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WHEN CURRICULUM CHANGES: THE RESILIENCE OF A MATHEMATICS TEACHER

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa there has been one curriculum change followed by three successive revisions during the period 1994-2012. Some of the most important changes relate to nomenclature, content, assessment practices and pedagogical approaches. Due to the changes, the curriculum became unfamiliar to in-service, pre-1994 trained teachers, and impacted on the nature of their work. In this article, we focus on one mathematics teacher's responses to the change and subsequent revisions. A visual drawing and three semi-structured interviews were deployed to generate the data. The theoretical lens was a combination of Husserl's phenomenological theory of 'lived experience' and Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'. The findings suggest that teacher resilience is an important coping mechanism when confronting curriculum change and revisions.

Key words

Curriculum change, habitus, teacher resilience, lived experience

INTRODUCTION

In this article, we analyse the experiences of a mathematics teacher's spirited responses to curriculum adjustments despite working in a school characterised by insufficient resources, large teacher-student ratios and inadequate support mechanisms. Knowing that teachers' work is complex and demanding, with far-reaching effects on those who are over-burdened (Garrick, Mak, Cathcart, Winwood, Bakker & Lushington, 2018; Nordhall, Knez & Saboonchi, 2018; Day, 2017), the aim is to explain the teacher's resiliency.

Research in South Africa provides troubling descriptions of the complex and demanding responsibilities that teachers bear and for which they are inadequately trained (see Amin & Mahabeer, 2021; Morrow, 2007). Due to the inequalities accrued during apartheid and insufficient redress thereafter (Amnesty International, 2020; Vally, 2019; Sedibe, 2011), the South African education system is acknowledged as being bimodal in nature (de Clercq, 2020; Köhler, 2020; Spaull, 2013). While some schools are adequately equipped, under-resourced schools place enormous burdens on teachers to provide students with socio-emotional, psychological, and nutritional support. The demands are onerous in the absence or dearth of school counselling, psychological and social work services (Morrow, 2012). Moreover, complexities related to teaching include underqualified and unskilled teachers, questionable leadership competencies and large teacher-student ratios compounded by poor pedagogical content

knowledge (Shalem & de Clercq, 2019; de Clercq, 2014; Modisaotsile, 2012, Spaull, 2013). More burdens have emerged, too, from the successive curriculum policy amendments over a short period of time (De Jager, 2013; Bantwini, 2010), which we expand upon in the next section.

CURRICULUM CHANGES AND ITS EFFECTS

In 1994, a new education programme, Curriculum 2005, was introduced. Curriculum 2005 required teachers to embrace outcomes-based education discourses and practices. For example, the use of vocabulary like content, teachers, pupils and subjects, was replaced by outcomes, educators, learners, and learning areas. Teaching approaches and assessment practices were aligned to outcomes. Then, just as teachers became familiar with the new curriculum, it was revised in 2002 and referred to as the Revised National Curriculum Statement. In 2007 another revision occurred, the National Curriculum Statement, followed by yet another revision, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement in 2012. Each modification generated uncertainty, unfamiliarity, low morale, and more curriculum work (Tshiredo, 2013; Nunalall, 2012). With each policy change, work demands increased on the already overworked teachers (Govender, 2018; Braun, 2017). Consequently, the professional, emotional, and personal well-being of teachers became compromised and destabilised. More importantly, since the last curriculum revision in 2012, there is suspicion that the quality of education has not improved (Workman, 2020; Spaull & Kotze, 2015; Spaull, 2013), especially in a high stakes subject like mathematics, evident in South Africa's poor performance and ranking in the international mathematics and science study (TIMSS) in 2019 (Mullis, Martin, Foy, Kelly & Fishbein, 2020).

Despite the uneven and prejudiced education system, all teachers of mathematics are under constant pressure to produce successful examination results. Mathematics is also regarded as the gateway to most careers and is therefore under constant scrutiny by the media (see Nkosi, 2021; BusinessTech, 2020) and academia (Taylor, 2021; Boylan, 2016; Mapaire, 2016). The pressures increase work obligations for mathematics teachers because attainment in mathematics is not solely connected to learning success, it is also directly related to national development (Wang, Li, Yang & Zhou, 2021; Amin, 2012). Additionally, teachers are expected to enhance students' learning and to provide them with the opportunities to reach their potential. This expectation means deep understanding of both theories of teaching and practical application, resonating with an observation made more than a century ago by Dewey (1904), that theory and practice are both vital for the preparation of future teachers. Even in contemporary times, many practising teachers have not bridged the theory-practice gap (Korthagen, 2010). Despite the gap, practitioners are involved at a practical level in a complex set of intellectual activities when finding, analysing and preparing a single mathematics problem for teaching (Ball, 2000), albeit in the absence of the latest theoretical developments. It requires effort to surmise, for instance, whether it is suitable for all students, whether the problem is contextually situated, or whether methods selected will be useful. Ball (2000) argues further, that teachers' work is multidimensional in character. Some of the dimensions include preparing students for a career (Ziaian-Ghafari & Berg, 2019), dealing with the complexities of multiculturalism, multilingualism, and multiracialism (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015), accommodating learning styles, student

backgrounds, emotional well-being, and interests (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017), and grappling with curriculum policy changes (Govender, 2018).

Curriculum modifications not only increase teachers' workloads, it also makes them accountable to multiple stakeholders (parents, society, school leadership and state officials). In fact, Van Droogenbroeck, Spryt and Vanroelen (2014) argue that external pressures from policymakers, supervisors, parents, and experts, have increased teachers' workloads considerably. Testing, which uses students' performance to gauge the efficacy of teaching, also places external pressures on teachers (Gonzalez, Peters, Orange & Grigsby, 2017). Multiplying the complexity is the realities that teachers confront in schools. For instance, schools are not homogeneous; diversity and plurality are more accurate descriptions of the student composition of schools. Students from diverse sociocultural backgrounds and cultural capitals also expect schools to teach mathematics in a language that they comprehend so that the cognitive demands of learning mathematics are accommodated (Campbell, Davis & Adams, 2007). However, this is not the case, and in many instances, the language of teaching and learning differs from those spoken by students, while the socio-economic differences between teachers and students erase the notion of a shared culture (Ernst-Slavit & Slavit, 2007).

With the numerous challenges that teachers face with curriculum changes and the teaching of mathematics, they undoubtedly experience anxiety and feelings of negativity towards mathematics and the teaching of mathematics (Patkin & Greenstein, 2020). What's more, coping with change creates emotional challenges for the teacher (Fried, Mansfield & Dobozy, 2015). For example, teachers who believe that mathematics is a set of procedures would be emotionally stressed by the shift from the teacher- to learner-centred approaches. Teachers' work and in particular, that of mathematics teachers, is overwhelming, complex, complicated, and stressful. Undoubtedly, stress is likely to increase in light of the acknowledgement that the 21st Century is the most demanding era for the teaching profession (Gu, 2014).

Despite the challenges, there are teachers who are able to adapt and survive in adverse teaching situations (Gu, 2018). Indeed, teachers continue to teach mathematics and some even do so successfully. In this article, we present and analyse the positive experiences of a mathematics teacher who had to navigate curriculum changes and revisions from 1994 to 2012.

TEACHER RESILIENCE

The term 'resilience' is used to comprehend how teachers manage to sustain their enthusiasm and commitment during transformation. Resilience is defined by Bobek (2002, p. 202) as a "process of development that occurs over time involving the ability to adjust to varied situations and to increase one's competence in the face of adverse conditions".

Bobek's notion emphasises three dimensions of resilience: time, change, and competence. The conception is apt for analysing the enthusiasm and commitment of a mathematics teacher working for years in a suboptimal educational institution. The teacher faced a series of changes to the content and pedagogy that put his professional competency to the test.

Going beyond the idea that resilience is developed over a period of time, Gu and Day (2007) argue that it is an interactive process

that involves an intersecting triad made up of the personal, professional, and contextual facets of teachers' work. Based on Gu and Day's perspective, a resilient teacher learns to solve problems, and is flexible, self-sufficient, and independent (Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2010; Patterson, Collins & Abbott, 2004). Day and Gu (2010) found that teachers with firm beliefs about the purpose and value of the work they do retain their commitment and resilience. To state it differently, resilience comes from inner strengths and dispositions. Therefore, teachers who have strong beliefs about what they are supposed to do will find the ways and means to do so despite the significant work burdens they face.

Seemingly, resilient teachers are not only motivated to work under extenuating circumstances, they also find ways to cope and succeed in the workplace. Success entails cherishing a worthwhile purpose and espousing ethical values provides strengths that enable them to be resilient throughout their careers (Gu, 2018; Gu & Li, 2013). Furthermore, teachers with the desire and ability to teach, adapt positively (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). It is evident that the passion for teaching and aspiring to meet the needs of learners are the traits of a resilient teacher.

While many teachers can identify the numerous pressures that they experience during their lengthy or brief careers, it is also important to ascertain how some teachers are able to enjoy their careers. Furthermore, with concerns about the disproportionate rate of teachers experiencing burn-out and related illnesses (Lo, 2014; Nagar, 2012; Howard & Johnson, 2004), it is important to understand how those who are unaffected, navigate teaching despite the challenges they encounter.

HABITUS, RESILIENCE, AND PHENOMENOLOGY

The term 'habitus', coined by Bourdieu (1977), and Husserl's (1970) theory of phenomenology, are used in this article to understand the attitudes and beliefs of a resilient teacher. Bourdieu (1977, p. 214) defines 'habitus' as, "a system of lasting and transportable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks".

Each individual has her own habitus, gained from past experiences which, in turn, shapes future experiences. The past as an essential element of the habitus as it shapes perceptions, and actions (Chandler, 2013). Indeed, past experiences feature significantly in the perceptions and attitudes of resilient teachers. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) posit that individuals possess a habitus that ensures the active presence of past experiences and a tendency to secure correctness of practice and reliability over time, rather than adherence to formal rules or specific norms. Therefore, a resilient teacher's qualities are determined from the past, where the ability to find creative ways to cope with adverse conditions is developed.

As stated already, South Africa has undertaken numerous curriculum policy revisions, and with each revision, factors such as large class sizes, socio-economic challenges, and diversity in the classroom have increased the intricacies of teaching. So, what is in the habitus of a South African mathematics teacher that makes him/her endure all these burdens with fortitude? One explanation is that learnt habits, attitudes and beliefs cause individuals to act without a conscious plan and to adapt spontaneously to the situation (Kamphuis, Jansen,

Mackenbach & van Lenthe, 2015; Chandler, 2013). Another explanation is that that the socialisation towards a particular habitus, formed during childhood, continues into adulthood (Harker, 2006). Childhood perceptions are internalised and practices are carried out without conscious knowledge. A teacher may thus develop skills of resilience and exhibit such skills without even being conscious of doing so.

Resilience, we argue, when coupled with the notion of habitus, comprises perceptions (views), appreciations (gratitude) and actions (deeds). In the workplace, it could, for example, relate to optimism, being grateful for the opportunity to teach, making a positive impact in the classroom, and being proactive. Apprehending the notion of resilience, we argue, is increased within the context of a phenomenological approach. Husserl (1970) explains phenomenology as the search for an understanding of human consciousness. Primarily, it involves the recollection of events that allows different experiences to impinge on consciousness. While Bourdieu's theory of habitus discusses how past experiences shape future experiences, phenomenology uses recollections or a person's mental residuums to describe human consciousness (Koopman & Koopman, 2018). Phenomenology is orientated towards an educational philosophy that combines lived experiences and human subjectivity, which constitutes a body of knowledge (Koopman & Koopman, 2018). Therefore, a person's life experiences and perceptions of these experiences make them what they are or culminate in their habitus. Additionally, Koopman and Koopman (2018) identify historical, social and cultural forces as a convergence of factors that influence the way people think and view the world. Thus, the experiences that the research participant had during and in the post-apartheid era, influenced his habitus.

Finally, Nias (1999) believes that it is the desire to improve the lives of the children they are teaching that enables resilient teachers to endure adversities. Similarly, Freire (2005/1970) claims that a critical mathematics pedagogy can improve the lives of students who have been disadvantaged in the past, and even in the present. When a curriculum is changed or modified, teachers desiring better futures for students are motivated to create a critical pedagogy in their classrooms so that those they teach can understand the forces that shape their lives. Persuaded by a social justice purpose to see learners differently, teachers can even change the way they teach. The work of shaping lives through awareness and conscientisation in adverse contexts is most likely to be achieved by a teacher who is resilient, amenable to change and reflects on the past to create better prospects for students.

TEACHER RESILIENCE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY APPROACH

The phenomenological case study combines the phenomenology and case study methodologies. The phenomenological method is the study of the lived experience of the participants as they experience a particular phenomenon (Sanders, 1982). Based on a Husserlian version, phenomenology allows authentic experience to emerge without interpretation, in other words, accessing human experiences and producing knowledge in a meticulous manner (Moustakas, 1994). The case study, by contrast, is not so much about exact reality but about "getting close to reality" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 132). For Stake (2005), a case is chosen for being unusual. Combining both these approaches allowed us to study the lived experiences of a participant working in an adverse context. In this study, the unusual element was the confidence and resilience of a mathematics teacher who

thrived despite poor learning outcomes in mathematics elsewhere in South Africa. We wanted to know how it was possible to be resilient in an adverse context. By combining the two approaches, the participant's beliefs, dispositions, experiences and actions of teaching mathematics could be explored rigorously and authentically. It allowed, too, for understanding resilience through the study of the idiosyncratic nature of a mathematics teacher's journey through curriculum change and revisions.

The selection of the participant

This article arises from a broader study which involved five mathematics teachers with twenty or more years of experience (Meeran, 2017). The study sought in-depth information about the influence of curriculum policy change on teachers' work. The years of service was vital to trace responses to the curriculum policy changes that began in 1994. Purposive sampling was necessary to ensure compatibility with the aims of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017). For this article, only the data pertaining to one participant is used. A short biography of the participant follows.

The mathematics teacher: Participant Sagie

Sagie has been teaching mathematics for 35 years. He has taught Grades 9 to 12 in government schools, before and after apartheid ended. As a child, he attended schools designed for, taught by, and attended by individuals who trace their origins to India. Multicultural exposure was limited to the linguistic and religious diversity of Indians living in South Africa. When he began his university education in the 1980s, it was interrupted by political unrest and protest action. It was at an institution of higher education that his political interests awakened the desire for a democratic form of government and inclusive worldview. When he became a teacher, he knew that he wanted a better education for those he taught and regarded curriculum change as vital for that purpose.

Producing data

Two data generation methods were deployed in the main study: visual drawings and three individual, semi-structured interviews. Pre-data generation meetings were held to explain the role and functions of the research inquiry. The visual methods provided a novel language for curriculum work (Gough & Gough, 2004), and showed the perspective the participant had of each policy change. Three individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The first, after completion of the visual drawing. The second and third semi-structured interviews were conducted at strategic times when there were examinations and tests, in order to see how the mathematics teacher fared with the intensity of work during those times. In this article, data from the interviews is presented and analysed.

Once data was produced and transcribed, the participant was allowed to verify the data and to make changes. Sensitivity and care were taken into consideration by getting the participant's informed consent before the commencement of fieldwork. The university's stringent rules and guidelines ensured that all ethical procedures were in place before data production started. Confidentiality was honoured by using pseudonyms of the participant and names of schools in this article.

TEACHER RESILIENCE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we present the actual responses of the participant followed by our

interpretations thereof.

Teacher resilience expressed as a positive attitude to change

This theme denotes the attitude that this mathematics teacher had to the changing curriculum policies he was exposed to. He said:

> *You see from where I come from, my background made me want the change to occur. The curriculum had to change to meet the times. From what I have seen, education has been evolving. From the time I taught, 1986 till 1994, was apartheid education. In those nine years, we were part of the struggle to change the curriculum to include a common education for all race groups.*

Sagie's attitude is one of accepting change as a necessary step towards progress. The fight for curriculum revision, for a period of nine years, not only made him resilient and patient, it also made him receptive to amendments and transformation when they did occur. He views change as an essential component of education evolvement. He remains positive despite the number of changes, as each revision of the curriculum is consistent with his political and social justice views about a curriculum which applies to all students irrespective of their race profiles. An additional explanation for Sagie's resilience and positive attitude to the new curriculum is that it took place during the post-apartheid period. According to him, the curriculum has to change to meet changing times, meaning that education has to meet particular conditions at particular times. He also embraced change as he accepted it as a necessary aspect of his work as a teacher.

Sagie's background and experiences of differentiated education during apartheid led him to accept the series of curriculum changes after 1994. His past experiences created a habitus of resilience to successfully traverse the curriculum revisions. Chandler (2013) points out that the past is an essential element of the habitus. As a result, Sagie's approval of the new curriculum policies can be traced to the negative experiences of the preceding inequitable curriculum.

The desire to improve the lives of the children is also an important resilience factor, and echoes similar sentiments in the literature (Stanford, 2001; Nias, 1999). Flores (2020) found that ethical and moral interests during times of adversity sustained teacher commitment and resilience, while Nagar (2012) revealed that personal investment in educational institutions prevented teacher burnout.

Teacher resilience as the ability to solve problems

In this section, we focus on Sagie's recollections of coping with work intensification resulting from the changes introduced by each curriculum revision:

> *As a teacher, we have more to do as compared to the earlier days. It was the syllabus and the curriculum which was much higher powered. NATED 550 was at its peak in terms of its difficulty and complexity. This was pre-1994. But as technology came in, our workload seemed to have decreased drastically. Previously, you will find us typing on those stencils and running them out. Now it is cut and paste on the computer. You can get a worksheet in 5 minutes. Those days you had to work overnight to make sure everything was ready. Now, within an hour, you can do an entire day's preparation.*

Sagie reflects on the increase in workload since the change of curriculum. However, he found that technological developments alleviated the expanded workload. Instead of complaining, Sagie focused on new ways to prepare his teaching resources. He remained committed to teaching because he chose to focus on solutions that made it easier for him to cope, demonstrating a key characteristic of a resilient attitude (Faulkner & Latham, 2016; Leroux & Théorêt, 2014).

The burdens teachers face, especially new demands and pressures associated with change, did not detract Sagie from fulfilling his role functions. His positive disposition and adaptation to change shows resilience and reveals a changing habitus from resistance during apartheid to problem-solving thereafter (Reay, 2004).

Pedagogy decisions reflect teacher resilience

In this section and its subsections, we analyse Sagie's pedagogy decisions when implementing the new curriculum policies and how these reflect resilience.

Groupwork approach

> *We do a little bit of group work but because of curriculum and time constraints [this] becomes time-consuming and we have to take a second period because of overflow. We do a little bit of that if the sections warrant that - like sections using discovery, like a section on congruency. Learners can work together and identify, bring it out and everybody [can] share and bring out the principles and then move on. Other sections, you know maths being abstract: it is little bit difficult to do that.*

Curriculum 2005, and the three revisions that followed it, emphasised student-centred methods to displace the teacher-centred approaches of the past. Sagie welcomed groupwork teaching as he felt that social approaches of learning benefitted students. It is apparent that he made judicious choices regarding pedagogy. Based on his teaching experiences, he realised that some sections lent themselves to group work, while abstract sections needed an instructional approach. Consistent with Shulman's (1986) notion of pedagogical content knowledge, Sagie demonstrated professional knowledge and awareness of the relationship between mathematics teaching and student learning. His choices suggests that he made practical decisions about mathematics teaching. Thus, he demonstrates that there are opportunities to exercise teacher agency and to make curriculum decisions. Once again, it is clear that agency, derived through experience and knowledge, is an important ingredient of resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Day, 2018).

Beliefs and assumptions about student learning

Sagie's pedagogy is underpinned by beliefs teaching and assumptions about student learning as evident in data:

> *To a certain extent, the syllabus is watered down. We have to change some of our strategies. What we have been doing is doing it all, all-inclusive. We have to do specific learning like, you know, what we have to put to all the high- fliers and teach them in one class. This is what we have to do. Otherwise, we hold everybody up. Then the others who want to do maths and to stay there…then you have to teach at their level to ensure that they at least pass. … A distinction is out of the*

> *question. Therefore, as mathematics is important to many careers, we do not want learners to drop mathematics but to retain it right through to matric.*

Sagie's discourses centre around marks, percentages and distinctions. With a diverse group of students, he felt that teaching the curriculum in mixed ability classes was not benefitting students. Changes to the curriculum, he believed, lowered the quality of the mathematics content they have to teach and is disadvantageous to the 'highfliers' at his school. To make mathematics accessible, and teaching easier, he separated students for differentiated teaching purposes. Although his knowledge of content, pedagogy and context bolstered his confidence, ability grouping results in detrimental effects on lower achieving students and perpetuates inequalities (see Boaler, 2011; Ansalone, 2001). Though he is confident as a mathematics teacher, his pedagogy choice is ironic when compared to his past struggles for a common curriculum for all. Resilience in this instance is not always based on rational thinking; it can also be shaped by misconceptions and instincts to survive in situations of complexity.

Student-centred approaches

Based on the assumption that students should become aware of their capabilities, the curriculums after 1994 were characterised by student-centred methods (DoE, 1997). Sagie shows that he embraced the assumption by including student-centred methods in his teaching. His approach resembles Freire's (2005/1970) critical mathematics reasoning and considerations to improve the lives of disadvantaged students. Sagie's moral interests and agency guide his teaching and echo the phenomenological spirit of lived experience to develop a resilient outlook and practice (Koopman & Koopman, 2018).

Proactive overtures

Sagie found workshops, textbooks and curriculum documents insufficient to implement each curriculum revision. He therefore sought assistance from other sources to help him implement unfamiliar sections in the curriculum, as the following excerpt shows:

> *Almost every year, we have a workshop here and we manage to get Mr Matthew Moses (pseudonym), who is a chief education specialist for maths, and he comes and tells us what level you should go, and how far you should go. We invite teachers from the Thomeni, Pasdeo and Voslo (pseudonyms) districts. For the last three years, we have been having these workshops. We use our funding money to fund that workshop. We have found ways to help ourselves. Because of these new introductions, we said we will carry on consolidating. We sit as a team and we work out the depth to which we should be going because we are still finding our way in all grades in terms of how far should we go and what we should include and what we should leave out.*

Here we observe the proactive stance taken by Sagie. Knowing that the resources provided by the state are inadequate and recognising his own shortcomings, he sought assistance from an expert. More importantly, he created a professional learning community as it involved the participation of mathematics teachers from nearby schools. Being able to share problems and working together to resolve them indicates a caring attitude that is indicative of emotional maturity and resilience behaviour (Wilson & Ferch, 2005).

Caring for professional development is another marker of Sagie's resilience. Because he considered self-improvement as vital for professional growth, he did not hesitate to use his own funds for that purpose. The willingness of the official from the department of education to assist suggests that in the absence of structured teacher professional development services, support is available to those who request it. In particular, Sagie's resilience, indicated by proactive behaviour, is evident from the overtures he made to teachers from other schools, and arrangements made with the official from the regional education department. His caring actions and reflections undoubtedly strengthened his resilience which are similar to the findings of a study carried out in Malta (Galea, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to explore and gain insights about a mathematics teacher's resilience based on his experiences of working in a situation of adversity. Using a qualitative approach, the case of Sagie is illustrative in a number of ways. In spite of having to teach a diverse group of students in a demanding context, he responded positively to successive curriculum revisions and the challenges that arose therefrom. His willingness to accommodate changes to the content, pedagogy and assessment demonstrated that he was a flexible, reflective, and resilient individual. He made efforts to become adept at teaching each version of the curriculum from 1994, which increased and strengthened his resilience.

This case also shows that resilience is not linked to consistency of aspects of his worldview, as demonstrated by his changing values and interests regarding pedagogy. The struggle during apartheid sustained his commitment to teaching. However, when the curriculum revisions created uncertainty of what and how to teach, he moved into a pragmatic mode to survive which contradicted his espousal for equal education for all students. Because he was unaware that his intention did not serve the interests of lower achievers, it did not reduce his resilience. Thus, not knowing or being unaware of the limitations of a teaching approach, ability grouping in this instance, served to increase his resilience.

Frequent changes to the curriculum intensify the work of teachers employed in situations of adversity. To survive, Sagie's case illustrates that external and personal resources combine to fortify resilience. For instance, collaborating with an external expert and a community of teachers with common challenges sustained his resilience. Sagie's personal characteristics like being proactive, having the ability to solve problems, reaching out for help and willingness to share, bolstered his resilience as well.

Habitus also played a role in preparing and toughening Sagie to teach mathematics. Experiences of being a learner and later, a teacher, influenced his worldviews about the importance of curriculum revisions. As a result, Sagie was amenable to change and was responsive to the discomfits associated with change. Resilience was reinforced too by his commitment to teaching, a desire for positive learning outcomes, and a caring disposition. From a phenomenological perspective, the value of this case study is that it generated data and meaning based on personal experiences rather than predetermined constructions. Importantly, experiences reveal teacher resilience as it is lived – sometimes demonstrating consistency and sometimes, revealing the irony of action.

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