "Deal with it!" my graduate studies had me working "to cultivate an interpretive ear [and] approach the world with generosity" (T. Skuce, personal communication, February 15, 2022). Instead, I paused and approached his statement with curiosity, "You HATE poetry, Brendan? Really? All poetry? Why? What is it about a poem that makes you hate it?"

"Because it's terrible and I don't get it," he said. I looked around the room and saw heads nodding in agreement.

While this answer did not surprise me, my response to the class did: "Let's dig into that a bit. Why do so many of us in the room hate poetry?" And I began to collect their ideas on the whiteboard (T. Polasek, personal narrative, February 2022).

Understanding Curriculum as a Verb

Currere

Curriculum is not just
the what of teaching and learning,
but a form of experience;
not only a noun but also a Verb,
The focus changes to Experiences and to Questions:
What is it like to be a teacher
        and to teach?
What do subjects and their content mean
        for students?
What does learning look like
        in everyday experiences?
How should we respond to changing contexts
        of life
        diversity
        gender
        culture
          language?   (found poem inspired by Skuce, 2022, p. 2)

My Poetic Past

"As the past becomes, the present is revealed."
(Pinar, 1994, p. 22).

For Mrs. Gellner (my Grade 2 teacher)

I was your favourite student that year
And (that is to say)
You made me feel extra-special.

The gift of a notebook (the spark)
The encouragement and interest you showed in my poetry.

You saw beauty
In my words and taught me to write, (even though)
I do not recall a single lesson.

It was you,
It was the notebook,
It became me.

     Betty Gellner passed away several years ago, but her gift of the love of writing poetry lives on. I wish to honour her memory by offering this gift to my students. Embracing the method of currere allowed me to sit with my past through a process of regression. I grew up in a household that valued reading and poetry. In the poem below, I explore my early years and the influences that shaped my love of poetry:

Simple Playthings

Rhyme, rhythm, word play shaped my early years,
filled my ears before I could read a Word,
They were my playthings, toys
Shel Silverstien with his silly, simplicity
drawing me in, my imagination opened
I gobbled up the "Alligator Pie" and "Garbage Delight" Dennis Lee served, helping after helping
fed my wonder and curiosity
My father around the campfire mining from his memory "The Cremation of Sam McGee"
The power of the Midnight Sun still shining after all those years
The power of a poem to capture, captivate, encapsulate
a feeling, a crowd, a heart

Reflecting on my past reveals the overwhelmingly positive influences I have experienced with, through, and about poetry. Our world shapes us, and by examining our own understandings we may glimpse how this insight offers new perspectives in our interactions with others (Green, 2021). What experiences have led my students to their dislike of poetry?

Distill and Be Still in the Present

Honouring my position as a teacher and the privileged place I hold in the classroom amongst students I am reminded that "teaching is a matter of continual beginnings" (Levinson, 1997, p. 439). If we approach each year, each semester, each class, and each moment as a new beginning, we might glimpse the potential of becoming. Travelling alongside my students as we work to uncover their dislike of poetry I am constantly reminded to stay open and curious to avoid freezing the future that lies ahead. Moving through currere to the progressive allows the "usually buried visions of what is not yet present to manifest" (Pinar, 1994, p. 25). I explore this through the following poem:

A Gift

As I hold the present in my lap
And begin to get curious about what might be inside,
I give it a little shake.

What does it sound like?
What does the weight of it suggest?
What did I ask for?

I run my fingers over the wrapping.
The paper, the ribbon, the tape.
I savour the possibilities that exist before
I know better.

Is this mindfulness?
Thoughtfulness?

I rip,
I tear.

How do I make sense of this paradox of both treasuring and destroying? This savouring and devouring? My love of poetry and my demolition of the potential love students might inherit? The possibilities that exist when poetry is lived or foreclosed when poetry is "schooled"? Through professional learning, I have learned new methods of approaching poetry that should entice and entrance my students, but I often find myself reverting to more traditional analytical methods of teaching poetry. There appears to be something more at play that I cannot quite put my finger on.

I know better...

But I often
  Find myself
  Standing
  At the
  Front of the room with a
classic poem
projected on the board.
  I proceed to
"torture a confession out of it"   (quotation from Collins, 1996, p. 58)

Digging Into Their Dislike

Greig and Hughes (2009) explored the complicated relationship between boys, masculinity, and poetry. They interrogated and troubled "the historical legacy of hegemonic masculinity and homophobia that continues to underlie anxieties about boys and poetry (p. 102). Excluding and shunning poetry is the manly thing to do. Boys and men should be engaged in active not passive pursuits. Teachers support and uphold traditional masculine definitions for boys through their poetry selections or even avoid teaching poetry on the basis that boys do not like it. Often when they do teach it, the selections they make – featuring themes of action, sports, and violence – work to further reinforce traditional definitions of masculinity and further limiting the preferred reading of boys. In addition, leaving poetry out of documents and publications aimed at boys reinforces the cultural assumption "that boys do not read poetry" (p. 99). Poetry collections designed to appeal to boys weaponize poetry and take aim at those who would seek to expand the traditional definition of masculinity.

Levinson (1997) noted that "education forecloses possibilities when educators teach about the past in ways that immobilize our understandings of the present and discourage students from exploring possibilities about a different future" (p. 442). Instead of opening worlds for boys, teachers may be constructing barriers; bolting boys to narrow narratives of what it means to be a man. Too often these narrow definitions of masculinity acquired during childhood and adolescence persist. Phelan (2010) cautioned that too strong a hold on identity can be just as paralyzing as a crisis in identity. There appears to be a lot at stake for boys. How might teachers use poetry to invite and support boys' interrogation of their own historicity?

Poetry as the Remedy

"To live poetically is to live in language."
(Leggo, 2005, p. 178)

The Vastness

The reading and writing of poetry in school matters. Why?
First, poetry is richer linguistically, holds promise
for exciting students about language.

By reading and writing poetry,
we expose our students to
the vastness of language, nuance, and subtlety.

More importantly, the reading or writing of poetry has expressive
and personally explorative power, which can profoundly alter the student:
one faces oneself.

To contemplate, reflect on themselves as gendered subjects,
examine the gender regimes they know
are problematic   (fusion poem inspired by Greig & Hughes, 2009, p. 92)

Poetry offers students a wealth of possibilities: the possibility to be heard and understood, but also the "paradoxical desire not to be understood" (Jardine & Batychy, 2004, p. 5). There is a magical quality that poets seek in their writing; this subtle mystery ensures the poem cannot be immediately and fully consumed. Poetry can offer us this. It can be simple and complex. It can be superficial and deep. It can be "the place left vacant for who is to come" (p. 6).

Poetry also invites the reader to come back and re-explore a terrain they once visited. In this way, each reader may have the chance to experience the poem, hear it speak to them, and then see the poem anew, to see it in a new season, to have a new line reach out and touch their heart in a profound way. The possibility exists for the reader to leave the poem a different person.

While educators might work to transform and emancipate students through a diverse palette of human relationships that help build community and care for the other (Greig & Hughes, 2009), it remains for the student to participate. There is no one method, no one best practice that will suit all students. The students in our classrooms show up each day and they make a choice to engage in learning or to refuse. As teachers and curriculum theorists, we can point to conditions and practices that have led to or might lead to authentic learning, but the work will always necessarily be participatory. For Aoki (2000), teaching "should be much more about the provocation to think than any communication of knowledge" (p. 367). In this way, teachers "need to be precisely what we hope our students will be: curious, knowledgeable, adventurous, well read, questioning, creative, and daring in their intellectual ventures" (Jardine et al., 2008, p. xxii).

Analysis

"Interpretation must make more visible what is lived through directly."
(Pinar, 1994, p. 26).

In the poem below, I endeavour to interpret the works of Aoki (2000), Jardine (1992), and Porter and Robinson (2011) through the keyword *entangle*. This making visible might be accomplished for the reader in a multiplicity of understandings, as it was for me when I created it. Mimicking the distinct style of Emily Dickinson and her adherence to specific rhythm and meter, I hope to reveal the truth by circuitous means. As she so keenly observed, "Success in Circuit lies" (Dickinson, 1998, p. 494).

Entangled

The Questions we ask can Lead us
To Truth. We are Open
To invite Risk, we Lose ourselves–
Find possibilities.

Follow Strings of Transformation,
Witness how "language twists
Upon itself." We are Entangled
In knots; new ideas.

Teaching cannot be reduced through
Simplified translation;
Cannot be Communicated
Conveniently with ease.

Fantasy is wrapped in her cloak
Of clarity. Search where
The only way is in; puzzling.
When Truth blinds, we can see.   (quoted portion from Aoki, 2000, p. 359)

Unlearning

Unlearning is "an iterative process with learning" (McLeod et al., 2020, p. 183). It is a reflective process of identifying our conceptions of the world and making conscious the unquestioned aspects. It involves a dismantling and reinvention of our understanding and identities. When we deconstruct and disrupt the norms of our environment, we have the chance to transform.

While much of the research on unlearning comes from the thinking and behavioural spheres, there is now more talk about the emotional dimension of unlearning. For example, the unpacking of white privilege is a rich topic currently explored through unlearning. In addition, the entire concept of decolonizing involves unlearning deeply embedded concepts and practices in classroom and institutions. This forces not just a critical lens, it requires an embedding and enacting of Indigenous knowledges.

For Jardine and colleagues, (2008) "it is necessary to interpretive work [to show] how new examples enrich, transform, and correct what one thought was fully understood and meaningful" (p. xii). Peeling back the layers of our education (and miseducation) opens potential for new understandings.

Understanding

"Understanding and interpretation are not acts of an individual conscious mind
but enactments, performances, or a kind of praxis."
(Schwandt, 1999, p. 455).

For Schwandt (1999), "when we model understanding on learning, we think of the task of understanding as conversation, as the expression in language of what is understood" (p. 456). Hosting a conversation in this way, where we seek to understand others, we find ourselves in between what is known and what is strange. This requires a sense of "awakeness" in the in-between living for these experiences to generate meaning. Being open to experience, engaging in dialogue, risking confusion about the other and ourselves are all at play in this space.

For Green et al. (2021), understanding is predicated by interpretation and is necessarily tied with language. For Nelson (2000), understanding "is the enactment of intentionality in an environment" (p. 154). I am pulled to the notion proposed by Code in Schwandt (1999) that the quest for a right way is related to a person's orientation to the world and the value they place in understanding. I am driven by the desire to understand more fully, to uncover a new insight or illumination, and that keeps me perpetually pursuing a better understanding.

Understanding: Stand in the midst of

Unlearning
I tense in tension and seek comfort in the
Comfortable.
Will I shift from bracing
For uncertainty
To embracing it?

For Phelan (2010), because there exists in teaching and in living a sense of riskiness and imperfection, we shift the question onto ourselves and how we might hold ourselves open to possible awakenings to strike us. Poetry might hold this magical quality to reveal "the Truth's superb surprise" (Dickinson, 1998).

Poetry for Teachers: A Way to New Understandings

"Human beings are really human be(com)ings constituted in the play of language."
(Leggo, 2005, p. 178)

In the same way that teaching and living are complex and littered with risk and uncertainty, so too is language. As Aoki (2000) observed, "clarity cannot escape difficulty" (p. 362). Life is complicated and poetry can both capture and reveal this. For Leggo (2005), "language is the creative medium by which we construct meaning collaboratively" (p. 178). And it is through language that we experience the world (Risser, 2019). In this sharing, the world expands; As we venture out, we may find ourselves (past, present, and future) changed upon our return.

Bringing the wor(l)d closer

The universe of language lives its life:
Conversation.
When we want to understand, we are caught up
in the Language of Conversation,
Participatory engagement with the other:
A shared life:
An infinity of possibility opens:
Allowing space for play and ambiguity.
The poetic word brings the world, and thereby the other,
Closer.   (fusion poem inspired by Risser, 2019, p. 2; Green et al., 2021, p. 5)

Exciting work is being done in the field of arts-based research as poet researchers explore the possibilities of poetic inquiry. In a research study conducted by Prendergast and colleagues (2009), haiku was used to represent data collected. The form allows small moments of our lives to shine and reflect on how these memorable experiences are lived through thought and emotion rather than in a straight line. The fleeting nature, constrained form, and ambiguity of understanding add to the richness of the poem. The purpose "is to cause some potential reverberation within the individual reader as they engage with these renderings in the light of their own interests and experiences" (p. 311). We can use language to understand the experiences of our lives in fresh and dynamic ways (Leggo, 2005).

Sometimes the extract is not an erasure,
But an expansion.
It is not a cut, but a culmination.
Not a gash, but a growth.   (Gorman, 2021, p. 37)

Synthesis

"I am placed together."
(Pinar, 1994, p. 27)

In the final phase of Pinar's (2004) method of currere, synthesis pulls together the self to create one whole – thinking, feeling, acting, being. The intention is an "intensified engagement with daily life" (p. 37). In a similar way, using language creatively can offer readers and writers a chance to dwell in this space. For Olthouse and Sauder (2016), "synthesis, or creativity in writing, does not replace the development of content understanding, it reinforces it" (p. 192). Writing is about experiencing the world, seeing and interpreting the ideas and impressions surrounding us.

The model of a life

The teacher fires the hearts and the imaginations
of teachers and parents and students,
not with platitudes and shopworn homilies that nobody believes,
but with the model of a life committed to
learning
teaching
risk taking
experimentation
journeying
growing.

Being a teacher is a way of life,
the living out of a vocation or calling,
a way of dwelling in the world.

The teacher is a visionary whose feet are firm
and steady in the soil (even mud) of real lived experience
with all the constraints imposed by
time
money
differences of opinion
while at the same time dreaming
new possibilities   (found poem inspired by Leggo, 2005, p. 191)

An Ending by Way of a Beginning

How might my process of unlearning lead to new understandings and possibilities for me as a teacher and curriculum theorist? How might this venture through currere open possibilities for a transformation in my practice? Might this new thoughtfulness create space for an appreciation (or even love!) of poetry in my students? I am reminded again of the potential for a multiplicity of understandings through education.

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About the Author

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Mental Health Supports Lacking in Rural Canada:
Schools an Effectual Entry Point

Susanne Lee

Abstract

Adolescents living in both rural and urban settings experience the same mental health care needs at similar rates, but those living in rural environments experience exacerbated consequences because of localized barriers to receiving support. These barriers are often summarized as the three A's: availability, accessibility, and acceptability. Because Canada has many rural and remote communities, it is important to implement effective interventions that address these barriers within the community context. Tiered intervention at the school level is one such intervention framework that produces positive results.

The geographic location in which individuals reside can play an important role in their lives: it can determine the language(s) they speak, the seasons they experience, and the people they interact with. More importantly, this location can impact the adequacy in which they experience the social determinants of health such as mental health care. While all adolescents experience mental health disorders such as anxiety or depression at a similar rate (van Vulpen et al., 2018), those living in rural areas receive mental health services much less frequently than those in urban areas (O'Malley et al., 2018). The impact that this disparity has on a student may be detrimental not only during adolescence but into adulthood as well, which can put a strain on a country's social systems (Bronstein & Mason, 2016). The next step seems clear: provide better access to mental health care for those living in rural communities. This access needs to be responsive to the unique setting of these communities with a clear understanding not only of the consequences of untreated mental health concerns but additionally of the unique barriers that adolescents in rural communities have in receiving mental health care. Since the onset of mental health concerns tends to occur in childhood and adolescence and because most of this population accesses education through schools, mental health intervention through the system is an effectual and practical solution in rural communities.

Considering the Consequences

Untreated mental health concerns can have a myriad of effects on adolescents and the societies in which they live, both immediate and into adulthood. On an individual level, adolescents can experience social-emotional, academic, and physical impairments such as academic failure, risky behaviours, health issues, and an increased risk of suicide (Wilger, 2018), which is the second leading cause of death in adolescents (Berryhill et al., 2022). When mental health concerns are left untreated, adolescents drop out of school at a rate of 37% (McCarter, 2019, p. 7), which can lead to future poverty, unemployment (McCarter, 2019), health issues, divorce, and single parenthood (Bronstein & Mason, 2016). On a societal level, the repercussions include higher affiliated costs and services (Michael & Jameson, 2017) when an adolescent finally seeks treatment, because mental health symptoms are aggravated (Wilger, 2018) and emergency services are often required (Michael & Jameson, 2017). This may also put more pressure on other services, such as child welfare systems (Michael & Jameson, 2017). When adequate care is not received and adolescents with mental health concerns drop out of school, this may lead to adult unemployment and poverty, which exacerbates the use of public assistance programs and incarceration (McCarter, 2019), putting increased financial strain on a country. These are the consequences of untreated mental health concerns that are encountered by adolescents all over Canada.

Untreated mental health concerns are disconcerting for all who experience them, but the 30% of Manitobans living in rural areas (Statistics Canada, 2017) can expect consequences that are exacerbated by their location. This is because 15% of families living in rural communities also live in poverty (Puskar et al., 2006, p. 14) and students from low-income families can already experience lower rates of academic success and post-secondary education, including higher rates of dropout (Bronstein & Mason, 2016). For example, in 2016, 17% of Manitoba's rural population had less than a high school diploma and the highest level of education reached by 31% of the population was a high school diploma (Manitoba Government, 2021), compared to provincial rates of 14% and 83%, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2017). Rural students also experience higher rates of parents who work multiple jobs (Heitkamp et al., 2019) and lower rates of parental involvement (Michael & Jameson, 2017), which often accounts for higher student absenteeism and school attrition (Harvey & Clark, 2020). Outside of academics, adolescents from low-income families are more likely to encounter adverse childhood experiences including parental divorce, incarceration, mental illness, substance abuse, and violence (Rural Health Information Hub, 2021). As these adolescents become adults, they often experience decreased health care, lower quality jobs, lower life-expectancy (McCarter, 2019), higher rates of unemployment, obesity, opioid abuse, and mental illness (Berryhill et al., 2022). These are the exacerbated consequences for adolescents who face mental health challenges in rural communities.

While all of these statistics seem related more to poverty than to rurality (Michael & Jameson, 2017), this is still concerning because rural adolescents are less likely to seek assistance for mental health concerns (Nichols et al., 2017). It may also explain the increased rate of substance abuse (Bain et al., 2011) and the doubling of suicide rates for adolescents living in rural areas (Michael & Jameson, 2017). The severity of the ramifications of untreated mental health concerns of adolescents living in rural communities is evident and undisputed, so why is it that only 25-35% of children living in these areas receive mental health services (Bain et al., 2011, p. 2)? The answer can be found in the barriers to care that are faced by this group.

Clarifying the Barriers

There is a tendency for society to view people with mental health disorders as dangerous or uncomfortable to be around, and those who experience mental health concerns often feel embarrassed about reaching out for assistance, especially adolescents who are highly motivated by the approval of others (Michael & Jameson, 2017). This makes it difficult for them to access mental health support. Adolescents living in rural communities face additional unique barriers that are often summarized by the three A's: availability, accessibility, and acceptability (Heitkamp et al., 2019).

Availability is the existence of appropriate health care (Wilger, 2018). While 50% of the world's population lives in rural areas, only 30% of health professionals practice in those areas (Bain et al., 2011, p. 2). Harvey & Clark (2020) described this population as "isolated and underserved" (p. 537), causing longer wait times for assistance. The shortage of mental health providers leads to missed or erroneous diagnoses and treatment, and can result in worsening symptoms requiring intensified treatment that comes with a higher financial burden (Michael & Jameson, 2017). This is because general physicians in rural areas are often used for all health care needs due to a lack of specialized professionals (Bain et al., 2011). General physicians are less likely to follow up with patients experiencing mental health concerns and there is an increased likelihood of prescribing medication in the absence of therapy, resulting in adverse side effects such as the discontinuation of medication, increased suicidal ideation, or death by suicide (Berryhill et al., 2022). Both the quantity and quality of trained professionals are inadequate in these areas (Bronstein & Mason, 2016).

Accessibility is the convenience of mental health services (Wilger, 2018), based on time, knowledge, transportation, and finances. Wait times to be seen by specialized professionals are

often lengthy because of the limited availability of services (Michael & Jameson, 2017). This can make accessing the service unattractive. Knowledge of mental health is often termed mental health literacy (Enos, 2020), which is the belief and knowledge of mental health issues (Heitkamp et al., 2019). Without mental health literacy, the anticipation of support is dismissed and the knowledge of resources goes unknown (Bronstein & Mason, 2016). Transportation can be problematic, as well. Individuals living in rural areas must often travel longer distances for mental health services (Rural Health Information Hub, 2021). If those living in rural areas are also living in poverty, they may not have access to a private vehicle. This is not as substantial an issue in urban areas where there are often taxis, ride share programs, and public buses, but in rural areas these options may not be available. For example, in 2016, 35% of Manitobans did not have access to public transportation because they lived in rural locations that had no public transportation services (Statistics Canada, 2017). Furthermore, even if transportation and the costs associated with it were not an issue, individuals living in rural areas may lack insurance or the finances to utilize mental health services (McCarter, 2019). While one solution to the accessibility issue has been technology (such as telephone or video chatting), inconsistent telephone/internet connections, distrust of technology, and the importance of building a personal in-person rapport can be barriers in rural communities (Michael & Jameson, 2017). Also, even when these services are accessed, the rates of attrition in rural areas are higher than in urban areas (Michael & Jameson, 2017). This may be due in part to acceptability.

Acceptability is the willingness of the population to receive support (Wilger, 2018). In rural areas, the stigma of using mental health services is heightened (Nichols et al., 2017), usually a result of misinformation about mental health and mental health supports (Esters et al., 1996). Stigma affects use of service, even if services are available (Esters et al., 1996). Rural communities with denser social networks tend to be more self-reliant, see help-seeking behaviours as weak, and have a higher distrust of outsiders (Michael & Jameson, 2017). The idea of autonomy and self-care is often valued in rural communities, which may impede a family's willingness to seek out assistance (Esters et al., 1996) because they may fear being ostracized for seeking mental health services due to confidentiality/anonymity issues (Harvey & Clark, 2020). Some individuals fear that general physicians are not skilled in treatment (Michael & Jameson, 2017), and there may be skepticism around the purpose and effectiveness of treatment (O'Malley et al., 2018). They may also hold the belief that mental health issues are related to the justice system, not health (Michael & Jameson, 2017), and that when supports from outside of the community are available, treatment is not knowledgeable or culturally sensitive to the specific community's world views or ideologies (Berryhill et al., 2022).

Any of the individual A's may be an enormous barrier to acquiring mental health services by anyone regardless of their location, but the barriers faced by those living in rural areas are not usually limited to just one A. Rural primary care physicians in Saskatchewan and Manitoba listed both availability and accessibility to mental health professionals as the top two issues facing child and adolescent mental health care (Zayed et al., 2016). Any combination of the A's compound the justification for rejecting the services altogether, which puts adolescents living in rural communities at particular risk, because their young age magnifies each of the A's. This is the reason why intervention for this population must look different than it does for adolescents living in urban areas.

Positing Interventions

Establishing mental health interventions suitable for adolescents living in rural communities requires the support to be easily accessible and readily available, and to include a teaching component that increases its acceptability. With schools being the hub of rural communities (Heitkamp et al., 2019), the place where students spend most of their time outside of the home (McCarter, 2019) and the place where most adolescents in the community attend regardless of the type of mental health support they require (Michael & Jameson, 2017), a Multi-Tiered

Systems of Support (MTSS) at rural schools seems to be the best fit for addressing these needs (O'Malley et al., 2018). MTSS is an evidence-based school system of support with three levels of intervention based on student needs (Wilger, 2018). Tier one is where universal school- or class-wide prevention supports, wellness and engagement promotion, and screening occurs (Michael & Jameson, 2017); tier two is the level in which targeted group intervention and further needs-based assessment take place (Berryhill et al., 2022); and tier three is where intensive individualized support is provided (O'Malley et al., 2018).

The promotion of mental health and identification of risk factors in tier one requires classroom teachers and school counsellors to be literate in mental health because they are the people who are most likely to notice mental health concerns in adolescents. Teachers are often attuned to behavioural differences from "typically presenting" same-aged peers (Michael & Jameson, 2017, pp. 4-6). School counsellors and classroom teachers who have had adequate mental health literacy training can implement interventions such as Social Emotional Learning or Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports, which have positive impacts on academics, behaviours, and social-emotional well-being, including increased feelings of belonging and connectedness with the school and staff, which influences academic and social-emotional success and is also a protective factor against depression (Michael & Jameson, 2017). Promoting mental health in schools also reinforces the normalization of help-seeking behaviours, which results in reduced stigma associated with poor mental health (Michael & Jameson, 2017) and more positive attitudes about mental health and help-seeking behaviours (Esters et al., 1996). The successful identification of risk factors associated with poor mental health or mental illness requires that school staff be appropriately trained in child development, wellness promotion, social determinants of health, culture, and context (Michael & Jameson, 2017). Understanding these factors and implementing tier two intervention with these students leads to earlier identification of mental health issues (Michael & Jameson, 2017).

In tier two, the at-risk individuals identified in tier one are the target population for intervention. These students typically present with symptoms of failing mental, academic, social, or emotional health (Michael & Jameson, 2017, p. 50), but are not currently experiencing severe mental concerns or illness. Group intervention can be led by school counsellors and can follow a prescribed process such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or mindfulness. These interventions can give adolescents the tools they need to improve their mental health and well-being, and may ultimately negate the need for more intensive support.

Students who require the intensive, individualized support in tier three typically present with mental illness such as depression and anxiety (Michael & Jameson, 2017). Students in tier three benefit from collaboration with community agencies, which decreases the single burden of either the school or agency of dealing with all the mental health issues of adolescents. The different systems can also provide support to each other (Bronstein & Mason, 2016), and in fact must, because psychotherapy and medication together have the best results for depression and anxiety in adolescents (Berryhill et al., 2022). While trained school counsellors can provide students who require tier three intervention with individualized therapy, collaborating with community agencies and families will enable students to receive the holistic support they require. This leads to improved mental health, social performance, and academic success of the student (McCarter, 2019), and decreased individual and government costs associated with mental illness (Michael & Jameson, 2017).

Adopting MTSS has resulted in a two-fold increase in the access of mental health supports by adolescents in rural communities (Berryhill et al., 2022). Families are more likely to follow through with treatment when the school is involved (McCarter, 2019), which is important because when parents are involved outcomes are more favourable for students in both mental health and academics (Michael & Jameson, 2017). If the argument ever arises that schools are not the place to support mental health – that they are solely a place to improve the academic skills of adolescents – it is important to remember that mental health can affect academics (Michael & Jameson, 2017). Another strong case for MTSS in schools is that almost 80% of

student in rural communities access mental health supports only in an educational context (Nichols et al., 2017, p. 39). Thus, while schools remain the central institution for academic education of adolescents, they are also the place where social-emotional learning in the context of MTSS should occur because schools are able to provide developmentally appropriate treatments to adolescents (Wilger, 2018) in a comfortable, familiar, youth-friendly environment.

Conclusion

The geographic area wherein people reside can have a great impact on many crucial elements in their life. For adolescents living in rural areas, the struggle to get support with mental health can have significant negative consequences for their current and future existence. These consequences can be intellectual, social-emotional, physical, and/or behavioural. The challenges that adolescents living in rural areas face in receiving support for mental health are not the same as those faced by their urban counterparts and can be summed up by the three A's: availability, accessibility, and acceptability. The factors that make up these A's must be considered when planning culturally sensitive intervention. MTSS is one approach that has been met with success when implemented in collaboration with the community because it takes into account the unique consequences and barriers of students who need specialized supports. Because nearly all school-aged Canadians already access community schools, they can be a powerful locus for closing the gap of inequitable mental health services support between rural and urban adolescents.

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Play-Based Learning:
Playing the Way to Rich Learning

Jamie Blyth

Abstract

Play-based learning is a combination of rich play and curricular outcomes. When implemented in a classroom, play-based learning has a multitude of positive effects on the students, both academically and social-emotionally. As leaders of a play-based learning classroom, educators must understand the different types of play, how to create an inclusive environment, and how to use their expertise to enhance the play and learning of their students. When used effectively, play-based learning can enrich and extend the learning of all students.

Children spend the first five years of their lives soaking in the world around them, and then they enter the formal academic world of kindergarten. To go from a world of play, where the children are in control, to a teacher-directed classroom can be quite the shock for some children (Lewis, 2016), especially as kindergarten has become more rigorous, with higher academic expectations, in recent years (Danniels & Pyle, 2016). As a result, teachers feel pressured to meet the curriculum standards, and are more likely to focus on direct instruction techniques, instead of letting the children guide the learning through their interests and passions (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). This brings up the question of whether it is developmentally appropriate for children to learn in only a direct instruction context, instead of the play-based environment they are used to.

Play is essential for children's learning and development. It is through play that children make sense of the world around them and build on their previous learning (O'Leary, 2021). Play is "freely chosen, actively engaging, opportunistic, pleasurable, creative, and concerned more with means than ends" (Danniels & Pyle, 2016, p. 275). Play-based learning is the perfect strategy to unify the need for learning and the need for play. The purpose of play-based learning is as it sounds: "to learn while at play" (Danniels & Pyle, 2016, p. 285). To elaborate, play-based learning brings together the child-centered act of play and educational curriculum driven by teachers (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Play-based learning focuses on expanding on children's interests and abilities, through a variety of play scenarios and structured learning opportunities and has been found to provide a deeper learning experience than direct instruction or free play alone (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). To fully understand how play-based learning can be effective in classrooms, educators must comprehend the benefits of play-based learning, how play-based learning is a tool for inclusion, the types of play used, and the role of the educator in a play-based learning classroom.

The Benefits of Play-Based Learning

Empathy, curiosity, innovation, creativity, leadership. All of these are skills that can be learned through play-based learning (Healthy Child Manitoba, 2015). Play-based learning has an abundance of benefits for children, many of which fall under the category of social-emotional learning (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). One such benefit is the development of self-regulation skills, whereby children learn to manage their emotions and behaviors during play with classmates (Danniels & Pyle, 2016). Through play, children are given the opportunity to collaborate and develop problem solving skills (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). When children learn conflict resolution skills, it also helps them to build confidence in themselves and their regulation abilities. With practice, these skills will translate to situations outside of play, therefore increasing the benefit to the children. During play-based learning, children also learn social norms such as turn taking, sharing, responsibility, cleaning up after oneself, and transitions (Taylor & Boyer, 2020).

Play-based learning has also been shown to improve children's communication skills. Play gives children the chance to practice their communication skills with peers, such as sharing thoughts, feelings, and ideas (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Through pretend play scenarios, where children take on roles and navigate the direction of play, children learn routines of conversations and advanced language skills. Children involved in play-based learning have better verbalization, improved language comprehension, and an overall more advanced language level (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2015). In addition to improving communication and language skills, play-based learning can also improve children's literacy scores (Danniels & Pyle, 2016). Research has found that when literacy is embedded in play scenarios it improves literacy scores and communication skills at the same time. Play-based learning can also increase children's math scores (Danniels & Pyle, 2016), which is important because high achievement in kindergarten math is one of the biggest indicators of success in later academic years (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Many of the kindergarten math outcomes can be achieved using hands-on learning, such as comparing quantities and demonstrating an understanding of patterns (Manitoba Education, 2013). Therefore, it is a natural progression that these outcomes be learned with play-based learning. Executive functioning is also increased during play, as children expand their ability to retain information, especially during games with rules (O'Leary, 2021). Any game that involves strategy gives children the chance to make plans and change them based on the flow of the game. This expands working memory, which is an essential skill for academic learning.

As shown, many benefits of play-based learning fall within the realm of social-emotional and academic learning; however, play-based learning also has benefits for children's physical health (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2015). Play-based learning can benefit both gross motor skills such as running, jumping, skipping, or catching a ball, and fine motor skills such as scissor skills, zippers, using writing utensils, or doing puzzles. In addition to physical health, there are also benefits to children's mental health, such that when children play it increases overall feelings of well-being (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2015).

While it has clearly been shown that the benefits of play-based learning are vast during childhood, research has also found that when children have a positive early childhood experience, which involves play, it leads to improved overall health, better stress management, and a longer life expectancy during adulthood (O'Leary, 2021). This is all the more reason to implement play-based learning in classrooms. Educators using play-based learning are helping to create not only well-rounded children, but well-rounded adults.

Play-Based Learning as a Tool for Inclusion

Play-based learning is a tool for inclusion. Students with developmental delays can benefit greatly from play-based learning. When discussing the inclusion of students with developmental delays in play-based learning classrooms, it is important to note the difference between academic inclusion and community inclusion (Danniels & Pyle, 2021). Academic inclusion refers to integrating the students into the classroom and making sure that there is an access point for them in the academic tasks being complete. Community inclusion refers to making sure that all students feel as though they are valued and respected members of the classroom, and this is where the concept of play comes in. Typically, students with developmental delays participate in more solitary play and less collaborative play with classmates (Danniels & Pyle, 2021). They are also often excluded from the play of other children. In a classroom that supports play-based learning, students with developmental delays can receive the same benefits as typically developed students if the teacher is an active participant in the play (Danniels & Pyle, 2021). The teacher must be there to support and extend play if needed. When the teacher becomes an active participant, students with developmental delays show growth in areas such as communication and social-emotional learning. Including students with developmental delays in play-based learning will benefit all members of the classroom by creating a community of

inclusion, and therefore a community of empathetic learners.

Types of Play

When exploring types of play, there are two different conceptualizations to delve into. The first is from the Manitoba context. As more research has been done, many of the Canadian provinces have implemented play-based learning curriculums (Danniels & Pyle, 2016), especially following the Canadian Ministers of Education Canada statement endorsing play-based learning (CMEC, 2012). The Manitoba government has outlined five types of play that children learn and grow from (Manitoba Learning and Advanced Training, 2015). The first is exploratory play, which is when children experiment and play with new ideas or materials. This can be achieved through sensory play or the use of loose parts. Exploratory play is often linked to math and problem solving. A second type of play is constructive play, which is described as goal-oriented play, using open-ended materials. This can be seen through creative outlets, such as making art or the building of structures. Children may look for patterns or similar characteristics within a collection of items. Teachers can support students in their constructive learning by posing questions as the children play. Symbolic learning is the type of play where children make one item, or person, represent another. This shows the emerging ability to be a representative thinker. Excelling at symbolic play has been shown to be a precursor to early literacy skills. Socio-dramatic play is seen when children act out stories or scenarios, such as doctor's office or bakery. This type of play gives children an insight into how the world around them works. It also allows them to connect to how others think and feel, promoting empathy. Finally, games with rules are where children can learn to follow directions, take turns, and work on impulse control. Board games, card games, and group games are all opportunities for learning. Manitoba teachers are encouraged to incorporate all of these types of play into their early years classrooms.

The second conceptualization of types of play comes from Danniels and Pyle (2016). While the Manitoba document focuses more on specific activities, Danniels and Pyle focused on types of play being on a continuum from child directed to teacher directed. The first type of play on the continuum is free play. During this type of play there is no guidance or interference from the teacher, and the play is mostly imaginative and pretend. When children choose materials during free play it is often building blacks, sensory tables, or playing with toys, such as cars or dinosaurs. While there is a place for free play within the classroom, too much free play leads to teachers not taking initiative for the children's growth. Next on the continuum is inquiry play, which is still child led, but the teacher becomes involved to enhance the learning experience based on the children's interests. This type of play often includes spontaneous, in-the-moment teaching. In the middle of the continuum is collaborative play, which is shared control between the teacher and students. These play scenarios are set up in advance by the teacher, based on the interests of the students. The teacher has specific learning goals in mind; however, the students still have control within the scenario. As teacher control increases, the next type of play is playful learning, where teachers create scenarios with specific outcomes and the children play within the scenario. This play scenario is not based on the students' interests, but can still be enjoyable for the students as they play. The final and most teacher-directed type of play is learning through games. The teacher intentionally teaches skills, such as math or literacy, through a variety of games. Research has shown that the most effective learning happens in the middle of the continuum, where students and teachers share control (Taylor & Boyer, 2020).

When comparing the two of types of play conceptualizations, it is easy to see how they can fit together. The activities described in Manitoba Learning and Advanced Training's (2015) document have a place within Danniels and Pyle's continuum. It is important for educators to understand the wide variety of types of play so that they can incorporate them within the classroom, in order to enhance the learning of students.

The Role of the Educator

The teacher is a key contributor in play-based learning, but their exact role has been debated (Danniels & Pyle, 2016). Some believe that the role of the teacher is merely to provide the materials and then to let the play happen, making sure not to disturb the children. However, most research concludes that teachers must be involved in play to increase the engagement and learning of the children. It is important for teachers to understand what their role in a play-based classroom is, what educator skills are important for the play-based classroom, and how to find effective professional development in the area.

The role of the educator in play-based learning is "to be actively observing, assessing, and acting on opportunities to extend students' learning" (Taylor & Boyer, 2020, p. 131). The teachers are the leaders of the classroom, and while they share control of many play-based scenarios with their students, it is up to the teachers to ensure that rich learning is happening (O'Leary, 2020). When teachers join in, it has been found to increase the duration and complexity of play (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Teachers must remain cautious that they do not take over the play, because children interpret a situation as play only if they feel that have control over it.

To be effective during play-based learning, the teacher must have a strong understanding of curriculum in order to see connections during play. If the teacher can spontaneously recognize learning opportunities, it enhances the experience of the whole classroom (Hunter, 2020). Teachers must take an active interest in their students in order to learn about their passions and the prior knowledge of the classroom. This will help to guide the learning and enable teachers to create rich play scenarios. Additionally, teachers must know how to interact with their students in a way that supports the social-emotional growth that happens during play (Hunter, 2020). Students must be given control of their learning; however, having teachers model appropriate peer interactions and problem-solving skills has been shown to help students grow.

Knowing how to become involved in play-based learning is not instinctual for all teachers; therefore. it is imperative that teachers receive the right kind of professional development (Hunter, 2019). Having a colleague model how a teacher effectively interacts in, and leads, a play-based learning classroom has been proven more effective than simply sending teachers to a conference style in-service. In addition to modelling, using constructive feedback and professional conversation have also been proven to be effective at enhancing teacher practice. This shows the importance of creating a network for teachers who use play-based learning within a school or a division.

Play-Based Learning for All

A play-based learning classroom can provide rich learning experiences for all students. It has numerous benefits for children, from social-emotional learning to physical development. It provides opportunities for inclusion, so that students of all abilities can engage with their peers and experience the joy of playing. In addition to understanding the benefits of play-based learning and the opportunity for inclusion, educators must also understand the types of play that should be included in a play-based learning classroom, and the role of the teacher within the play-based classroom. Children are born to play, and by tapping into that innate instinct educators can help students learn in the rich environment of a play-based learning classroom.

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Resiliency During COVID-19

Nicole Harwood

Abstract

As a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the term "resiliency" has led to much discussion in many educational settings. Resiliency is a profound word and it is through further exploration of its meaning that I seek to garner new insights into what is needed in order to strengthen both student and teacher resiliency, and to provide suggestions for fostering resilience within the classroom in the face of future adversity.

My experience of teaching throughout the COVID -19 pandemic has been equivalent to the most difficult years of my teaching career. Like so many of my students and colleagues, I was faced with enduring months of public health orders, added anxiety and stress levels due to isolation and sickness, disruptions and challenges that included teaching remotely, in hybrid form, as well as transitioning back into the classroom full time. Throughout the past two years, I have observed a lack of motivation, disengagement, breakdown and increased levels of anxiety, depression and mental health issues among many of my students throughout the ongoing pandemic. My own personal experiences, and observations of my students, have led me to delve deeper into the notion of resilience. I worry that these ongoing, widespread problems will become insurmountable if school systems do not intervene and recognize the need to focus on student resiliency, and the overall health and wellness of students and teachers. Most concerning to me is that despite the lifting of public health protocols and the shift toward normalcy within the classroom, I continue to see a decline in the success and wellbeing of many students that I teach.

The Meaning(s) of Resiliency

The etymology of the word *resilience* dates back to the 1600s when it was referred to as an "act of rebounding or springing back, often of immaterial things, from Latin *resiliens*" or in other words "to rebound, recoil" (Resilience, n.d.). Although I believe that resiliency is anything but a simple term, in its most basic form it can be defined with a common day, dictionary definition as "the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness" (Resilience, n.a.b). Many definitions of resilience include "the overcoming of stress or adversity or a relative resistance to environmental risk" (Bowes & Jaffee, 2013, p. 195). On a broader scale, the term *resilience* is "imbued with a multidimensional set of meanings that evoke mental, emotional, and spiritual insight, resolve, foresight, strength, and fortitude in an individual and in a communal social context" (Almedom, 2015, p. 708).

What is interesting to me is that there is an "epistemological pluralism" that arises in comprehending what it means to be or become resilient, when human resilience is expressed through first person narratives, observations by onlookers, or communicated by experts (Almedon, 2015, p. 709). From an educational standpoint, I have come to understand that resilience is loosely regarded as "a set of attitudes and behaviors which are associated with an individual's ability to recover from adversity and also to actively adapt in the face of these adversities and stress" (Robbins et al., 2018, p. 44). Johnson and Howard (1999) regarded resilience as "the inherent and nurtured capacity of individuals to deal with life stressors in ways that enable them to lead healthy and fulfilling lives" (p. 3). Could it be possible that this nurturing capacity lies within a classroom or educational setting for some students? What role might teachers play in this nurturing capacity? As a teacher, I am compelled to think of how my experience in the field of education might guide me in further understanding resilience in

students. Brogan (2020) suggested that "experience is an engagement in the ongoing process of life that involves interpretation and thus a productive repetition that exposes what we know to new meaning," whereas "experience is the realization that the present is not a closed and finished state but a reality that opens out onto past and future" (p. 5).

The Teacher's Experience

Admittedly, for much of my teaching career, and prior to COVID-19, I often equated resiliency in students to those who faced trauma, abuse, poverty and marginalization, with the assumption that there would always be students in my class who had been touched by such disparity and injustice throughout their lifetime. I was also cognizant of the challenges and barriers that many students face as they move from junior high to the high school, equating this to a sense of resiliency, and recognizing the adaptations that sponsored students must make when they move away from their outlying home communities in northern Manitoba in order to attend high school at R. D. Parker Collegiate in Thompson, Manitoba. Moules et al. (2015) would explain that "when a term becomes widely assumed and taken for granted, it starts slipping away from us, unnoticed in plain sight like a comfortable pair of shoes" (p. 156). It wasn't until I found myself in the midst of being tested by my own resilience to adversity throughout the pandemic that I truly began to question how and why some students seemingly coped well, while others continuously struggled throughout the pandemic. Upon much reflection, I began to think more deeply into my shared experiences alongside my students throughout the pandemic. The irony of the situation was that, although I felt a sense of togetherness with my students, simultaneously the pandemic created a sense of isolation like I had never experienced before in regards to my interactions with some of my family, colleagues, and friends. I began to further question my understanding of the term *resilience*. As Gadamer (2000) explained, "(u)nderstanding begins … when something addresses us" (p. 299).

As a science teacher caught in the thick of the pandemic with my students, I struggled to "actively champion resilience" (Theron, 2016, p. 91) like teachers are often equated with, and respected as doing. Although I would show up to each online or in-person class and put on a cheerful face, I too began losing motivation, and optimism. My understanding of resiliency became entwined with the notion of coping, adapting, and surviving. How is possible to decipher these terms from one another? I soon began to question whether resiliency is inherent in all individuals, and whether it can be regarded as an aspect of being human.

I vividly remember the group of students that I was teaching in the spring of 2020, when we were unexpectedly forced to shift our teaching and learning online. I referred to those students at the time as my "COVID kids," and I assured them that I would never forget them or our lived experiences together. One semester turned into two, and here we all are two years later to tell our stories of these surreal teaching and living experiences. When I think about my relationship with these former students, I understand that we were all tested with something "inherently difficult and transformative in the act of becoming experienced in the ways of the world" (Moules et. al., 2013, p. 5), and from such a process none of us could be exempt (Gadamer, 1989, p. 355). Initially, I believed that we would all persevere through the challenges of COVID-19, and anticipated that the pandemic would end sooner than later. Through lived experience, I soon realized that we would not all spring back as easily as I once thought that we would. Echoing the words of Hannah Arendt, "never has our future been more unpredictable" (1973, p. vii). I dwell on this thought, as it seems timeless. It became apparent to me that with so much uncertainty, it was impossible to know what the future would hold, and how long we would need to endure the ongoing challenges. I questioned the sustainability of hybrid teaching and online learning, cohorts, my newfound roles of cleaning and sanitizing my classroom, and the balance of my work and family. I questioned whether students were falling behind, or if that was even possible when they were all enduring the pandemic at the same pace. I questioned

my effectiveness as a teacher and as a parent. Despite all of these ongoing questions, I continue to teach, and continuously look back on where I was, and where I am today.

The Student's Experience

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of my students participated in remote learning activities and engaged in discussions, though over time their participation dwindled, their motivation began to wane, and a sense of despair began to set in. Currently, a number of my students continue to struggle and display similar difficulties in regulating their emotions. Some students are pre-occupied with their electronic devices and cell phones, while others can best be described as being present in class, though choosing not to participate in the ongoing of daily tasks and activities. Prior to COVID-19, many of these students were regarded as vibrant students, eager to learn. In addition to this, while public health protocols have lifted within the province of Manitoba, and students are no longer required to wear a mask or social distance, I continue to observe students with high anxiety who find it difficult to interact with other students and participate in activities when they are still fearful of contracting the virus.

Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, there was a widespread sense of defeat, rather than toughness that settled in as further public health orders were put in place, and students were forced to become even more isolated from one another. From mask wearing to social distancing, it became nearly impossible for students to socialize in a fashion that they were used to. Traditional graduation and prom ceremonies became a thing of the past, and consequently a number of students chose not to engage in their remote graduation ceremonies. Students appeared to be mourning the loss of what their peers had celebrated in previous years. With continual disruptions to both in class and remote learning due to isolation and sickness, many students were simply unable to cope with the content that they had missed. In addition, students were required to adjust to a hybrid teaching/learning system that was developed by our school administration, whereby students attended combined online classes on Wednesdays, and in person learning on their respective cohort days (Monday and Tuesday or Thursday and Friday). The online learning continued to pose great stress on those who did not have the technology required to participate in our Google Meet sessions. For those who did participate, very few turned their cameras on, placing additional pressure on teachers to provide adequate lesson plans and learning opportunities. Pinar (2021) noted that the pandemic "pressed educators to rethink, restructure, and reimagine what curriculum is and can be" (p. 301). Comparably, I began to feel a sense of disconnect with students when I was not able to see their faces, or read their body language and level of resiliency. At this point in time, it became increasingly more difficult to connect, engage, and interact with students, despite all attempts by the school and teachers to provide support. In the eyes of Pinar (2021), "the COVID-19 crisis is a curriculum crisis because it is a humanitarian crisis. Survival-physical, psychological, educational-is at stake" (p. 300).

Widespread concerns regarding the health and wellbeing of students across all grade levels began to emerge by the end of the first year of the pandemic. "Large-scale national research indicates that the pandemic has prompted a decline in children's emotional wellbeing" (Sharp & Nelson, 2021, p. 2). Sharp & Nelson (2021) identified numerous additional behaviors that seemingly emerged as a result of the pandemic, impacting aspects of student resiliency: elevated anxiety and depression, reduced cognitive abilities, lack of motivation and withdrawal, poor social skills, stressed relationships among peers, broken friendships, sleep loss, reduced physical fitness, as well as speech and oratory delays. Notably, within my own classes, there continued to be an increase in disengagement, and lack of attendance as the pandemic progressed.

What is profound to me is that "the same environmental insults" to the human body can impact individuals in a number of ways, in that a student could be considered "resilient for certain outcomes but not for others" (Bowes & Jaffee, 2013, p. 196). I observed this

phenomenon in that some students who were terrified that they would contract the virus, quickly became quite comfortable in wearing masks and social distancing throughout the pandemic, thus increasing their sense of resiliency. These students appeared to be comfortable in isolating from others, as they felt a sense of security and safety in not interacting with their peers. In other cases, there were some students who were greatly impacted by other aspects of the pandemic such as the isolation requirements, fueling their pre-existing mental health and anxiety issues, and reducing their resiliency. Moreover, some students appeared to have their level of resiliency challenged by remote learning as they struggled with emotional regulation and confidence in working with technology, while other students appeared to be well accustomed to these newfound learning environments and platforms of technology. Bowes and Jaffee (2013) further noted that "how an individual responds to an external stressor will depend on the complex interplay between a multitude of factors, relating both to individual characteristics (including genetic factors) and to the broader environment" (p.196).

Implications for the Future

Education systems must brace for the long-term impacts that COVID-19 has placed on both students and teachers. The reality is that "harsh environments that challenge our species survival and interconnected social-ecological, socio-cultural and geophysical sustainability challenges will continue to draw attention to human resilience in all its dimensions" (Almedom, 2015, p. 709). While resilience can be regarded as complex and interpretive in nature, it is also situational, and it may continually change over the course of time. I believe that education systems have a responsibility to look more closely at the notion of resilience within students and teachers, on a continual basis, not just in response to COVID-19. We can no longer assume that students or teachers are fine. We cannot ignore the reality that we have all endured teaching and learning throughout a worldwide pandemic, in knowing that life as we once knew it, will never be quite the same. However, most school districts within Canada have been unsuccessful in documenting "the extent of the damage, as few have assessed what students have and have not learned" since the initial school closures in the spring of March 2020 (Pinar, 2021, p. 307). While there is a dire need to prioritize the mental health and wellbeing of students and teachers as we move forward, there is arguably the concern regarding what the impact of missed curriculum content might be on students as a result of COVID-19. The assurance of education and "the promise of curriculum, particularly as the international community navigates the COVID crisis, lies in the potential enactment of curriculum as a complicated conversation that investigates the intersected social, political, economic, educational and environmental issues illuminated by the pandemic itself" (Burns & Cruz, 2021, p. 222). Pinar (2015) would ask the key curriculum question, what knowledge matters most in these historical times? The question of knowledge of most worth becomes "an ongoing question, as the immediacy of the historical moment, the particularity of place, and the singularity of one's own individuality become articulated through the subject matter-history, poetry, science, technology-that-one studies and teaches" (Pinar, 2015, p. 32).

I propose that now is the time for sweeping curriculum reform, with cross-curricular outcomes becoming infused with inquiry and opportunities for students to deepen their understanding of their own historicity, culture, and traditions, in hopes of becoming more empathetic and compassionate human beings. Certainly, the past two years have been a test of human resiliency, and this will not be our last test. I believe that teachers should strive to facilitate ongoing opportunities for students to explore the meaning of their shared, lived experiences, and their own understandings of resilience through a variety of ways such as poetry, song, story, dialogue, and most importantly conversation.

Throughout the past two years of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, both students and teachers have changed and morphed into new beings with new understandings of the world around them. Personally, I have changed the ways in which I approach my students in the

classroom, but I have also expanded upon my teaching strategies to involve more personal reflection, and inquiry-based activities. I listen more carefully and feel as though I am becoming more attuned with my students in terms of their insecurities, needs, and level of resiliency. I believe that all teachers can provide meaningful opportunities for their students to improve upon student embodiment and self-awareness, thus strengthening resilience. Historicity, traditions and culture can and should be explored by providing opportunities for students to engage with others in hopes of better understanding one another's horizon and learning to appreciate differences.

"Structured by guidelines, focused by objectives, overdetermined by outcomes, the school curriculum struggles to remain conversation. It is conversation-efforts at understanding through communication-among students and teachers, actually existing individuals in certain places on certain days, simultaneously personal and public" (Pinar, 2015, p. 110). I believe that these complex and often cumbersome conversations must continue to happen within schools: between and among administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the greater community. We must all ask the questions of where have we been and where are we now? What has changed within the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic and how do we respond to those changes? What knowledge have we gained, and what do we aspire to further understand?

Conclusion

I have come to an understanding that resiliency is of complex nature. Although some students may appear to be coping well within the confines of a teacher's classroom, exhibiting success in their academics and in their social relationships, they may be struggling in other aspects such as in their sleep patterns, their family support networks, or their physical and mental health – all of which a teacher may not be aware of. I see myself in these students, struggling in ways that they are unable to see in me. For me, it is these situations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic that have provoked new understandings of student resiliency and the "fecundity of the individual case" (Jardine, 1992, p. 51). Jardine (1992) would describe such incidents as those that "have a generative and re-enlivening effect on the interweaving texts and textures of human life in which we are all embedded" (p. 51). I have been "struck" by the inconsistencies of resilience throughout the pandemic, in that in these particular cases, "the unanticipated eruption of long-familiar threads of significance and meaning in the midst of a wholly new situation" (Jardine, 1992, p. 55) have tested my understanding of resilience as I once knew it. I seek to further understand how one might find meaning in why students are not coping, not adjusting, and not moving forward with success.

Most recently, I have found myself in a difficult space in that I question what is required in order for my students to strengthen their resilience. Though I have found understanding in the term *resilience*, I seek to find further meaning in why students have responded to the pandemic in differing ways in terms of their resilience and I wonder how I can play a role in offering support to help students move forward with success within my own classroom.

I have come to recognize that before students can move forward with success, it is important to seek a better understanding of what the underlying meaning of their resiliency may be, in hopes of providing adequate supports if necessary. The COVID-19 pandemic has reconceptualized my understandings of what it means to be resilient. Moreover, and on a personal and professional level, although I have been tested on all accounts throughout the past two years, I feel that through learning alongside my students I have come to appreciate every small success in life, and to be hopeful for what the future brings.

Postscript

Sammel (2003) explained understanding as not to read or hear an individual "correctly," but rather in "finding out about ourselves through what emerges in the middle and center of

dialogical interplay" (p. 160). I recently presented a poem about resiliency to one of my senior level biology classes, and invited them to respond in written form as to what their understanding of the word *resilience* meant to them, perhaps in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. What was most profound to me is that although all of the students endured the pandemic, their responses were symbolic of who they are as individuals, and they reflected different comprehensions of resilience. Some students responded to the COVID-19 pandemic directly, while others alluded to their understanding of resilience in relation to various other experiences that they had encountered throughout their lifetime. This activity confirmed for me that resilience is complex, and interpretive in nature. In the words of my grade 11 biology students –

Resilience is

- "the ability to do something hard without being stopped"
- "being strong enough to stand up for what you believe in and not letting anyone alter or change your belief or opinion"
- "coming back from something that damaged or hurt you"
- "encountering an undesired situation and not giving up"
- "doing everything with pride and never giving up, always having the mental power to do something and doing it in style"
- "the task of recovering from difficulties and having toughness"
- "trying and trying again until you accomplish whatever it is that you are trying to do"
- "the motivation to move forward to try to do your best to pass any challenge that comes your way"
- "responding to something negative in a positive way"

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What Makes Principals' Feedback Effective?

Simone F. Miranda

Abstract

When it comes to generating better practices, feedback – a fair representation of professional performance – plays a crucial role due to its transformational power of enhancing skills, which helps ensure high-quality teaching in the classroom. However, principals' lack of time, lack of knowledge of curriculum content, and lack of training are the causal factors for ineffective feedback. This paper presents elements that make K-12 principals' feedback effective. Feedback must be given within a 24-hour period after each supervision or evaluation; it must also be descriptive, specific, understandable and dialogical while communicating through constructive dialogue.

The English word *feedback* has been spoken and used worldwide as a synonym for relevant information given to someone to improve performance. Feedback is largely accepted to be essential to all areas of modern society due to its transformational power of enhancing skills. In education, feedback has been positioned as helpful in improving professional practice because when "principals provide feedback to teachers they help them, illuminating their competencies and areas for improvement" (Papay, 2012, p. 125).

According to Sullivan (2005), the purpose and delivery of meaningful feedback are vital elements of the clinical supervision and evaluation process. In other words, feedback is a fair representation of professional performance and also a mechanism to improve it through support. Moreover, feedback is indispensable when the objective is to ensure high-quality teaching in every classroom.

However, proper feedback is not always given to teachers due to many reasons. For instance, school administrators may not give thorough feedback because of lack of time, lack of knowledge of curriculum content, and lack of evaluation training. Furthermore, some principals do not give teachers any sort of dialogical feedback:

> It saddens me that so few school leaders talk to teachers after classroom visits. Some principals don't give feedback at all, which drives teachers crazy. (What did he think?!). Some principals leave a post-it note on the teacher's desk on the way out with quick jottings. (Go Tiger! Great lesson!). Others prefer to fill out a checklist and put it in the teacher's mailbox. Others devise their own formats for written notes (a box for "Wow" and a box for "I wonder…"). And others email their comments. All these suffer from the lack of human contact – and the teacher not having a chance to explain the context.
> (Marshall, 2013, p. 65)

It is evident that when principals do not have sufficient time and comprehension of curriculum content, their feedback may not reflect what teachers do in their classrooms. Another aspect to consider is that most of them do not have any evaluation training or an insightful understanding of school policy. Hence, "providing instructional feedback is also complicated by local contexts, organizational constraints, and principals' knowledge of instruction, curriculum, and content-area pedagogy" (Wieczorek et al., 2019, p. 358).

For feedback to be effective, principals should give it within 24 hours, with specific considerations about teachers' practices through written and oral communication. Schut et al. (2022) strongly emphasized dialogue as an important asset to the learning process since it has to do with communicating information. Boehmer (2021) also emphasized that some analyses have demonstrated that principals can undoubtedly impact teachers' sense of self-efficacy through appropriate feedback based on constructive dialogue.

As noted above, there is an intrinsic relationship between feedback and dialogue. The main purpose of this article is to demonstrate elements that make feedback truly effective. It must be properly given after every supervision or evaluation, and also be descriptive, specific, and understandable while communicating through dialogue. In this way, competency and professional growth, which are the objectives of the teacher evaluation system, will be enhanced.

Literature Review

The Importance of Principals' Feedback

Teachers need principals' feedback to boost their performances. Feedback is important because "evaluations must provide teachers with clear understanding not only of their current success or failure but also of the practices they need to develop to become more successful with their students" (Papay, 2012, p. 138). Additionally, principals should offer teachers opportunities to learn, and districts should build the ability of principals to support teachers through feedback.

In accordance with Boehmer (2021), teachers' level of self-efficacy increases when they receive proper feedback. The teacher evaluation process should measure professional practices, inform, and support ongoing development. Wieczorek et al. (2018) stated that when principals provide meaningful feedback through instructional supervision and evaluation, teachers' competencies and students' performances are improved.

As previously mentioned, providing relevant feedback is an instrument that empowers school leaders to positively impact teaching and learning achievements. Moreover, the proper use of feedback contributes to retaining high-quality teachers, which is a vital asset to any educational institution (Marshall, 2013). Marzano (2003) stated that when principals give significant feedback, teachers' self-efficacy leads to students' progress since feedback is an essential component to build teachers' and students' development. Further, he argued that feedback is a vital factor in a successful evaluation system; hence, without consistent feedback, teachers will not know what must be improved or how to do that. Consequently, they will not be able to meet students' real needs, which is a causal factor that can lead to the failure of the entire appraisal mechanism (Marzano, 2003).

Problems Related to Giving Feedback

There are problems related to giving feedback. In essence, the clinical supervision and evaluation process occurs to strengthen and prepare educators to be thoughtful collaborators in the field of promoting classroom instruction. Sullivan (2005) maintained that qualitative feedback plays a critical role in such a process because teachers want and need feedback about their work. However, they seldom receive the type of information that enables them to develop their practices. On that account, "the current evaluation system in place in many districts is ineffective" (Papay, 2012, p. 137).

The cornerstone of the problems regarding K-12 principals' ineffective feedback is mainly focused on three aspects: principals' lack of time, lack of knowledge of curriculum content, and lack of training. In other words, principals' feedback has demonstrated ineffective results because principals have a frequent busy schedule, they do not know the content areas, and they do not receive any proper training to observe and evaluate teachers (Boehmer, 2021). Hence, literature corroborates the relationship between principals' lack of time, lack of knowledge of curriculum content, and lack of training with the inefficiency of their feedback to teachers, who do not have their professional performances improved (Marshall 2013). These three aspects that are the causes of principals' ineffective feedback are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Causes of Principals' Ineffective Feedback
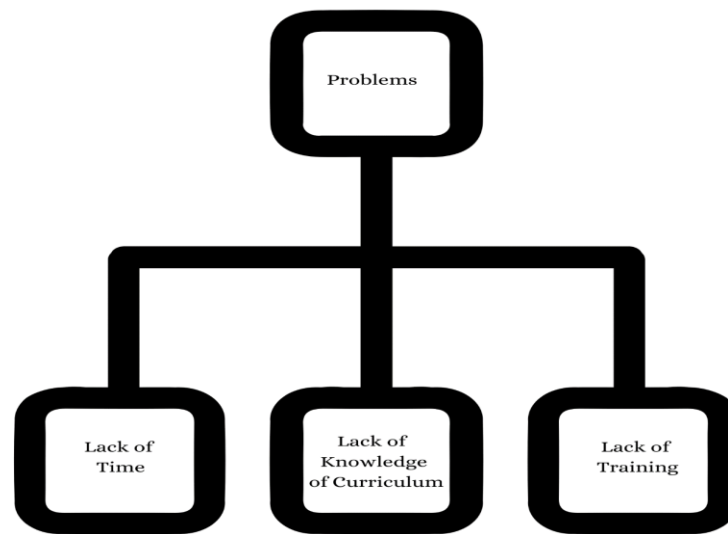
Lack of Time

Principals have many different responsibilities that go from managing school administration to building positive school cultures to recruiting and retaining high-quality staff. Marshall (2013) acknowledged that principals are preoccupied with meetings with parents, budgeting, and answering emails and phone calls that they rarely observe teachers enough to give them fair feedback. Each day has many interruptions and it is hard to prioritize evaluation visits and feedback time respectively. Boehmer (2021) affirmed that school administrators' commitments are abundant and their constant inflexible agenda leads them to superficial observations and evaluations. Their lack of time leads to vague and inaccurate feedback or, even worse, the absence of it.

Lack of Knowledge of Curriculum Content

Principals must have sufficient knowledge of curriculum content to deliver practical feedback. Wieczorek et al. (2018) confirmed that principals are pedagogical generalists challenged to improve curriculum content knowledge to observe and appraise teachers. In this way, observation and appraisal, contextualized within broader policy initiatives, are also required to contemplate teachers' departments. School administrators must acquire knowledge of curriculum content because "expert supervision requires a repertoire of knowledge and skills for engaging teachers in productive formal and informal conversations" (Lipton & Wellman, 2013, p. 17). For these reasons, efficient feedback could not be delivered without the principals' proper knowledge regarding the curriculum content.

Lack of Training

Principals must have professional development in providing efficient feedback to teachers. It can be accomplished if they receive appropriate training and support:

> Effective evaluators must be willing to provide tough assessments and to make judgments about the practice, not the person. They must also be experts in providing

rich, meaningful, and actionable feedback to the teachers they evaluate. Regardless of who serves in the role, all evaluators must be trained and supported.

(Papay, 2012, p. 135)

When school administrators are well-trained, they can deliver feedback in ways that build teacher self-efficacy. Boehmer (2021) agreed that principals who do not receive professional development are more likely to leave their schools than leaders who did receive training. Furthermore, she pointed out the impacts of this lack of training, citing an increase in angst, frustration, and disappointment more frequently felt by evaluators without relevant training.

In the words of Boehmer (2021), many districts currently lack professional development for feedback providers, resulting in feedback that is not descriptive, specific, and dialogical. This creates teacher confusion about the purpose of the received feedback since it is not able to represent the classroom reality. School administrators must have professional improvement to provide reasonable and actionable feedback to teachers. This means that K-12 principals need to have their professional practices developed to give efficient feedback to teachers and, consequently, enhance their performances.

Characteristics of K-12 Principals' Effective Feedback

After analyzing the three aspects that cause problems regarding feedback, the question remains: What makes principals' feedback effective? According to the literature, effective feedback must be given after every supervision or evaluation, and also be descriptive, specific, and understandable while communicating through dialogue. These solutions to make K-12 principals' feedback effective are demonstrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Solutions to Make Principals' Feedback Effective
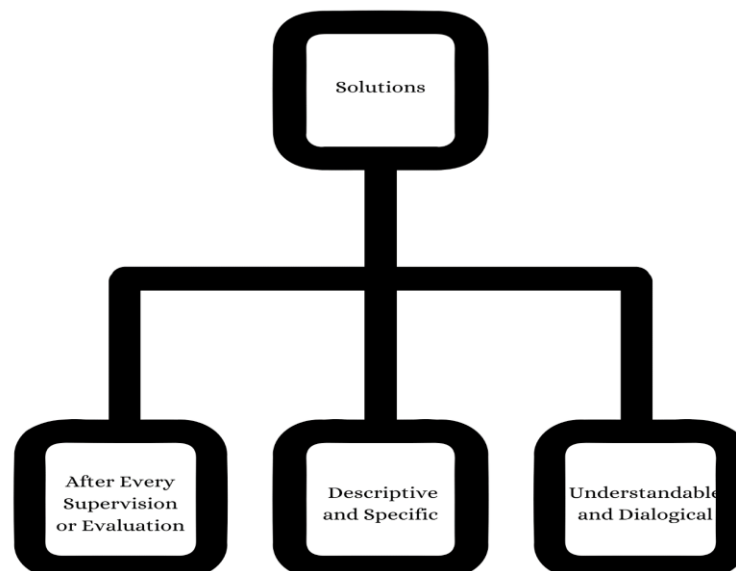
Feedback Given After Every Supervision or Evaluation

In alignment with Marshall (2013), principals must provide teachers with feedback, ideally within 24 hours, after every supervision or evaluation through informal conversations. This is also sustained by Boehmer (2021), who argued that principals should provide feedback

promptly because teachers should not wait for days or weeks to hear back about an observation or appraisal. Important details could be left behind and other urgencies could appear, which would be obstacles to resolving any problem previously detected by principals.

Descriptive and Specific Feedback

Teachers may and do improve with descriptive and specific feedback. Papay (2012) ratified that descriptive and specific feedback defines what the teacher is doing in the classroom, and directly impacts students' learning. Descriptive and specific feedback encourages reflection and confidence. Danielson (2009) reiterated that important suggestions and instructions for improving teachers' professional practices are based on descriptive and specific feedback since they are actionable and also effective. It is evident that only this sort of feedback grants helpful ideas for the future and focuses on solutions.

Understandable and Dialogical Feedback

Teachers must understand the suggestions and instructions given by principals after any observation and evaluation. This is successfully done through the power of communication because "solidarity requires true communication, and the concept by which such an educator is guided fears and proscribes communication. Yet only through communication can human life hold meaning" (Freire, 1970, p. 55). On that account, Danielson (2009) emphasized that for teachers to benefit from the supervision and evaluation process, they must be active, reflective participants. Teachers must comprehend the directions provided by school leaders' feedback, and desire constructive dialogue based on clear communication:

> Effective instructional leadership matters. Supervisors need to see themselves as learners and to believe in their capacity and the capacity of others to grow. For supervisors, the ability to structure and facilitate learning-focused conversations lies at the heart of both one-on-one and collective work with teachers.
>
> (Lipton & Wellman, 2013, p. 4)

Therefore, feedback must be understandable and dialogical to not only benefit the creative thinking process but also to promote competency and professional growth (Schut et al., 2020).

Discussion

Feedback is an equitable representation of professional practices and also an instrument to enhance them through pedagogical support. Nevertheless, proper feedback is not always provided to teachers due to three causal factors: principals' lack of time, lack of knowledge of curriculum content, and lack of evaluation training. This paper describes potential solutions to make K-12 principals' feedback effective. K-12 principals' feedback must be properly given after every supervision or evaluation, and also be descriptive, specific, and understandable while communicating through constructive dialogue to improve performances.

For K-12 principals' feedback to be effective, principals must give teachers feedback after every observation or appraisal because teachers want and need to know what principals noticed during the period they remained in the classroom (Marshall, 2013). When school administrators provide feedback within 24 hours after supervising or evaluating teachers' classes, school administrators can address the exact areas that demand enhancement and offer teachers more personalized and pedagogical support (Boehmer, 2021). Consequently, when teachers receive timely feedback many important details regarding classroom management are discussed, preventing further issues.

Also, K-12 principals' effective feedback must be descriptive and specific. Teachers are more likely to make significant changes to their practices when they receive clear written recommendations (Papay, 2012). When principals give teachers written feedback with clarity,

specifying what adjustments and improvements are required and why, teachers feel more comfortable and secure. Descriptive and specific feedback provides teachers with instructions about how to revise their performances through insightful pedagogical strategies to generate high-quality teaching and learning (Marshal, 2013). Hence, when principals give descriptive and specific feedback, teachers can adapt their professional practices to what is more suitable to meet students' needs.

K-12 principals' effective feedback must be understandable and dialogical because principals must provide feedback in a way that teachers can make sense of what needs to be adjusted. Principals must have informal conversations with them about how such modifications should be achieved (Schut et al., 2020). Through informal conversations with principals, teachers understand that developing their practice is vital to facilitate students' learning, and due to that, teachers are active participants in the supervision and evaluation process, which promote competency and professional growth (Danielson, 2009). Satisfactory communication between principals and teachers plays an indispensable role to corroborate and rectify any issues during classroom supervision (Lipton & Wellman, 2013). Therefore, I strongly agree with Freire (1970) that understandable and dialogical feedback is crucial when it comes to the effectiveness of teachers' implementing changes due to the feedback they receive.

Recommendations

What makes principals' feedback effective is that it is to be given after every supervision and evaluation, and be descriptive, specific, understandable, and dialogical. These research findings are highly recommended to not only K-12 principals and teachers but also to school districts or divisions due to their profound implications regarding the advancements of principals', teachers', and students' practices. When school districts or divisions offer principals proper training through professional development workshops and specialized courses about the procedures regarding the supervision and evaluation process, principals become confident feedback providers. As a result, teachers comprehend what, why, and how their professional practices require adjustments to meet students' needs, which is the core of the teaching-learning process. Some challenges encountered are lack of funds from school districts or divisions, prioritization of priorities from principals, and collaboration from teachers. However, such boundaries are mitigated when school districts or divisions, principals, and teachers cooperate to increase students' learning progress, the central aspect of the educational system.

Conclusion

With respect to the causes of principals' ineffective feedback – which are principals' lack of time, lack of knowledge of curriculum content, and lack of training – this article has suggested solutions to make K-12 principals' feedback truly effective. Principals' feedback must be provided after every supervision or evaluation and descriptive, specific, understandable, and dialogical. Effective feedback plays an important role when it comes to developing professional practices through pedagogical support. Thus, knowing what causes ineffective feedback is vital to understand how these potential solutions can resolve the problems concerning proper feedback.

It is easier for teachers to address and correct issues when they receive feedback within 24 hours after observation or appraisal. Teachers are better guided to professional growth if principals' feedback describes what teachers have to adjust in their performances and how to do that in a specific way. Feedback is understandable and dialogical when principals and teachers work together through efficient communication that leads them to improve their practices. Students' learning is also improved and the teaching-learning process flows its course with success and consistency. For these reasons, I believe that K-12 principals will benefit from focusing on enhancing their feedback to be provided after every supervision or evaluation, and

also to be descriptive, specific, understandable, and dialogical. Enhancement in these areas benefits entire school communities.

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About the Author

Simone Miranda is an M.Ed. student in the educational administration stream who loves travelling and is passionate about cultural diversity. She worked as a teacher and vice-principal in Brazil at Maple Bear Global Schools. More recently, she has been volunteering in Brandon at Earl Oxford School and teaching online. She has also been a research assistant at the BU CARES Research Centre.

CELEBRATION OF SCHOLARSHIP

We are honoured to recognize the following students who defended M.Ed. theses in 2022.

Russell Wade Houle   April 14, 2022   Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Alysha Farrell

Coming Home: Finding Strength Through the Women in My Life

Having the ability to navigate the world of western society with my Indigenous worldview and identity is a delicate balance. Combining self-analysis, Indigenous ceremonial process and storytelling via survivance, this study focused on my ability to navigate two worlds in relation to the female influences in my life, in particular, my matriarchal ancestral line.

The research emerged from the Parkland and Interlake regions of the Treaty 2 Territory in Manitoba, Canada. Using an open-ended interview process, I collected stories from family and friends to retell, rewrite and restory Indigenous history during a time when the stories of Indigenous women are often untold or forgotten. In weaving the discourses of academia and Indigenous worldviews through storytelling, I was able to demonstrate introspective leadership in education.

Most importantly, the stories that emerged from the interviews became an act of survivance for my daughters and future generations of my family. This research is about love and the discovery of self and identity, honouring Indigenous women, honouring the Anishinaabe trickster Windigokaan and sharing and recognizing Indigenous knowledge, strength, resiliency and beauty through story.

Jeremy Roberts   May 25, 2022   Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Alysha Farrell

Game-Based Learning as an Interruption to the Curriculum-as-Plan: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Approach to Fostering Teacher and Student Dialogical Identity in Dungeons and Dragons

The purpose of this inquiry was to explore the impact of game-based learning on student identity as it relates to issues of academic engagement, intrinsic motivation, social inclusion, and self-efficacy. Using a methodology grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher employed an interpretative lens to study a shared gaming experience. Hermeneutic phenomenology recognizes the inseparability of the researcher from the experience and concentrates on narratives of experience. By examining the researcher's and the participants' perceptions of game playing, the researcher developed a deeper understanding of how identity is de/constructed in game-based spaces of curriculum. This study focused on the lived experiences of seven participants who played *Dungeons and Dragons* in an extracurricular game club. The data collection process included two relational hermeneutic interviews with each participant and a final focus group with all of the participants. Findings indicate the participants' interpretation of game play was contingent on the quality of social interactions with other players, the safe and convivial atmosphere, the collaborative and consequence free play structure, and the imaginative narrative in the game environment. More significantly, the collective imaginative role-playing game, *Dungeons and Dragons*, offered an experiential forum for players to explore identity dialogically, to counter dominant narratives of neo-colonialism and neo-liberalism and to engage in a just and reconciliatory forum.

FOCUS ON FACULTY

Tender Memories From My School Teaching Career

Marion Terry

Teachers discover early that learning is more than academic, and that the teacher-student continuum works both ways. The following recollections celebrate the emotive learning that I was privileged to experience while engaging with students during my school teaching career.

Grade 5

In 1980-81, I taught grade 5. Each student brought a distinctive personality that was rapidly maturing on the way to adolescence. One student in particular pulled on my heartstrings. Steven[1] had lost his parents as a toddler and was living with elderly grandparents in an outlying community. He had been held back twice, so he was already 12 at the beginning of grade 5. He was a very clever child with a wonderful sense of humour, but he came to me with significant behaviour challenges because he wanted to be returned to his male grade 4 teacher whom he adored. After a rocky start, we bonded to the point that another student said while she was in one of my university classes years later, "We all knew that [Steven] was your pet. But we knew he needed that."

Early in fall term, the other teachers in school complained that my students were chewing gum in their music and phys ed classes. When I asked my students what I should do, they said that I should make them put the gum on their noses as a punishment. I dutifully stood at the classroom door with a garbage can for their gum as they left and re-entered. The first afternoon, I caught Steven with a wad of purple bubblegum so big he could hardly get it out of his mouth after recess – and I made him put it on his nose. He spent the rest of the afternoon deadpan, sculpting the gum into different shapes (various mustaches and horns, a ball, etc.). He sat at the back of the class, so only I could see him. I partially hid my smiles behind a hand. At the end of the day, he ended up going home with a purple nose because we couldn't get the stain out. He didn't chew gum again – and I didn't make another student put gum on their nose.

Near the end of the year, we took a week-long field trip to Winnipeg. Steven convinced his grandparents that he had to take a taxi to catch the field trip bus on Monday. They came to school to meet me the week before the trip. I assured them that Steven could take the school bus on Monday morning, same as usual. At the end of our meeting, his grandmother took my hand and said tearfully, "You take care of our boy, because he's never been anywhere." Steven and I stayed very close for the whole trip, unharmed (although Steven did get hit on his incredibly curly head by an equally incredible large bird dropping in the zoo). The other students also arrived home unscathed, but Steven was the happiest. We had spent the whole way to, from, and in Winnipeg within sight of each other as he fretted constantly that we were lost.

Periodically during that year, I would see Steven escorting his grandparents to or from town on Saturdays. He went first, dragging a wagon or toboggan depending on the time of year. His lame grandfather and blind grandmother followed, arm in arm. I cherish having interacted with these very special people.

At the end of June, the vice-principal wanted to see me. I was moving to Flin Flon, and I thought that he wanted to thank me for my service. Instead, he told me that I had done the students a disservice. He said that I had made them love me, and that wasn't fair because their grade 6 teachers (one of whom was he) wouldn't love them. I should have made them tough instead of soft. I had failed to prepare them for their real future.

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[1] All names in this article are pseudonyms.

Grade 9

Between 1975 and 1983, I had the honour of teaching hundreds of grade 9 students in northern and rural Manitoba. Several experiences during 1975-76 taught me to appreciate the delightful eccentricities that characterize young teenagers.

Spirit week included a hat day. One of my students chose to wear a leather World War One flying helmet to our 2-hour class, complete with remarkably thick goggles. Peter remained deadpan attentive with sustained eye contact through the goggles while I was speaking. During individual work, he spent the whole time diligently bent over his desk with frequent liftings of his goggles to figure out what he was looking at. Every time Peter looked up at me, then pushed the goggles down with a slight smile and went back to work. It was hilarious – and a rare opportunity to share one-to-one humour with a student who was not always so easy to get along with in school.

After spring break, I came to school with a Honda Civic that I had bought in Winnipeg. Before morning break, I noticed that it was raining and I lamented that my little car was getting wet. None of the boys came back to class after recess. When I complained to the girls, they told me to look out the window. There were my grade 9 boys, soaked, smiling, and waving up at me. They had spread their jackets over my car to protect it from the rain. This was an unexpected gesture that can only come from exuberant youth.

Grade 12

In 1981-82, I had a remarkable group of grade 12 students who were ready to take on the world. They were boisterous and eager to graduate. They were also academically sharp – very sharp. The principal came to me in the middle of the year to tell me that I needed to figure out a way to bring these students' marks down by year end, to be closer to the marks of my other grade 12 students who were not as achievement oriented. I didn't do it, and nothing bad happened. Everyone graduated, some with much higher marks than others.

One of these brilliant students had very long thick hair, which he kept over his face during class. Periodically, Jack would part his hair a bit so that he could see me. I wasn't sure whether I should smile or ignore this behaviour. I didn't think he meant to be funny. I thought maybe he meant to annoy me. I just kept on treating him the same as everyone else, and I never really knew what he looked like. I also never really got to know him. In 2016, Jack stopped me at the Winnipeg Airport and told me who he was. He wanted to thank me. He said that I was the only teacher who understood his shyness and didn't try to force him to show his face in class. In the 35 years after grade 12, he had graduated from Harvard (and been a Harvard athlete), and he had pursued a variety of terrific careers. All those years, I felt guilty that I hadn't tried harder to make a connection with Jack, and now he was thanking me for it. We communicated for a few years after that, and we even met while he was working at the Legislature in Winnipeg, but we are no longer in touch.

Closing Remarks

Tears have accompanied this writing, both happy and sad. Students who teach their teachers to care are the best students – and the best teachers.

About the Author

Dr. Marion Terry teaches graduate students in Brandon University's Faculty of Education. Her research interests are youth-at-risk and adult education. She is also the founding editor of the BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education.

BU JOURNAL OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN EDUCATION

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Send your manuscript electronically to Dr. Marion Terry, Editor (terry@brandonu.ca), as an email attachment in Microsoft Word. All manuscripts that adhere to the content and style requirements will be reviewed.