

A MATHEMATICS TEACHER'S CURRICULAR DECISIONS

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Although research uncovered some factors that inform mathematics teachers' curricular decisions, it is less clear how they make such decisions. I used the practical knowledge framework to explore the construct of image with a veteran eighth-grade mathematics teacher. Images are teachers' perceptions of teaching that involve emotionality, morality, and are intimately connected to personal and professional narratives. Data consisted of transcripts of conversations, weekly journals, and student-written work. The analysis uncovered two images: 1) Bringing the outside in, and 2) Reading students and moments. Both images express how the teacher made curricular decisions: Using lessons that brought the outside in and following her students. This study expands research on curriculum by illuminating how teachers make curricular decisions and therefore revealing teachers' practical knowledge in practice.

Keywords: curriculum development, narrative inquiry, mathematics teachers

Research has identified diversity in teacher curricular decisions (Heaton, 2000; Lampert, 1985; Remillard & Bryans, 2004; Remillard et al., 2009; Sztajn, 2003). *Curricular decisions* are those involving selection of tasks as well as pedagogical approaches taken to teach such tasks. Although Remillard et al. (2009) identified factors interacting in teachers' curricular decisions, they called for exploring the nature and decision-making process.

Practical Knowledge Framework and the Image Construct

Teachers' practical knowledge ([PK], Elbaz, 1983) framed this study. Teachers face various situations and "draw on a variety of sources of knowledge to help them to deal with these" (Elbaz, 1983, p. 47). Rather than describing knowledge in the form of cognitive structures, Elbaz (1981, 1983) described teachers' knowledge as situated in experience. *Image* is a construct derived from PK and refers to teachers' perceptions of their teaching that involve emotionality, morality, and connections to personal and professional narratives (Clandinin, 1985; Elbaz, 1983). I explored: How does an eighth-grade mathematics teacher make curricular decisions?

Methodology and Methods

Building from a collaborative relationship (Suazo-Flores, 2016), Elizabeth, the author, narratively inquired (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) into Lisa's curricular decisions while both planned and taught a lesson over three months. Lisa was an eighth-grade mathematics teacher. Elizabeth conducted narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) to transcripts of conversations (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), students' written work, and Elizabeth's personal weekly journal.

Findings and Conclusion

Two images convey how the teacher made curricular decisions: *Bringing the outside in* and *Reading students and moments*. Lisa enjoyed teaching lessons that would take students on field trips and embedded in real-world contexts. Lisa also paid attention to what students were doing and saying to decide her next teaching step. This study contributes to existing studies in curriculum-development by illuminating how teachers make curricular decisions and therefore revealing teachers' PK.

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