Tapping into Early-Career Teachers' Arts-Informed Narratives of Mentorship for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Establishing a well-ordered transition from higher education institutions of learning in terms of mentorship relationships (mentor-mentee) to ground realities of a classroom and whole school development in the basic education level remains a challenge for newly appointed teachers in a country like South Africa. This is especially in rural areas. Backwoods are characterized by lack/unavailability of resources such as adequate learning spaces, computer, and science laboratories, and (continuous) professional teacher development initiatives. Mentorship plays a significant role in preparing the next generation of basic education teachers/leaders in a changing environment. It prepares them to be conscious of the day-to-day issues that affect both the classroom and the whole school context in evolving times. Memory drawing is a creative and innovative mechanism of learning, researching, and reflecting on past experiences. This paper examines how memory drawing can act as a catalyst /for/ learning about the complexities of mentorship. It critically discusses a study that was conducted by a recently qualified schoolteacher, as he zooms in and out on the stories of complexities he faced as a rural teacher, in a country like South Africa, as he was transitioning from an urban post-school to a rural primary school destination. The research examples show how memory drawing can reveal interconnectedness between formal and informal educational experiences and reclaim mentorship relationships in lower-ranking school quintiles. The paper also uncovers how memory drawing as a learning, researching and reflective tool can help new teachers to renegotiate and reclaim their spaces in their respective margins.

Keywords: Mentorship, Memory Drawing, Memory-Work, Teacher Learning