

Curiosity as Circuit Breaker: Deconstructing Teacher Educator Deficit Perspectives of Pre-Service Teacher Resistance

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Teacher educator work with primary PSTs related to mathematics pedagogies is important to support the opening of more equitable possibilities (Boylan & Woolsey, 2015). In exploring more socially just approaches to mathematics teaching with PSTs, Nolan and Keazer (2021) and Boylan and Woolsey (2015) discuss the potential for PSTs to respond with resistance. However, Guzmán (2019) critiques this narrative, noting that this perspective is a deficit perspective which frames PSTs as problematic and teacher educators as the ones bringing the solutions to those problems. Graham and Slee (2008) use the concept of normalisation and normalising discourses as a contrast to deficit discourses. They say that normalising discourses “affirm or negate particular ways of being” (p. 282). This means normalising discourses communicate what is the desirable subject, seeing those who do not meet the criteria of a desirable subject as deficient. Past experiences and beliefs systems shape the practice and assumptions of teacher educators, meaning that teacher educators need to deconstruct their discourse to open up their teaching practices (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2016). This presentation shares some reflection and unlearning I undertook as a teacher educator, specifically exploring my deficit assumptions towards the primary PSTs with whom I work. It proposes that a pedagogy of curiosity may provide space to examine and reframe deficit assumptions towards PSTs. Undertaking a process of self-study led to an awareness that I regularly respond to PSTs with frustration and deficit assumptions when met with responses I frame as resistance. At times I respond with blame and frustration towards PSTs for their unwillingness to be open to the new possibilities for learning and teaching mathematics that I seek to introduce. The process of self-study helped me to see that my ways of thinking about and relating with PSTs need to change. I propose that a response of curiosity may act as a circuit breaker (Graham & Slee, 2008) to a deficit perspective, bringing opportunities to reshape the deficit perspective and opening up opportunities to respond to PSTs in ways that foster relational encounters between myself and the PSTs with whom I work.

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