

CAN WE CONCEPTUALIZE LEARNING AS A JOURNEY? THINKING OF TIME AND SPACE

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Abstract: We discuss the commonly accepted metaphor of learning as a journey in light of our own work as cartographers of our learning movements, moves, itineraries, paths, etc. We propose that for the metaphor to be useful in the field of education, the two main ingredients of a journey: time and place have to be modified. In the case of time, we propose to adopt the slow movement's premises, which are more in tune with healthy professional lifestyles. Regarding space, inspired by Braidotti's nomadic writing, we adopt "spaces of movement", which are neither actual nor virtual places.

1. Context: Reflecting on educators' life-long learning

One of the main purposes of teacher education, and probably of any kind of education, is to offer spaces and moments for reflection on the actual practice. When we stop our action and engage in reflection, we devote valuable time and spaces to becoming more aware of what we are doing and why we are doing it, and we potentially contrast these actions with imagined ones (Correa, Martínez-Arbelaiz & Gutierrez, 2014). The importance of giving opportunities to student teachers to imagine counter-factual scenarios is explored in McGarr and McCormack (2016). By virtue of these and other forms of reflection we can start thinking critically and potentially innovate or challenge our practices and choices, counteracting and resisting imposed ones. In order to move forward in our teaching, we believe that it is necessary to stop our daily practice or action (Schön, 1987), to separate ourselves physically and think about or feel our

teaching practice from a non-routinized or normalized perspective. With this purpose in mind, our school of education has offered teachers a set of workshops to make them aware of where, when and how they learn to become teachers. The chosen approach was art-based (Atkinson, 2011; 2012), where we created a cartography that would eventually map our learning journeys.

2. The cartographic work as a trigger for reflection

In this presentation we think critically about one of the main metaphors traditionally used in teacher education to conceptualize learning: the journey, the path or the trajectory. We take on the provocative question posed by Sefton-Green (2016): “What if learning isn’t a journey?” We look at our research stance and discuss how the two main ingredients of our cartographies, namely time and place, can be re-conceptualized to reconcile them with a postmodern view of learning as a ubiquitous non-linear phenomenon. We critically examine the validity of each of the two constructs and, in an act of counter-factual thinking, explore the consequences of modifying them to provide a more precise understanding of learning. To discuss the construct of TIME, we draw on theories of slow movement and slow university (O’Neill, Martell, Mendick, Müller 2014; O’Neill, 2014) and discuss the timing that is imposed on our learning itineraries and the importance of breaking linear views of time.

3. Mapping learning journeys: SPACE and TIME

Regarding the concepts of SPACE/PLACE, we entertain the idea of nomadic learning movements. Following Braidotti (2014), “when you remember in the intensive or minority-mode, however, you defeat linearity to open up spaces of movement and of de-territorialization that actualize the virtual possibilities which have been frozen in the image of the past” (p. 173). If space is to be understood in a nomadic way, it clashes with its meaning in regular maps, where in order to identify a location it has to be fixed. Therefore, TIME and SPACE have to be heavily re-conceptualized. This is exactly what reflection on cartographic work can trigger: an act of recreating past, present and future learning experiences, which can actualize virtual possibilities. This

in turn, defeats a simplified idea of learning as movement in a linear fashion or just a change in space.

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