

Title:

The tension of mentor-mentee relationships within participatory action research projects

Author:

Paul Betts, Ph.D.

University of Winnipeg

p.betts@uwinnipeg.ca

Abstract:

As a mathematics educator concerned with the professional learning trajectories of beginning teachers, I often initiate collaborative and participatory action research projects. While working with teachers on these math teaching projects, I am positioned as the outsider “having” expert knowledge of mathematics for teaching. From this positioning, a mentor-mentee relationship emerges. These relationships are an opportunity to explore the nature of mentoring as it pertains to the professional learning trajectories of beginning (K-8 mathematics) teachers, where these trajectories are inspected using the theoretical construct of mathematical knowledge for teaching (MKT). Three episodes are described to illustrate tensions inherent in these emerging mentor-mentee relationships. I draw themes from the episodes - namely, that mentoring models are incomplete, and that growth of MKT is unpredictable and problematic - which suggest that these tensions can arise for others doing work with teachers. Finally, I conclude with some reflections concerning the challenges of mentoring and mathematics teacher education.