BECOMING A BORDER CROSSER: AN ACTIVITY THEORY
PERSPECTIVE

ON TEACHING SOCIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The surge of students with diverse sociological background in classrooms and the push for professionalization in the field of intercultural education has shifted conversations among teacher educators, administrators, teachers and researchers alike in the direction of mutual understanding and collaboration in an effort to target the needs of both teachers and learners. There are many strands of these conversations that present tensions, especially those related to funding and policy; however, on the whole, the energy around this topic is conducive to qualitative transformation in the fields of teaching sociocultural diversity and intercultural teacher education.

This ethnographic comparative study explores the teaching worlds of a group of middle school teachers of all subjects in Vicenza, Italy and in Granada, Spain. Guided by an activity theory framework (Engeström, 1987, 1991, 1999), this dissertation uncovers prominent relationships and inherent tensions within the activity systems of the teachers. In doing so, the important role of teachers' personal practical knowledge and beliefs are revealed along with the inextricable reality of the teaching and learning context within which they develop their teaching practice. Principle findings include the following:

1) professional learning opportunities are critical components to teacher development and teacher empowerment, but the structure of these opportunities factors heavily into their efficacy, and

2) empowering teachers through collaborative decision-making within the school, creating space for peer interaction, and promoting professional growth are paramount to a healthy, satisfiedteaching force within a school.

4

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INTRODUCTION

The ongoing difficulties of intercultural coexistence; that the increasing presence of ethnically diverse immigrants continue to have Italy and other Mediterranean countries in the front line, is not a recent phenomenon. The only thing that is new is the inclusion of intercultural coexistence in the educational curriculum and in school programs, and the explicit consideration to educate pupils with values such as tolerance, solidarity, and respect. The Council of Europe, whilst underlining the common responsibility among all for fostering intercultural dialogue, identifies educators at all levels as playing an "essential role" (p.32). The role places obligations on teachers to promote tolerance and understanding among diverse populations and challenge negative attitudes. Teachers must promote the concept that all pupils are equal regardless of their ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic background. This theoretical framework implies a commitment to develop and enhance the incorporation of certain attitudes not only in our youth, but at the very heart of the entire school community. Attitudes resting on a perception and interpretation of the variety offered by the multicultural coexistence, not as a potential threat but as one of the greatest treasures of humanity. To develop and to promote such attitudes, it's imperative to value first, the need to foster critical and decisive attitudes against outbreaks of xenophobia and racism, aggressive expression of contempt and disregard other possible ways of understanding and interpreting the world.

Intercultural Education is a response to the challenge to provide quality education for all. It is framed within a Human Rights perspective as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (UNESCO, 2006).

Problem Statement

For many teachers, diversity produces significant fear and they see themselves as needing to acquire highly specific narrow skills in order to address the perceived deficits among their pupils and manage diversity in their classrooms (Allan, 2008; Gallagher, 2010; Rizvi, 2009). The pathologising and naming of individual deficits within that system represents what Thomas (2008) calls a "closure on learning" which produces and reinforces disabled, ethnic, class and gendered identities as failures(Besley and Peters 2012).How teachers are prepared,the tools they are given to engage with diversity, and the competences they have developed to deal with all facets of diversity are of points of crucial importance.

The Council of Europe undertook a project beginning in 2006 throughout 2010. Researchers from different European countries participated. The findings evidenced that teacher education programs did not adequately prepare teachers to cope with the diversity they encounter in their classrooms. A second issue found concerns causes of inequalities related to inadequate educational policies and legal frameworks.

The project followed these steps:

2004

Ad hoc Advisory Group (ED-DS)

2005

2006

Evaluation of situations in 18 member states

2007

Identification of competences areas related to diversity

Adjustment of concepts and principles related to diversity

2008

Taking into account the geographic and national needs

Four thematic roundtables
Austria → Cyprus → Bulgaria → Estonia

Revision of the general project framework

2008

2009
Dissemination of results: 3 publications + Final European Conference (Oslo)

2010
Submission of results to the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education

Source: Council of Europe

Scope of Dissertation

This cross-cultural ethnographic study was born of a simple desire to analyze educational policies in Italy that help or hinder intercultural education, Identify and describe teachers practices that have a greater intercultural approach, and create a guideline with concrete strategies to deal with diversity in the classroom. I also wanted to analyze data from Spain to insist on the importance of comparative approaches in Education as a way to legitimize national policies on the basis of "international measures." It is not so much the question of cross-national comparisons, but the creation and ongoing re-creations of "global signifiers" based on international competition and assessments.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

This ethnographic study aims to describe current teachers' classroom practices and intercultural competences to deal with diversity through the use of activity theory, which evidences relationships and tensions that contribute to a more holistic view of the teachers' live experiences. I set out to investigate what teachers do to deal with diversity in middle school classrooms, so that I could better understand the strategies they employ and why they employ them, determine how they integrate learning from teacher education and professional development opportunities in the classroom and discover what challenges they face in doing so. In the early stages of this inquiry process, I uncovered some educational policy and curriculum guidelines realities that I knew existed, but I was initially unaware of the extend to which they would factor into my study. As it became clear that exploring classroom practice would not be as simple as observing what teachers do and investigating their decision making process, I shifted my focus to exploring teachers' interactions with institutional macro structures to allow for the complexities and richness of the story that will unfold in this thesis.

To situate my study in the existing literature on teachers' practices for teaching sociocultural diversity and intercultural education, I highlight research that allows a better understanding of the interplay among teacher knowledge and understanding, teacher communication and relationships and teacher classroom management and practices.

The notion of 'competence' was introduced in education in connection with the training of teachers during the 1990's and influenced educational reforms in a number of European countries. It meant the need for a more professional role for teachers, particularly in an increasingly decentralized educational system. A more independent and active role of teachers was required both in terms of taking on personal responsibility for their professional development and for planning, evaluating and reflecting on their work (Lindblad et al, 2002).Today competence attributed to the individual is associated with the neoliberal notion of the "enterprising self," the free individual aspiring to autonomy, striving for fulfillment, recognizing responsibility, and choice (Rose, 1998). Over the last decades, a great deal of attention has been given to the construct "key competences," mainly to provide a conceptual basis for school based achievement comparisons in international and national systems of reference (PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS, etc). In accordance with the final Declaration of Council of Europe Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education (Council of Europe, 2007), special attention has been given to analyzing and developing key competences from a diversity perspective that focuses on reflection, enabling students to identify their personal positions in a diverse setting, developing clearer sense of their own ethnic and cultural identities, and examining attitudes towards different groups.

The following table presents the key competences for teachers which will enable them to engage with socio-cultural diversity in the classroom and in school community as determined by the Council of Europe.

Knowledge and understanding	Communication and relationships	Management and teaching
Competence 1 Knowledge and understanding of the political, legal and structural context of sociocultural diversity	Competence 7 Initiating and sustaining positive communication with pupils, parents and colleagues from different socio-cultural backgrounds	Competence 13 Addressing socio-cultural diversity in curriculum and institutional development
Competence 2 Knowledge about international frameworks and understanding of the key principles that relate to socio-cultural diversity education	Competence 8 Recognizing and responding to the communicative and cultural aspects of language(s) used in school	Competence 14 Establishing a participatory, inclusive and safe learning environment
Competence 3 Knowledge about different dimensions of diversity, eg ethnicity, gender, special needs and understanding their implications in school settings	Competence 9 Creating open-mindedness and respect in the school community	Competence 15 Selecting and modifying teaching methods for the learning needs of pupils
Competence 4 Knowledge of the range of teaching approaches, methods and materials for responding to diversity	Competence 10 Motivating and stimulating all pupils to engage in learning individually and in cooperation with others	Competence 16 Critically evaluating diversity within teaching materials, eg textbooks, videos, media
Competence 5 Skills of inquiry into different socio-cultural issues	Competence 11 Involving all parents in school activities and collective decision-making	Competence 17 Using of a variety of approaches to culturally sensitive teaching and assessment
Competence 6 Reflection on one's own identity and engagement with diversity	Competence 12 Dealing with conflicts and violence to prevent marginalization and school failure	Competence 18 Systematic reflection on and evaluation of own practice and its impact on students

Figure 1:1 Outline of the competence framework (Council of Europe, 2009, p. 4-5)

The term teacher knowledge encapsulates a range of topics including teachers' decision making, teachers' background knowledge, teachers' practical knowledge, teachers' beliefs and knowledge structures that will be noted in this dissertation (Borg, 2003; Kagan, 1990). Given the breadth of research available on teacher knowledge, learning, practice and development, this review will focus primarily on studies conducted with in-service teachers, however, in order to target the early stages of knowledge formation in teacher education programs, I will need to review some studies involving preservice teachers.

Knowledge and understanding competences are considered to be prerequisites, enabling teachers to be sensitive to and respond to diversity. These competences are based on a view of knowledge as reflective, critical and in a process of development (Council of Europe, 2008).

Professional development rests on different forms of knowledge (1) live experience, for example, subjective knowledge of relationships in actual situations and (2) scientific and professional knowledge for instance about children and universal aspects of development and learning. Knowledge serves as the basis for action and must be regularly expanded in the light of new research findings, conceptual models, and theories (Paige, 1993).

Research on teacher knowledge spans a wide range of areas that address and impact teacher learning practice and development. Studies can be categorized in numerous ways reflecting various subtopics (e.g., beliefs, decision) (see e.g., Bailey, 2006; Borg 2003; Burns 1996; Phipps & Borg, 2008, Qing, 2009) or levels within one topic (e.g. content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and practical knowledge)(see e.g.,Shulman, 1987). Researchers have focused on what teachers actually do in the classroom as compared to what teachers report they do (Farrell & Lim, 2005). Some studies have explored the role of experience in teachers' abilities

to access teacher knowledge and theorize practice(see e.g., Dahlman, 2010; Johnson, 1996; Tsui, 2003).Teacher knowledge itself is so vast and all encompassing Shulman (1987) states:

> *Indeed, properly understood, the actual and potential sources for a knowledge base are so plentiful that our questions should not be, is there really much one needs to know in order to teach? Rather, it should express our wonder at how the extensive knowledge of teaching can be learned at all during the brief period allotted to teacher preparation (p. 7).*

In regards to Shulman's point, the ensuing review of literature on teacher knowledge for teaching sociocultural diversity cannot fully acquired and developed in a teacher education programs, but continually develop and evolve throughout the career of the teacher.

Following an extensive review of educational research on teacher knowledge, Borg (2008) provides a schematic representation of teaching with teacher cognition at the center (see Figure 2.2). It demonstrates the critical role of teacher knowledge in teachers' lives, demonstrating how it is shaped by their early schooling experiences as students and later professional coursework in teacher education programs. It accounts for the impact of contextual factors on the development of their cognition and highlights the important interactions between teacher knowledge and classroom practice that take place during the reflective process and as they theorize practice.

Researchers have also evidenced that teachers develop knowledge over time. During various stages of their career their body of knowledge grows and incorporate different types of interacting knowledge. Borg (2008) notes that the range of contexts and concepts explored contribute to a fragmented perspective of teacher knowledge. He states, "these cognitions have been described in terms of *instructional concerns* or *considerations* teachers have, *principles* or *maxims* they are trying to implement, their thinking about *levels of context*, the *pedagogical knowledge* they possess, their *personal practical knowledge* and their *beliefs*" (p.87).

Other studies show the relationships and tensions between teachers' cognitions and classroom practices, some of these studies (Flores, 2001; Richards, Tang, &Ng, 1992). Reported findings evidence that teacher beliefs are consistent with reported classroom practices but can only be taken at face value without actual classroom evidence. These studies are of partial value; in my opinion, as they consider teachers in isolation of their classroom practices Moving studies into the classroom, however, did reveal a connection between teachers' cognitions and classroom practices. Borg (2008) provides a summary of cognitive influences that impact classrooms and establishes the following six central topics in research of teacher cognitions and practices:

1)reasons for making instructional decisions (Breen, 1991; Gatbonton, 1999; Nunan, 1992; Bailey, 1996; Woods, 1991, 1996)

2)departures from lesson plans (Richards, 1998, Bailey, 1996);

3)collective principles and practices (Breen et al., 2001)

4)cognitive change during in-service training (Freeman, 1992,1993)

5)practicing CLT[1] theories (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999, Mangubbai et al, 2004) and

6) narrative studies of teacher cognition (Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Hayes, 2005)

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1 Communicative Language Teaching is a set of principles about teaching including recommendations about methods and syllabus where the focus is on meaningful communication not structure, use not usage. In this approach, students are given tasks to accomplish using language instead of studying the language.

Extensive experience of
classrooms which defines early
cognitions and shapes teachers'
perceptions of initial training.

May affect existing cognitions
although especially when
unacknowledged, these may limit
its impact.

| Schooling | → | Professional Coursework |

Beliefs, knowledge,
theories, attitudes ,
images, assumptions,
metaphors,
conceptions,
perspectives.

**TEACHER
COGNITION**

About teaching,
teachers, learning,
students, subject
matter, curricula,
materials, instructional
activities, self.

| Contextual Factors | → | **Classroom Practice**
including practice teaching |

Influence practice either by
modifying cognitions or else
directly, in which case
incongruence between cognition
and practice may result.

Defined by the interaction of
cognitions and contextual factors. In
turn, classroom experience influences
cognitions unconsciously and/or
through conscious reflection.

Figure 1:2 Borg's framework for teacher cognition (Borg, 2003, p. 82)

Communication and Relationships

The communication and relationship competences are at the heart of teachers' engagement with and response to diversity. It is where teachers create classroom and school conditions that are inclusive and where they build and sustain relationships based on trust and mutual respect (Council of Europe, 2009).

Previous research has indicated that nonverbal teacher behaviors such as smiling, vocal expressiveness, movement about the classroom, and relaxed body position are salient low-inference variables of a process which results in a product of increased cognitive and affective learning. However, the diversification of modes of communication in society has altered

relationships, communication and flows of information. Teachers need to be both attentive and responsive to these changing patterns. In their face to face contact with pupils, parents and other colleagues from different socio-cultural backgrounds, teachers have to find ways of initiating and sustaining positive communication. This requires being creative as well as attentive and sensitive to interests, issues and concerns (Council of Europe, 2009).

A review of the research shows that authors have a lot to say about positive relationships with students. Thompson (1998) states, *"The most powerful weapon available to secondary teachers who want to foster a favorable learning climate is a positive relationship with their students"* (p. 6). Canter and Canter (1997) make the statement that we all can recall classes in which we did not try very hard because we didn't like our teachers. This should remind us how important it is to have strong, positive relationships with our students. Kohn (1996) goes a step further, saying, *"Children are more likely to be respectful when important adults in their lives respect them. They are more likely to care about others if they know they are cared about"* (p. 111). Marzano (2003) states that students will resist rules and procedures along with the consequent disciplinary actions if the foundation of a good relationship is lacking. He goes on to assert that relationships are perhaps more important at the primary and middle school levels than at the high school level.

And according to Zehm and Kottler (1993), students will never trust us or open themselves up to hear what we have to say unless they sense that we value and respect them.

Three investigations which examined the relationship between perceived teacher communication behavior and either student perceptions of teaching effectiveness or student learning, teachers who were perceived as having greater interpersonal solidarity and a more

positive communicator style (more dramatic, open, relaxed, impression leaving, and friendly) were perceived as more effective. Furthermore, positive perceptions of teacher communicator style resulted in greater student affect toward the instructor, the course content, and the overall course. It also resulted in greater student behavioral intent to use in the course.

Existing research has documented that students' engagement in school is continuously shaped by their relationships with adults and their schooling environment (Connell, 1990; Finn & Rock, 1997).

In their review of the literature on student engagement, Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) divided engagement into three dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. Behavioral engagement has been defined in several ways but may best be described as two sub-constructs: the avoidance of negative and disruptive classroom behaviors (Finn, 1993; Finn, Pannozzo, & Voelkl, 1995; Finn & Rock, 1997), and positive participation evidenced through attentiveness and asking questions (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). The literature defines emotional engagement as related to student attitudes and affective responses towards schooling (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Cognitive engagement is understood as students' investment in learning, and is defined both as their willingness to exceed requirements (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Newman, 1992), and their motivation or ability to self-regulate (Brophy, 1987; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). A large body of evidence also highlights the important role that teachers play in molding student engagement (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Specifically, demonstrated teacher caring has been shown to be associated with increases in students' academic effort (Wentzel, 1997, 1998), which is suggestive of how emotional engagement might translate into cognitive engagement. Parents also play a central role in shaping their children's behavior and engagement in school. Earlier work has shown that involving parents in their children's schooling can improve students' academic achievement (Barnard, 2004; Seitsinger et al., 2008).

Relationships in teaching and in school life are developed through communication. A large body of literature finds that high level of student engagement is the foundation of effective classroom instruction (e.g. see Wang & Holcombe, 2010). Negative teacher-student relationships are stressful for both teachers and students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Lisonbee, Mize, Payne, & Granger, 2008) and can be detrimental to students' academic and social-emotional development (McCormick & O'Connor, 2013; O'Connor, Collins, & Supplee, 2012). A study conducted by two Harvard graduates with 6th and 9th graders revealed three primary mechanisms through which communication likely affected engagement: stronger teacher-student relationships, expanded parental involvement, and increased student motivation.

Two well documented findings in educational research, that teachers profoundly affect student achievement (Rivkin, hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Nye, Kontantopoulus &Hedges, 2004) and some teachers are more effective than others (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006) have dramatically shaped education policy in the past decade.

A study conducted with students who attended math classrooms with higher emotional support reported increased engagement in mathematics learning. For instance, fifth graders said they were willing to exert more effort to understand the math lesson. They enjoyed thinking about and solving problems in math and were more willing to help peers learn new concepts (Rimm-Kaufman, Baroody, Larsen, Curby, & Abry, 2014)

Descriptive research (Connell &Wellborn, 1991) and anecdotal evidence (Mahler, 2011) suggest that the nature of relationships between teachers, students, and their parents play an important role in determining a pupil's level of engagement with school. Parents are an important part of the community and teachers should find ways to involve all parents in school activities and in collective decision-making. They will have to be creative and imaginative in ensuring that parents who may not have connections with the school are encouraged to become involved.

Frequent teacher-family communication increases student student engagement (e.g., see Kraft and Dougherty, 2012).

Research also shows that parental involvement can free teachers to focus more on the task of teaching pupils. Also, by having more contact with parents, teachers learn more about students' needs and home environment, which is information they can apply toward better meeting those needs. Parents who are involved tend to have a more positive view of teachers, which results in improved teacher morale. However, Cultural differences can create significant communication challenges if teachers use "their own cultural lenses" to interact with culturally and linguistically diverse parents (Colombo, 2004). Economic and time constraints may also be primary obstacles to effective communication (Finders & Lewis, 1994).

Substantial evidence exists showing that parent involvement benefits students, including raising their academic achievement. There are other advantages for students when parents become involved; namely, increased motivation for learning, improved behavior, more regular attendance, and a more positive attitude about homework and school in general.

Researchers have found suggestive evidence of the positive relationship between school-to-family communication and student outcomes (Fan & Williams, 2010; Rumberger, 2011; Sirvani, 2007). It is possible, however, that negative teacher-parent communication that is focused on increasing parental monitoring of student behavior and school-work could decrease students' sense of autonomy and engagement.

Management and Teaching

The main aspect in management and teaching is planning of lessons and even though the curriculum guidelines are relatively set in accordance to the national framework, teachers can make modifications to ensure that is sensitive and responsive to diversity (Council of Europe,

2009). Effective teachers create time to review lesson objectives and learning outcomes at the end of each lesson. Some teachers employ a Tactical Lesson Planning approach which describes both the content of the lesson and the learning objectives, and the the method to be employed. But the focus of the planning activity is on pupil learning outcomes. Careful planning will enable the teacher to establish a learning environment which is participatory and inclusive (Barton, 1997). Teachers can draw on many sources of student diversity within their classroom, such as ethnicity, disability or gender, to include in their lesson planning. In some schools, particularly special schools, the highly effective teachers involve support staff in the preparation of the curriculum/lesson plans, and outline to them the role they are expected to play.

Given the increasing diversity of our classrooms, a lack of intercultural competence can exacerbate the difficulties that teachers have with classroom management. Definitions and expectations of appropriate behavior are culturally influenced, and conflicts are likely to occur when teachers and students come from different cultural backgrounds. S Tomlinson-Clarke, Curran, and CS Weinstein(2004) discuss about culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM). They propose a conception of CRCM that includes five essential components: (a) recognition of one's own ethnocentrism; (b) knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds; (c) understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context; (d) ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate management strategies; and (e) commitment to building caring classrooms (Tomlinson-Carke &Weinstein, 2004).

Results on research conducted in two lessons in physical education indicated that, when planning, experienced teachers made more decisions concerning strategies for implementing instructional activities than did inexperienced teachers. During interactive teaching, experienced teachers focused most of their attention on individual student performance, while inexperienced teachers attended most frequently to the interest level of the entire class of students. The findings

indicated that experienced teachers possess knowledge structures rich in strategies for managing students and facilitating psycho-motor performance that enabled them to attend to individual student performance and alter their lessons in accordance to student needs. In contrast, inexperienced teachers possessed fewer of these strategies and focused their attention on the interest level of the entire class to insure that the children were busy, happy and well-behaved Lynn D. Housner & David C. Griffey, 1984).

Preventive, group based approaches to management provide a basis for teachers to plan and organize classroom activities and behaviors. Studies of teacher expertise and affect provide additional perspective on teacher development and on factors that influence management. Cooperative learning activities and inclusion of children with special needs illustrate particular contexts that affect management. Utilization of classroom management content in educational psychology components of teacher preparation is discussed.

The review of literature indicated that teacher efficacy helps teachers plan effective instructional strategies, increases performance, and enhances teacher effectiveness and productively. On the other hand, classroom management helps teachers to control students who have behavioral problems. Teacher efficacy researchers used and modified instruments to measure teacher efficacy construct. In conclusion, culture was identified as a variable that impacts upon teacher efficacy (Ajzen, 1985 pp 11-39 *)*.

Intercultural Education

According to scientific literature, the pioneers of Intercultural Education and its conceptual structuring are Louis Porcher, a sociologist, and Martine Abdallah-Pretceille (1986), who,after her experience as a teacher in 1985 wrote the first doctoral dissertation on this topic (under the supervision of Porcher), (Portera, 2011).

The intercultural approach is placed between universalism (education of the human being, regardless of color of skin, language, culture or religion, Secco, 1999) and relativism (everybody should have the opportunity to assume and should their own cultural identity; right of equality in the difference, Shaw 2000).Of crucial importance for the maintenance and development of multicultural societies is the implementation of educational strategies that raise awareness of the issues and foster intercultural dialogue and communication. Educational strategies need to identify common ideas and values, but they must also identify and address differences. Effective intercultural education requires the acquisition of intercultural competences, including multiperspectivity and the ability to see oneself and familiar situations and events from the perspectives of cultural 'others'.

The development of Intercultural Education

The early spurs to its theoretical development came from international organizations, above all the United Nations, which encouraged world cultural cooperation and peaceful solutions of conflicts. The preface of Intercultural Education in Europe can be traced back to the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) General Conference of Nairobi in 1976. The main topic of the conference was "Education to international understanding, cooperation and Peace." A few years later, following the General Conference of Paris in 1978, member states signed the "Declaration on races and racial prejudices" that proclaims all human beings belong to the same species and group, and that all individuals and all the groups have the right to be different, to feel and be recognized as such. During the World Conference in Education in 1990 I Jomtien, Thailand a "World declaration on education for all" was announced. Then, in 1992, attendees of the International Conference on Education in Geneva highlighted the need for an Intercultural Education to enhance experiences and important aspects of other cultures.

In the United States, the melting pot ideology[2] in the late 60's and early 70's, originated multicultural education(e.g., see Sleeter &Grant,2007). Multicultural Education is sometimes used in a programmatic manner (Banks, 2009). Recently, some authors have proposed the terms "cosmopolitan education" and seen "antiracist education"as better addressing the actual contemporary issues (see Banks, 2009).

In the same way, curriculum on Multicultural Education was first introduced in Canada and Australia in the 70's. An interesting note is that in several countries and in many English literature there is no distinction between the concept of Multicultural and Intercultural Education or Pedagogy.

Intercultural Education in Europe

In the 50's and 60's migration from Mediterranean countries (Turkey, Greece, the former Yugoslavia, Italy and Spain) to the northern Europe increased rapidly. In 1970, the Council of Europe passed its first resolution on education for immigrant children in member states. This resolution aimed at supporting immigrant children's scholastic integration in the host country preserving linguistic and cultural ties with their country of origin.

Between 1977 and 1983, the Conseil de la Cooperation Culturelle (CDCC) created a working group to anticipate methods and strategies for teacher training in Europe. The following year, Europe passed a recommendation stating that teacher preparation should be based on intercultural understanding. In the late 80's, the Council of Europe promoted trial periods on Intercultural Education (e.g. see Rey, 1986,and   see also Rey, 2009). Even now in parts of

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2 The melting pot is a metaphor for a heterogenous society becoming more homogeneous, the different elements "melting together" into a harmonious whole with a common culture. It is particularly used to describe the assimilation of immigrants in the United States.

England, some educators prefer to use the term "Multicultural Education" (Gundara, 2000; Shaw, 2000).

In Europe, the has been limitations related to the use of the concept of Intercultural education and intervening practically in schools. It is often limited as education that concerns merely immigrant students. However, "Intercultural" means consideration of all kinds of diversity, from social status, to cultural, to gender issues (Portera, 2011). Intercultural Education still requires scientific researches of its practical application, as well as theoretical foundations and mutual epistemology for researchers of different nationalities and languages.

The current debate in the field of educational research shows to deal with intercultural issues, it is not so much an option as a necessity if we do not want to ignore dynamics that characterize our time and the challenges it presents (e.g, *Abdallah-Pretceille, 2004; Aguado Odina, 2003; Erlbaum Associates Inc., 1998; Lopez Lopez, 2001; Shaw, 2001).*

Multicultural or Intercultural approaches to Education in Spain

There are several definitions of Intercultural Education in Spain, they depend on how the researcher or practitioner uses them. This is the definition proposed by Aguado (2003):

> [An] educational approach based on respect for and recognition of cultural diversity, aimed at every member of the society as a whole, that proposes an intervention model, formal and informal, holistic, integrated and encompassing all dimensions of the   education process in order to accomplish a real equality of opportunities/results, to promote intercultural communication and competency, and to overcome racism in all its expressions (p.45).

Inès Gil in her review of literature for her doctoral thesis evidences investigations done in Spain in the field of intercultural education. She discussed the direct antecedent of her work

(Aguado et al., 1999), and the I + D completed in 2006 in the framework of which her the thesis was made (Aguado et al., 2007a)

Continuing with the introduction to the research background Gil used, she noted different authors and institutions such as the Centre for Research and Educational Documentation (CIDE) that made, in recent years, a meta-analysis research carried out in Spain on intercultural education (Garcia Brown and Granados Martínez, 1999; Aguado and Grañeras, 2005), inequality education (Grañeras et al., 1998), treatment of cultural differences education, or school effectiveness (Murillo, 2003).

CIDE, in its review of research on inequalities in education in Spain (Grañeras et al, 1998), includes a chapter on intercultural education research(pp. 111-150). More specifically, a review of studies on intercultural education conducted between 1990 and 2002 (CIDE, 2002). More recently, Aguado and Grañeras (2005) reviewed research on intercultural education in Spain until 2004. This meta-analysis is especially interesting because of its higher temporal proximity but especially for its completeness in describing and thematically classify the studies reviewed.

The main research references used in this thesis are based on the cluster studies already identified in these reviews, which include those run by Teresa Aguado, the IOE Collective, Francesc Carbonell, Antonio Munoz Sedano, Margarita Bartolome, Jose Maria Diaz-Aguado and Carlos Gimenez, among others renowned in the field of intercultural education in Spain. One aspect on which attention should be drawn is the ambiguity that much research framed under the name of "education intercultural ". Perhaps by using the term accepted in Europe and proposed recommendations from community (eg, the opinion of Committee of the Regions on intercultural education (1997) and the Declaration of European Ministers of Education on intercultural education in the new European context, the Standing Conference of European Ministers of

Education, Athens, 2003), or perhaps a more or less explicit interest to distance of "multicultural" qualifiers, many studies call themselves the intercultural adjective; nevertheless, minority students remains the focus of many of these investigations (Calvo Buezas, 1993), considering as such Roma students (Munoz Sedano, 1993; Fernandez Enguita, 1995), or immigrant (Bartolome Pina, 1994, IOE Collective, 1996). The review by itself Aguado and Grañeras (2005) on research in intercultural education is part of a publication entitled "Attention to immigrant students in the system Education in Spain. " As we move on marshy ground for side remains open and non-categorical discourse on cultural diversity and intercultural education, but on the other hand research in relation to groups specific, minorities (especially immigrants) and educational performances develop with these groups. As an example, several studies under "intercultural education" focus on teaching Spanish to students abroad: Parejo Garcia, Elizabeth (ed.). (1997). Teaching and learning language and integration: an educational proposal that focuses on the immigrant adult based on data relating to the Autonomous Community of Madrid. CIDE.

Unpublished research report; Aguirre Martinez, Carmen (dir.). (1998). Study Comparison between the acquisition of Spanish as a first language and acquisition Spanish as a second language for teaching methodological application of Spanish immigrants. CIDE. Unpublished research report.

In this sense, the review by the CIDE in 2002 (Documentation literature: Intercultural Education Research conducted in Spain between 1990 and 2002) narrows the investigations considered in terms of three criteria: they are investigations themselves, which deal immigration, and relating to schools. This being under investigation in Spain, remain in this heading research on intercultural education titled all this group research in Spain, different from those mentioned in the previous section, contextually character (being the scope US) and openly multicultural. But it has to be noted that in educational research, as is the case with attention to models cultural

diversity or with some school practices called "Intercultural," not everything find merit this qualification if such part of the intercultural approach. In this sense, Teresa Aguado (1997) establishes a set of principles and Prerequisites for research on intercultural education premises. They include other:

• Starting from the theoretical bases, objectives and principles of intercultural approach:

Use mixed complex designs using various methods and complementary. (...) An inclusive pluralism (...) It is proposed to allow a greater concern for the socio-cultural context and recognizes the role of the research as a contribution to change (Dendaluce, 1995, cited by Aguado, 1997: 240).

• Being rigorous in the identification, description and selection of samples study. (...) A frequent mistake is to confuse ethnic / cultural / social group, provide little information about family structure, language level parental education, etc.,(Aguado, 1997).

Such principles serve as criteria for analyzing research made, including this thesis presented. The history of research in this area in Spain, for this work especially interested in those studies, focused on school practice, They have performed an analysis of various dimensions from the intercultural approach.

Hence, the two most important antecedents in Spain are two studies directed by Teresa Aguado in the last 10 years. Before presenting the two mentioned investigations, there are two other studies developed in the Community of Madrid:

a) The doctoral thesis by Aranzazu Gutierrez Moya, entitled "Evaluation of educational programs: intercultural education in Madrid". Directed by Antonio Munoz Sedano and presented in 2002, it is a evaluative research conducted in a public nursery school and Primary Vicálvaro (Madrid).

The purpose of the thesis was to "develop a model for evaluating programs that serves to reflect on the elements of the educational process necessary for intercultural education, taking into account the peculiarities of the context and allow not only to establish where they are were, but also, and very particularly, what changes they can and should perform "(Moya, 2002: 2). In reviewing this thesis, it is found that, although research refers to "intercultural education", the focus of the thesis is directed, explicit and exclusively, to the educational treatment of minorities (immigrants and Gypsies).

b) The study on "Intercultural Education Practices" held simultaneously in Madrid and in the provinces of Barcelona and Almería, and coordinated by the Social Action area FETE-UGT. The three reports are available at www.aulaintercultural.org (Pozo and Martinez, 2003).

The study focuses, despite the title, on immigrant students. It provides demographic data on immigrants, both society in general and schools in particular, and also analyzes the educational policy regarding immigration. The field work focused on the analysis of educational practices, it has been made from a "self-administered questionnaire for teaching professionals (Pozo and Martinez, 2003:27)". The issues raised were divided into three groups: identification questions that help describe the sample; questions about the center organization; and questions to elicit the views of teachers on various forms to see how they understand intercultural education. This study is still pending on the results obtained in Madrid[3]. The researches have established "three profiles categories according to their intercultural education practices "(Pozo and Martinez, 2003: 47), as set out in following table:

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3 the research conducted parallely in Almeria and in Barcelona have other established profiles center. See Soriano et al., 2003 and Marin et al.,2003

	Diversity consideration	Effect on center	Educational model
progressive attitude	Enrichment Factor	Center transformation	interculturalist
regressive attitude	Crisis Factor	Compensation education	multiculturalist
Denial attitude	does not produce any impact	Invisibility phenomenon	assimilationist

Table1:3 Profiles categories according to their intercultural education practices, (Pozo and Martinez, 2003)

However, in some recent research the focus has been the cultural diversity of the students defined more generically and not priori or closed preset categories (IOE Collective, 1998).

It is not the intention of this work to review those reports and studies again, but select some that its objectives and research questions, methodology and / or conclusions are especially relevant to contextualize this thesis.

Regarding official statistics, in Spain diversity in the schools is described within the framework of special needs or compensatory education, focusing on the difficulties or the "deficits" (Aguado & Malik 2011). There is no legislation on Intercultural education as such in Spain. Specific regulations dealing with sociocultural diversity in education refer to ethnic and cultural minorities (such as Roma) with the aim of compensating their difficulties in access to and maintenance in the educational system (Plan de Compensaciòn Educativa) in most Autonomus communities. Recently, some policy focus on immigrant students; in a compensatory manner as well. Promotion of the regional language is taken into account in those Autonomous communities where another official language exists besides Spanish. There have been many changes in the educational system in the recent years is Spain. Since the Educational Reform in

1990, with the passing of LOGSE[4]; (e.g. see Aguado, Ballesteros, &Malik, 2003). After that, two more laws have been passed with the government shifts, the LOCE and the LOE [5], although only the latest one has actually come into force. This most recent law and all previous ones state that all children, regardless of origin, are entitled to free compulsory education. One of the novelties of the new law was that it places a strong emphasis on citizenship education. Equity, inclusion and non-discrimination are terms used in the beginning chapters, and one of its goals states interculturalism must be seen as an enriching element of society. Besides, it acknowledges the linguistic and and cultural plurality of Spain.

Intercultural Education in Italy

During the eighties, an intercultural education approach begins to spread in the Italian school system to provide educational responses to the rapid changes in society. (e.g. Catarci and Fiorucci, 2011) in their literarure review revealed how Vinicio Ongini has outlined the path of development of intercultural education in Italy, highlighting the most significant passages of this development.

The first measure on the topic is the Ministerial Memoradum n. 301 8 September 1989 *Inclusion of Foreign Pupils in Compulsory Education. Promotion and Coordination of Initiatives to Exercise their Right to Education,* issued with the aim of regulating the general access to the right to education, learning of the Italian language and appreciation of the language and culture of origin. It should be emphasized that at this stage the focus was still placed primarily on foreign students even though among the most pressing educational guidelines is reported " to encourage

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4 the General Organization of the Education System Act of 1990 (Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo or LOGSE)

5 2006 Ley de Ordenación Educativa

pupils to accept and understand that[the] peculiarities [of different cultures] help to promote an open cultural awareness. "

A more conscious approach is expressed by the next Ministerial Memoradum n. 205 of 22 July 1990 *Compulsory Schooling and Foreign Pupils. Intercultural Education*, with which it is stated for the first time the principle of the involvement of Italian pupils in an interactive relationship with foreign students. Also here it is where intercultural education is defined as the highest and global form of preventing and combating racism and all forms of intolerance. Even in the absence of foreign students, the educational interventions must aim to prevent the formation of stereotypes against people and cultures.

In subsequent years, the National Council of Education pronunced two important publications: the first, on 23 April 1992 on *Intercultural Education in Schools*, which identified some needs of the school system in the field of intercultural orientation (among these needs, the reform of the curriculum to take into account intercultural instances, policy for the initial training of teachers of all levels of school on these issues, time and resources to effectively promote intercultural education) and the second of 24 March 1993 on *Racism and Anti-Semitism Today: The Role of School* in which it is stated, among other things, the need to take on issues of intercultural education in a systemic way, supporting the autonomy of schools, with greater attention to the relationship between "school networks" and between the various autonomies, envisaging the presence of intercultural mediators and professionals to be able to support the process of integration of foreign students.

In 1994, as part of the ongoing process of economic and political integration in the European context, the Ministerial Memoradum n. 73 of March 2, 1994 is enacted, *Intercultural Dialogue and* D*emocratic Coexistence*, which also draws attention to the diferent scolastic disciplines and educational programs, to be reinterpreted in an intercultural perspective.

In 1997, the Ministry of Education established the first "National Commission for Intercultural Education", to deepen on issues related to intercultural education and to adopt the necessary initiatives for all types and grade levels of school.

In 1998 the first immigration law is enacted, Law no. 40 of 6 March 1998 article. 36, emphasizing the educational value of linguistic and cultural differences: "In the frame of teaching and organizational authonomy, educational institutions should implement, for all pupils, intercultural projects, with the aim of promoting awareness of the value of cultural and linguistic differences, promoting of initiatives of acceptance and cultural exchange ". This text mentions for the first time also the need for " qualified cultural mediators".

The next legislative decree n. 286 of 25 July 1998, *Consolidated Text of Provisions Governing Immigration and the Alien status*, brings together and coordinates the various provisions on immigration.

On 31 August 1999, the Decree of the President of the Republic n. 394, *Regulations for the Implementation of the Consolidated Provisions Concerning the Governing Immigration and the Foreigners Status*, makes it clear that it is up to the teachers to make proposals for the distribution of foreign pupils in classes, and define in relation to levels of competence of the students, the adaptation of curricula. By the same measure, it is determined that the foreign student enrollment can occur at any time of the school year, in order to protect the fundamental right to education: "Foreign minors present in Italy have the right to education regardless of the regularity of the position in terms of their stay, in the form and manner provided for Italian citizens. "

In 2001, support actions were promoted with additional stipends for the teaching staff involved in schools with a high immigration flow, through the Ministerial Memoradum n . 155

In 2002, immigration law n. 189 of 30 July was enacted, known as " Bossi – Fini, " amending the previous legislation by adopting a restrictive view according to which the legitimacy of the presence of immigrants in the country is generally subject to its role in the labor market .

In 2006, an important document that expresses a certain maturity on the issues of intercultural education is published: Ministerial Memoradum no. 24 of March 1, *Guidelines for the Entry and Integration of Foreign Students.* Stating that "Italy has chosen the full integration of everyone in the school and intercultural education as its cultural horizon." The document provides, in a pragmatic view, a real handbook to address the difficulties arising from the inclusion of pupils of foreign origin in school, stressing that intercultural education is the baseline from where the educational process for foreign students begins, as part of an educational action aimed at all students. By promoting awareness of the democratic forms of coexistence and offering the opportunity to acquire knowledge of history, social, legal and economic preconditions for the formation of intercultural citizenship, school is, a privileged place for the construction and sharing of common rules.

On October 2007, the document *The Italian Way to Intercultural School and the Integration of Foreign Students* was issued, drawn up by the National Observatory for the integration of foreign students and for intercultural education, set up in December 2006 at the Ministry of Education. This document describes an Italian model of intercultural integration, which flows from the principles of universality, the common school, the centrality of the person in relation to the other and interculture, to be implemented through a number of fundamental actions: acceptance and inclusion of foreign pupils in school, Italian as a second language, enhancement of multilingualism, involvement and guidance for foreign families, promotiion of relations during extrascholastic activities, interventions against discrimination and prejudice,

intercultural perspectives in knowledge and skills, autonomy and networking between educational institutions, civil society and territory, enhancing the role of school principals, teachers and other school staff.

The concern for classroom settings with high numbers of migrant students characterizes the enactment of the controversial Ministerial Memoradum No. 2, 8 January 2010 imposing a ceiling of 30% in the presence of students without Italian citizenship in class in schools at all grade levels. During the same period, a hypothesis surged, it was not implemented but long-discussed, to predict "welcoming classes" or "bridge classes" to learn Italian language: separated learning contexts for foreign students.

On the French model ENAF (Enfants Nouvellement Arrivés en France), the focus shifts later on pupils NAI (Neo Arrived in Italy). In 2008, a national plan for teaching Italian as a second language for recent immigrant pupils enrolled in secondary schools of first and second degree was then ealborated.

In 2014,the new G*uidelines for the Entry and Integration of foreign students* (Ministerial Memoradum no. 4233 of 19.02.2014)is finally issued, in which we distinguish between many types of students of foreign origin (students with non Italian citizenship in a non Italian-speaking family environment with, unaccompanied minors, children of mixed couples, pupils arrived for international adoption, Roma pupils, Sinti and Travellers, university students with foreign citizenship). The document, finally, offers operational guidelines concerning the distribution of foreign students in the schools, their entry, the involvement and participation of families, assessment, guidance, teaching Italian as a second language in schools strong presence of foreign students, school staff training school, adult education.

This review summarizes twenty years of history on intercultural education in Italy. As seen, most initiatives focused on providing pupils with intercultural competences. However, it is not until 2015 when the first attemp to shift the focus to the the teaching staff.

On the 4 March 2015, the Milan Court by order declared the call for the creation of the three-year rankings for substitute teaching discriminatory(DM 353/2014) in the section where Italian and European Comunity citizenship is required. The Court has also declared illegal the clause in the call which provided priority to Italian citizens in the rankings for subtituting foreign language conversation teaching, the only ones to which foreigners had already been admitted, even if in a subordinate position.

Article 7 of Law no. 97/2013, amending Article 38 of the Decree. n. 165/2001 introduced an important opening for foreigners' access to jobs in public administrations. Under the new legislation not only Italian and EU citizens may participate in calls, but also foreigners. The opening does not, however, affect all third country nationals, but only:

- Holders of a residence permit for EU long-term residents;

- Holders of international protection;

- Non-EU family members of EU citizens, holders of the right of residence or the right of permanent residence.

As pointed out by the judges of the court of Milan, blue EU cardholders (Article 12 of Directive 2009/50 / EC) and non-EU relatives of Italian citizens (Article 23 of Legislative Decree. N. 30 / 2007)should be added to these categories.The posts involving direct or indirect exercise of public powers or which relate to the protection of the national interest (ex. Judges, military)still remains, in any case, reserved to Italian nationals.

This policy has a direct impact on the Italian education system because in order to be a public school teacher, one most be an Italian citizen. In contrast,studies have shown that a diverse

teaching staff has a positive impact on student achievement, and helps to close the achievement gap. A diverse teaching staff creates both academic and psychological benefits including: providing role models, having higher expectations, encouraging academic performance, understanding cultural difference, and breaking down all students' stereotypes.

In October 2004, the Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force at the Kirwan institude for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in Columbus Ohio reported that a diverse staff would:

- increase the number of role models for students of color;
- provide opportunities for all students to learn about ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity;
- enrich diverse students' learning because of shared racial, ethnic, and cultural identities; and
- serve as cultural brokers, able not only to help students navigate their school environment and culture, but also to increase the involvement of other teachers and their students' parents.

Unfortunately, Italian's teaching force does not reflect its diversity.While in Italy 43, 8% of students in middle school are not Italian citizens and come from around 200 different countries (MIUR - Ufficio di Statistica, 2015), the law still requires that teachers have Italian ciizenship to serve public schools.

The modern phenomena of migration, as well as old ones, within Europe, non-European and intercontinental routes, increase more and more. This poses the need and the desire to learn to live with each other, aiming at mutual understanding and starting to interact. Under the educational aspect, the instance above is specified as a requirement to teach respect for identity in diversity, intercultural dialogue, the protection of individual peculiarities, and to promote

completely new forms of democratic coexistence. Educational research, therefore, it is a difficult but crucial task: to be able to safeguard the originality of the individual, in respect of common standards coexistence, through appropriate educational programs.

The reference to foreign immigration in Italy and Europe (but not only) is the historical and socio-cultural underpinning in this reflection. This cue allows us educators to embrace, deepen and legitimize the theme of education in an intercultural perspective.

In Europe, diversity is connected with the variety of migrants subject added to the differences already present in the area (internal migration , minorities, differences in language, culture, class and gender) . In this sense , the substantial migration flows have repeated, on an urgent basis, the issues of integration with different. In Italy (Law 482, 1999), for example, there is the reality of minorities in the so-called 'language penisulas' on the border territories (French, German, Ladin, Slovenian) and the islands' language '(Albanian, Catalan, Croatian, French-Provencal, Friulian, Greek, Ladin, Occitan, German-speaking, sardines).

According to Perotti, European societies have become multicultural already several decades ago, and the recent arrival of new immigrants has only added other minorities, highlighting a social and cultural pluralism already existing. Diversity within European societies, it is rooted in the history of individual countries, rather than due to recent immigration.

Educational approaches, in the management of these relations, have largely contributed to the conservation and the "reproduction " of the dominant thought , paying little attention to cultural diversity and remaining unaffected by the ' balance of power.' However, the development of attention to the differences and to multicultural contexts, begun in recent decades in education. It is an important signal of a trend change. Education, thanks to this new approach defined intercultural today, gets rid of all its ' ideological shackles,' is recovering epistemological autonomy both in its scope and ethical practice.

Since the eighties of the last century, education has been affected by a series of " new emergencies," of new needs and new educational formulas. Three in particular, according to F. Cambi, are to be taken into consideration, all introduced by profound social and cultural transformation: feminism, the ecological problem, the growing presence of people of different cultural and national background in Western countries. These factors transform the characteristics of educational approaches, determining its relocation within society.

The establishment of our multiethnic society has put the models of coexistence to test and generated confusion . Faced with a such a large number of specific issues, there is an urgent need to strengthen the critical foundation and indicate the theoretical aspects of intercultural reflection. The pedagogical thinking comes into this web of issues bringing its interpretive contibution (Perucca, 2001, p. 76).

The present status of theoretical intercultural investigation seems to be soliciting a 'reinterpretation ' of the entire education in intercultural sense. The traditional educational theories and practices, strained by complexity and multiculturalism, they have proved deeply monocultural and inadequate to meet the demands that come from contemporary society (Dusi, 2000, p. 205).

Reflection intercultural faces the contradictions and antinomies. They are running throughout the pedagogical reflection , in an attempt to seize new possible complementary . If pedagogy , in a general sense , is concerned with the formation of personal identity , the intercultural education. It deepens the opening towards the other and his culture . in this direction of the intercultural perspective receives from the general pedagogy conceptual tools necessary to its constitution as relational pedagogy ; but especially it receives the chief object of reflection: the man , his educability and her education . In other words , the general education precise that even for the intercultural education the goal to attain is the integral formation man (De Santis, 2004).

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is influenced by an activity-theoretical perspective. Human life is fundamentally rooted in participation in human activities that are oriented towards objects. Thus, human beings are seen as situated in a collective life perspective, in which they are driven by purposes that lie beyond a particular goal (Sannino, Daniels and Gutierrez, 2009). Perspective also takes into account that all human action is mediated through the use of cultural artifacts and tools. The present study explores teachers' situated practices and investigates how they use and develop their knowledge bases as tools to respond to sociocultural diversity in the classroom and within the larger macro structures that comprise their teaching context. Activity theory conceptualizes actions in the broader perspective of their systematic and motivational context and, thus, aims at going beyond a given situation. The emphasis on action alone does not fulfill the research agenda in activity theory, according to which actions are studied in historically evolving collective activities. According to Nieto (2000) multicultural education is also a process of school reform and it is for all students. It permeates whole curricula as well as the all school organizations. As Sleeter and Grant (1988) defined, multicultural education is not one subject matter, but is education itself.

Banks (1997) also stated the components required for ensuring a multicultural education are: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social culture. Apparently, each element relates to the others, and each requires considerable attention.

Johnson (2009)discusses the shift in recent decades from a positivist, scientific method approach in educational research to one that embraces the interpretive perspective. She states,

> Rather than attempting to predict what teachers do or should do, interpretative research is interested in uncovering what they already know and are able to do, and how they make sense of their work within the contexts in which they teach. In that sense, interpretative research focuses on what teachers know, honors what they know, and helps to clarify and resolve the dilemmas they face. (p. 9)

The sociocultural perspective considers the prime unit of analysis to be mediated action with the focus of research being the individuals carrying out the activities (Wertsch, 1995). The present study explores the situated practice to respond to sociocultural diversity (i.e., the mediated action) of secondary teachers (i.e., the individuals), I have chosen to broaden the perspective through the use of activity theory as an analytical tool and conceptual framework. Activity theory allows for richer conceptualizations of individual experiences, acknowledging that human activity takes place in collective practice, communities, and institutions and, therefore, is shaped and influenced by multiple viewpoints, relationships, tensions, and histories.

Activity theory is based on the collective heritage of the founders, in particular Vygotsky (1978), Leont'ev (1981) and Luria (1976). In the following section, I will review the evolution of activity theory, beginning with an analysis of the foundational work by Vygotsky and Leont'ev. Then, I will introduce the development of early theories into the contemporary model of activity theory and its five key principles (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 1987, 1991, 1999).

Evolution of Activity Theory

Activity theory is a theoretical framework that can be applied to analyze and make sense of human practices within a given culture and context. Human practices or actions are revealed through their interactions with their environment and explored through the basic unit of 'activity'

or 'what people do' (Engestrom, 1987, 1991, 1999; Kuuti, 1996). Activity theory is very often viewed as an evolved theory with contemporary variants grounded in the early work of Lev Vygotsky (1978). Vygotsky posits that humans interact with their environment through the use of tools and cultural artifacts that mediate efforts to achieve certain goals or objectives. As we strive toward our goals, we are transformed and develop as individuals within a society and culture (Cross & Gearon, 2004; Engeström, 1987; Leont'ev, 1978; Scribner, 1985). This notion has come to be known as the mediation model, which Vygotsky (1981) diagrammed using a triangle to show the association between a Stimuli (S) and Response (R) as mediated through the use of a tool (X) (see Figure 2.1).
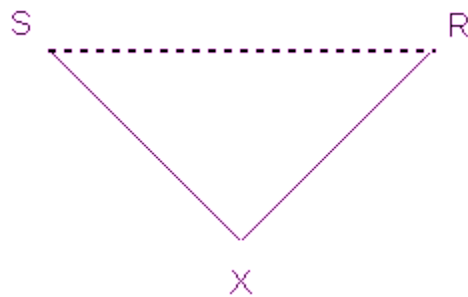
Figure 2.1: The mediational model (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 14)

The mediation model is a dynamic, general framework designed to guide teacher problem solving. During this process, the teacher creates and uses action relevant knowledge tailored to the learning context (Calderhead & Miller, 1985; Lampert & Clark, 1990). The model guides teachers' analyses and decisions on planning instruction and their actions during instruction. It can also be used to guide teachers' analyses and decisions on how to personalize new methods and materials and restructure their teaching through classroom research.

With this model, the teacher does not simply pass text meaning on to the student reader. Instead, she mediates student's learning through social interaction. Teacher mediation is more than modeling or demonstrating how to do something. While the teacher is interacting with the

student, she continuously analyzes how the students think and what strategies they use to solve problems and construct meaning. From this analysis, the teacher decides how much and what type of support to provide.

Leont'ev viewed all activity as being comprised of actions carried out by a subject through the use of tools, which result in particular operations aimed at a certain goal or motive, represented as the object (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Lektorsky, 2009). Leont'ev's conception of activity is illustrated in Figure 2.2. To give an example from education, the teacher (subject) uses a cooperative learning strategy (artifact or tool) in order to help her students achieve certain learning objectives (object).

Key to this theory is the idea that activity is carried out within a given context and the ability for the subject to reach his or her goal is determined by the availability of necessary tools or the ability of the subject to effectively fulfill the tools in order to mediate actions within the activity system.
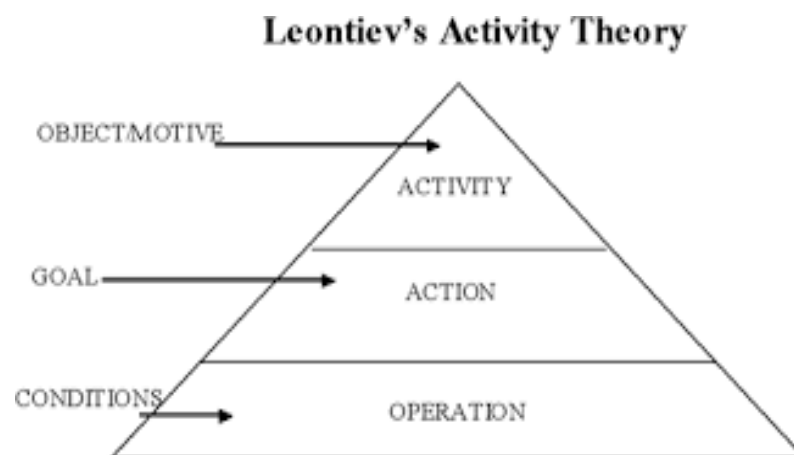
Figure 2.2. Leont'ev's conception of activity

The core of this theory is the idea that activity is implemented within a given context and the subject's ability to reach his or her goal is determined by the availability of necessary tools or the ability of the subject to effectively create the tools in order to mediate actions within the activity system.

Historical Development of Activity Theory

The history of development of activity theory is quite significant because it has given activity theory its power as a catalytic research tool. As stated above, activity theory is grounded in the early work of several Russian psychologists. Besides, it has the distinctive characteristic of developing as an integral part of the periods of historical turmoil in the Soviet Russia during the early 20th century. Sannino, Daniels and Gutierrez (2009) provide an excellent overview of the history of activity theory which was overshadowed during the Russian Revolution.

Activity ⟹ Motive

Action ⟹ Goal

Operation ⟹ Conditions
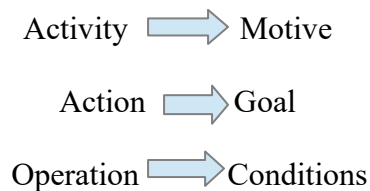
Figure 2.3: The structure of human activity

As part of history is the practice turn by scholars, which according to Sannino, Daniels and Gutierrez (2009) can be traced back to Marx's idea of revolutionary practice wherein "theory is not only meant to analyze and explain the world, but also to facilitate practices and promote changes" (p. 3). Many activity theorists have incorporated a practice orientation in their work over the past eight decades through interventionist research (i.e., research that identifies new tools and suggests changing existing approaches within a given activity). Early examples of interventionist research include, the educational impact of Vygotsky's work with homeless

children and children with special needs, the impact on healthcare of Luria's new methods of neuropsychological examination of patients who suffered head trauma, and the societal impact of Leont'ev's work with injured soldiers to rehabilitate their movement functions (Sannino, et al., 2009). The propensity toward transformation and innovation in theoretical work associated with activity theory is deeply rooted in this history.

Activity theory is one that develops as an integral part of the historical turmoil in which activity theorists live. Perhaps today's movements advocating global justice, the rights of ethnic minorities, and ecological sustainability will be the ground for the next generation of activity theorists. The identity of activity theory stands on the ability of those who work within this framework to establish fruitful connections between the classic heritage of the theory, present societal challenges, and orientations toward the future. (Sannino, et al., 2009, p. 11)

During the student movements of the 1960s, the foundational tenets of activity theory reached the rest of Europe and its exploration began by progressive academics and researchers in the United States. Sannino, Daniels and Gutierrez (2009) argue for the legitimacy of activity theory. They state,

> As a unified theory, activity theory has shown consistent viability throughout its history, beginning in the 1930s when Leont'ev formulated its basic principles and proposed the structure of activity. In addition, activity theory today attracts more interest globally than ever before. The term 'unified' does not refer to a closed and fixed theory. However, it rules out an interpretation of activity theory as an eclectic grouping of multiple theories. (p. 1)

Particularly, the activist work of Yrjo Engeström and his colleagues in Finland moved activity theory from a very little-known theory to a tool for research that promotes changing societal practices (Sannino, et al., 2009). The contributions to activity theory by Engeström will be further discuss in the following section.

The Evolution of Activity Theory with Engeström

Engeström viewed early versions of activity theory as lacking the potential to represent actions as elements of a collective activity system (Engeström, 1999). He envisioned a model of activity theory would account for the historicity, multiple perspectives, and interactions and offer potential for development inherent to collective activity. Activity theory, according to Engeström (2001) can best be summarized through an explanation of five key principles. The five principles to be extrapolated here are: 1) the prime unit of analysis is a collective object-oriented activity system mediated through the use of tools; 2) activity systems are multivoiced; 3) activity systems have historicity; 4) contradictions are central to transformation and development; 5) long term expansive cycles of transformation are possible in activity systems. As a result of Engeström's work in redefining activity theory, it is now commonly applied to the study and analysis of organizations, institutions, businesses, educational entities, and other activity systems to identify the potential for transformations in the collective practice. In the next section, I will expand upon each of the five key principles to provide further support for the choice of activity system as an ideal analytic tool for the present study.

Activity System as Prime Unit of Analysis

The first principle specifies that in order for an activity theoretical analysis to take place, a specific object-oriented activity system must be the prime unit of analysis. He notes that the minimum elements for an activity system must include subject, object, mediating tools, rules, community and division of labor (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 1987). These are represented in what is referred to as Engeström's triangles (see Figure 3.3). Engeström (2001) notes, "goal-directed individual and group actions, as well as automatic operations, are relatively independent but subordinate units of analysis, eventually understandable only when interpreted

against the background of entire activity systems" (p. 136). In the present study, analyzing the entire activity system of each participant allows for a more comprehensive view of reality as framed by the various relationships, interactions and tensions present.
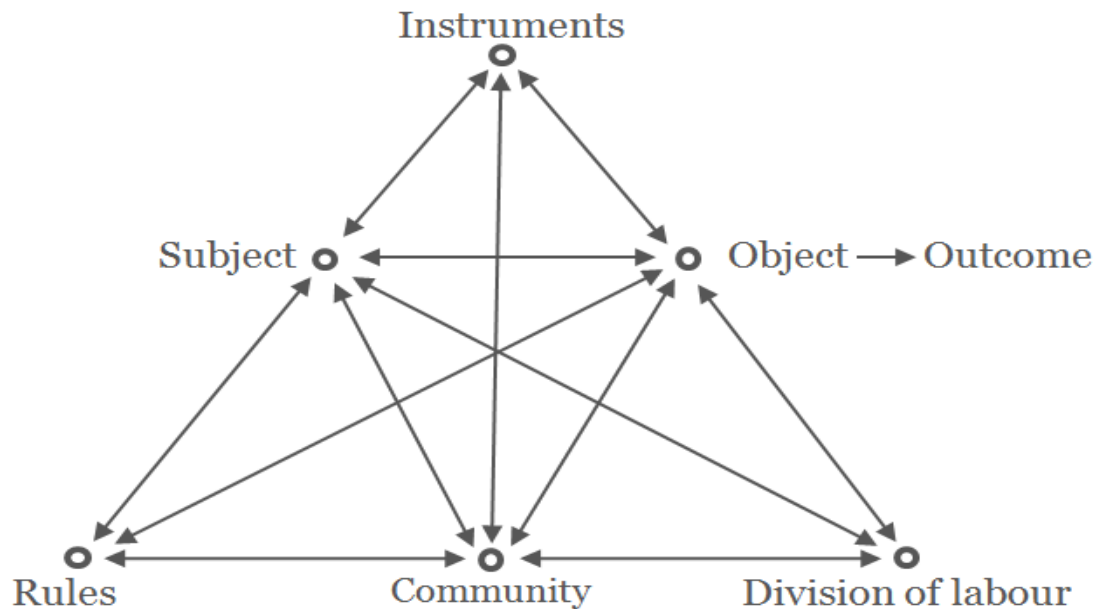
Figure 2.4: Engeström's Triangles (Engeström, 1987, p.78)

In an activity system, the *subject* is the doer of the action or the actor in the activity system. Analysis of the activity system takes place from the point of view of this individual or group. In other words, given the activity system of a classroom with students coming from diverse socio-cultural contexts, if the analysis is exploring what the teacher does in the classroom, the teacher would be the subject (e.g. Kim, 2011). However, if the focus of the analysis is investigating the way in which learners with diverse needs use a new instructional tool for learning, such as computers, the learners would be the subject (e.g., Blin, 2005).

The *object* of the activity system can be considered as that which the activity system is acting upon or toward which it is directed. By extension, there is an *outcome* component in the activity system that is generally considered as the goal (motive) of the activity system. As the

activity acts upon the object, the aim is transformation of or within that object such that the outcome is reached.

The *tools* are integral in the transformation of the object toward reaching the outcome. They are constructed and transmitted as per the cultural norms and cognitive forms that created them (Blin, 2005). They may be physical or material, such as textbooks and handouts; however, they may also include psychological or cognitive artifacts, such as language, beliefs, knowledge, and procedures. Tools either help or hinder the subject in carrying out the actions, depending on their availability, their usefulness for certain applications or their effect on the interactions between the subject and object.

The *community* within an activity system includes anyone who participates in the environment of the activity system and has an interest in the outcome. As noted by Cross and Gearon (2004) "community situates activity within a wider context by recognizing that it only has meaning as part of a larger social setting" (p. 10).

The *division of labor* within the activity system refers to the distribution of tasks and power within the activity system, which may be horizontal or vertical. Horizontal divisions of labor may be exemplified by the work of teachers working with learners at a similar level within the same program. Vertical divisions of labor are often related to power and status and may be reflected in the relationships between teachers and administrators in a program (e.g., Roth & Tobin, 2002). The division of labor acknowledges that different members of the community contribute to the goal in distinct, but important ways; each has an impact, direct and indirect, on the actions within the activity system.

The *rules* refer to the policies, norms, conventions and expectations, both implicit and explicit that are prevalent in the activity system. The rules constrain the actions and interactions within the activity system and determine the extent to which certain tools can be used toward the

outcome. The community creates the rules based on expectations of acceptable behavior within the activity system.

Multi-Voicedness

   The second principle of activity theory highlights the multi-voicedness of activity systems. This recognition of "multiple points of view, traditions and interests" stems from the awareness that all activity is collective and, therefore, inherently involves a community rich with variety and even tensions (Engeström, 2001, p. 136). An activity system incorporates the voices, expectations, traditions, beliefs, histories, and so much more as inseparable components of the individuals and groups involved in the activity system. In an educational setting, those components will be reflected in the actions and interactions carried out by teachers, students, administrators, stakeholders, and the students' family members. No classroom, teacher, or group of students exists in a vacuum sheltered from these various influences,

> The division of labor in an activity creates different positions for the participants, the participants carry their own diverse histories, and the activity system itself carries multiple players and strands of history engraved in its artifacts, rules and conventions. The multi-voicedness ... is a source of trouble and a source of innovation, demanding actions of translation and negotiation. (Engeström, 2001, p. 136)

   Activity theory makes paramount an effort to create a space in which these influences and perspectives can make noise and be recognized, thus promoting the expansive learning that will be addressed as principle five.

Historicity

   The third principle of activity theory is historicity. In addition to the multiple perspectives and realities that are brought into an activity system by its participants is the vast history that shapes each activity system over time. It is only against the backdrop of this history that an activity system with its various "problems and potentials" can be fully understood (Engeström,

2001, p. 137). The historicity of an educational activity system takes into account the local history of policy making, program development, cycles of power shifting with the coming and going of administrators and teachers, curricular decision making, professional development for teachers and of course the ever-evolving learner profiles of immigrant populations and students with specific learning disabilities. In this light, the nomadic journey of a Roma student can be considered part of the history of a middle school classroom in Veneto and in Andalusia regions.

Contradictions

The fourth principle of activity theory is the essential function of contradictions as catalysts for transformation within the activity system. "Contradictions are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems" that can lead to both conflicts and innovations (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). They arise with the evolution of an activity system and the resultant interactions among components within the activity system. For example, they may occur with the recent arrival of an immigrant student with limited language skills in the language of instruction to the activity system, such situation in the classroom, which *initially* may complicate the activity or limit the capacity of teachers or students to carry out tasks.

Contradictions are a critical premise to activity theory and their centrality speak to the inherent nature of conflict, contradiction, and tension in human activity. In his review of activity theory, Kuutti (1996) explains,

> Activity theory uses the term contradiction to indicate a misfit within elements, between them, between different activities, or between different developmental phases of a single activity. Contradictions manifest themselves as problems, ruptures, breakdowns, and clashes. Activity theory sees contradiction as sources of development; activities are virtually always in the process of working through contradictions. (p. 34)

The opportunities for development that exist when contradictions are identified support the notion that they do not reflect failure in a system and should not be seen as obstacles or signs

of weakness. Rather, they can be seen as the "illuminative hinges through which participants in an activity can reflect on their activity system's developmental trajectory and understand its dynamics" (Foot, 2001, p. 12). It is the power of activity theory to acknowledge the dynamic nature of activity systems that makes this analytical tool idyllic for the present study. Engeström identifies and explains four levels of contradiction within an activity system. They are represented in the triangle model by a lightening bolt between the elements experiencing the tension. The next section delineates the levels at which contradictions can occur within an activity system. Identifying contradictions at each level outlined below serves as the basis for analysis of the activity systems in this dissertation.

A level one or *primary* contradiction is that which occurs within a single component of the activity system. It is comparable to an internal conflict and may occur when an individual in the system, for example, has to take on a dual role or is coerced into taking a particular stance on an issue that is in contrast to his or her epistemology. For example, Gobbo(2007) in her ethnographic work in the Veneto region done with elementary and middle school teachers working with Roma students explains how a teacher in her study had a striking primary contradiction because her classroom practices appeared to be at odds with her beliefs about responding to the needs of nomadic students . In this study,the teacher believes some Roma students may have learning difficulties in the classroom but attested to her belief that the school system in Italy could be worsening the situation due to the lack of systematic interventions. Addressing primary contradictions requires a level of reflection and introspection that will promote evaluation of practices and ultimately, a shift toward new approaches that move the activity system to a culturally more advanced version of itself with appropriate object-oriented actions.

A level two or *secondary* contradiction is a tension that arises within a relationship between two elements or components of the activity system, such as subject and tool, subject and community or community and rules as they interact. An example of this contradiction uncovered in the study done by Vinicio Ongini (2011) in his journey visiting multicultural schools throughout Italy was that between subject (teachers) and community (parents). Italian parents manifest concerns regarding schools with a high number of immigrant students present in the classrooms. A teacher in this work explains their attitude towards this tension can ease parents' concerns. Relationships throughout the activity system will naturally entail tensions at some point. Negotiating these tensions requires a level of relational agency, which is the "capacity to work with others to expand the object that one is working on and trying to transform by recognizing, examining, and working with the resources that others bring to bear as they interpret and respond to the object" (Edwards, 2009, pp. 208209). Through employing relational agency to resolve contradictions between components in the activity system, participants in the activity tap into the distributed intelligence and expertise available in the system.

A level three or *tertiary* contradiction occurs between the activity system and a more advanced or further developed version of the central activity (Engeström, 1987). I would argue that 'more advanced' is perhaps an unfair judgment that automatically puts one version of the central activity system in a place of inferiority to another, but at the same time it does acknowledge that activity systems evolve over time and often at different rates from one another. An example of a tertiary contradiction in classroom might emerge if a new technology or approach is introduced into the teaching activity, resulting in tensions within the system (Blin, 2005). For example, if a teacher is given an interactive board or an electronic registrar to use in the classroom, but the teachers resist the use of these new tools, there will potentially be breakdowns in the system that the teacher and students will have to address.

A level four or *quaternary* contradiction occurs between two neighboring and interacting activity systems that share an interest in the same object and outcome. No activity system exists in isolation from other activity systems. In fact, all activity systems are engaged in a process of development and transformation that hinges on one another. For example, the activity system of an Italian as a Second language program in a school may experience tensions resulting from interactions with the activity system embodied by the funding agency for the language program. Moreover, in the case of Spain, the tensions rise due to state policies requiring co-teaching for compensatory programs, but there is not time allotted by law for co-planning. This level of contradiction is the focus of much recent work by Engeström in what is termed the third generation of activity theory. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to thoroughly explore additional activity systems as they interact with those I have analyzed; however, it is noted as a critical future direction for this study, the importance of which will be explained in following chapters.

Expansive Cycles

The fifth principle of activity theory "proclaims the possibility of expansive transformations in activity systems" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). It is perhaps the most critical principle according to Engeström, who views transformation and expansive learning to be the goal of this practice-based, historical and future-oriented theory.

Engeström has asserted throughout his work on developing activity theory that "it is essential that researchers not rest content merely to pass their research findings back to those who are affected by them, but that they remain active in helping to turn new ideas in to practices" (Blackler, 2009, p.34). The identification of contradictions and attempts to reformulate the "raw material" of the object is what leads to the potential expansive learning. Engeström (2001) acknowledges that expansive learning is an iterative process.

> Activity systems move through relatively long cycles of qualitative transformations. As the contradictions of an activity system are aggravated, some individual participants begin to question and deviate from its established norm. In some cases, this escalates into collaborative envisioning and a deliberate collective change effort. An expansive transformation is accomplished when the object and [outcome] of the activity are reconceptualized to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity. (p. 137)

To some degree, activity theory as a framework is ideally suited as a tool for empowerment. In considering the complicated history of the founders of activity theory and the societal challenges they faced during their time, it is no surprise that Engeström (1999) wrote, "activity theory has the conceptual and methodological potential to be a path breaker in studies that help humans gain control over their own artifacts and, thus, over their future" (p.29). In choosing an activity theoretical framework, researchers should be committed to challenging societal and cultural norms, shifting perceptions, addressing contradictions, and facilitating dialogues that target expansive learning.

Activity Theory to Explore Teacher Knowledge and Practice

These studies demonstrate the effectiveness of activity theory as a conceptual framework and analytical tool for educational research. For this dissertation, in particular, activity theory is ideal because it promotes context-embedded inquiry, transformation and researcher involvement. This approach encouraged me to go beyond situated teacher practice to seek out and identify relationships and tensions within the larger system in order to recognize opportunities for transformation. As Cross (2004) states,

> 'Teaching' has no meaning in and by itself, and there is no 'one teacher' that has sole authority over absolutely everything related to the act of teaching. Teachers, their work (goal, activities) and how they do their work is derived from where they are situated within a wider social, cultural and historical context. (p. 34)

Activity theory allows for a holistic view of the situation being explored, making context paramount to the inquiry, thus aligning with the epistemology of the interpretivist research paradigm. "Human life is fundamentally rooted in participation in human activities that are oriented toward objects. Thus, human beings are seen as situated in a collective life perspective, in which they are driven by purposes that lie beyond a particular goal" (Sannino, et al., 2009, pp. 2-3). Exploring the human activity of the teachers and learners within the greater context of the school demands an approach that allows for this 'collective life perspective.'

Additionally, it operates from the standpoint that research should be transformational, not only transactional. In other words, research should involve the participants and ultimately give back to the community in a meaningful way (Engeström, 1999). This particular study was born from my interests in teacher education and teacher practice with specific relation to the teaching sociocultural diversity. As noted in Chapter 1, there are many challenges that face teachers of these learners, not the least of which is a feeling that they are unprepared for this teaching context and at times unsupported in their professional growth.

Through my personal teaching experiences in settings with students with a variety of sociocultural backgrounds, as well as my conversations with teachers in these contexts, I recognized that there were not only issues related to teacher preparation, professional development, and resource availability, but there was an often unspoken power differential between classroom teachers and other entities, such as program administrators and researchers. At the outset of this study, my hope was to be able to make better sense of the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of teachers' classroom practices. However, early in the research process, I realized that this study would go beyond simple observations and reports; it would additionally take that information and move forward to embrace and promote change in systems and empowerment of teachers. Activity theory is a practice-based theory that urges deep involvement of the researcher

in the activity of the participants. The power in this study, therefore, is the selection of activity theory as the theoretical framework.

Operationalizing Activity Theory

As reviewed above, various researchers working in diverse contexts have employed activity theory; however, there has been little consistency in applications and interpretations of the framework. In fact, activity theory has been criticized for its lack of a standardized methodology for implementation (Mwanza, 2001; Nardi, 1996). In an effort to address this criticism, Mwanza (2001) demonstrates an effort to operationalize activity theory through the creation of a methodology that centers on an Eight-Step Model for examining human activity. It was developed during a project, which analyzed work practices in order to inform the design of a computer system as an improved tool to mediate the activity in the workplace. Her approach provides a way to systematically use activity theory to guide research and has subsequently been applied by other activity theorists. As the present study uses this methodology, I will extrapolate the basic tenets of her approach.

The activity theory methodology includes six stages for applying this framework. Within these stages, the Eight Step Model is activated at Stage One. It will be expanded upon below. First, the six stages are the following:

1) Model the situation being examined (using the Eight-Step Model).

2) Produce an Activity System of the situation.

3) Decompose the situation's Activity System.

4) Generate research questions.

5) Conduct a detailed investigation.

6) Interpret findings.

The present study passed through each of the six stages of this methodology; however, it did not happen in a linear fashion. For example, formulating the research questions (stage four) occurred prior to modeling the situation and, subsequently, to producing and decomposing the activity system. I had determined what I wanted to investigate before deciding that activity theory was the most appropriate analytical tool for the inquiry. However, the research questions did evolve as the activity system was produced and decomposed. In addition, there were many questions that were generated based on this methodology (i.e., guiding questions in the Eight-Step Model) that did not serve as core research questions but rather as tools for data collection and analysis. Another deviation from the linear nature of these stages involved Stages Five and Six. While preliminary interpretations could be made about the components of the activity system prior to investigation, data collection and preliminary analysis were necessary to generate an accurate model of the situation and produce a representative activity system. For example, I could not determine the object and outcome of the activity system without some initial observational and interview data to ascertain the perspective of the 'subject' in relation to those components.

Activity Theory in Educational Research Settings

Activity theory has been applied in several domains to explore activity systems and identify opportunities for growth and transformation. It has been used as a transformative tool to reconceptualized teacher education and professional development (see e.g., Roth & Tobin, 2002; Tasker, 2011; Tsui, 2007). Researchers have employed activity theory to make sense of teachers' classroom practices (see, e.g., Ahn, 2011; Kim, 2011) and to evaluate the impact of instruction on learning (see, e.g., Yamazumi, 2009)

The methodology is best understood when implemented and will, therefore, be illuminated in Chapter 3 of this dissertation when I expand on its application in this study.

However, it is useful for this discussion to present the Eight-Step Model here. It consists of eight open ended questions that target the components of the activity system so that they can be mapped onto the triangle (i.e., subject, object, tools, rules, division of labor, community) to represent the activity system. The questions are:

1) *Activity* of Interest

   a. What sort of activity am I interested in?

2) *Object* or Objective of activity

   a. Why is this activity taking place?

3) *Subjects* in this activity

   a. Who is involved in carrying out this activity?

4) *Tools* mediation the activity

   a. By what means are the subjects carrying out this activity?

5) *Rules* and regulations mediating the activity

   a. Are there any cultural norms, rules, or regulations governing the performance of this activity?

6) *Division of labour* mediating the activity

   a. Who is responsible for what, when carrying out this activity, and how are the roles organised?

7) *Community* in which activity is conducted

   a. What is the environment in which this activity is carried out?

8) What is the desired *Outcome* of the activity?

(Mwanza, 2001; italics and British spelling in original[6])

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6 Future citations from Mwanza (2001) will also employ her italics and British spelling, but I will only make note of it here.

The knowledge produced from answering these questions is the raw material for building the activity system based on Engeström's (1987) triangle model (Figure 2.3).

Mwanza (2001) suggests breaking down the larger triangle into manageable chunks or 'sub-activity triangles' for analysis and three 'rules-of-thumb' to facilitate this process. According to Mwanza, "the rules-of thumb state that each combination within the activity notation shall consist of:

1) An 'Actor' represented by the *Subject* or *Community* component of the triangle model.

2) A 'Mediator' represented by the *Tools, Rules* or *Division of Labour* component of the triangle.

3) The '*Object'* on which activity is focused."

Given the complexity of the larger activity system, identifying sub-activity units, clears the path for a coherent analysis of the interplay among components. For example, investigation can focus on the relationship between the *subject* and the *object* as mediated by the *rules.* The research questions that Mwanza's methodology suggests arise from this sub-activity matrix and include such questions as: *What Tools does the Subject use to achieve the Objective and how? What Rules affect the way the Subject achieves the Objective and how?* These questions did, in fact, serve in the data analysis as a tool for exploring relationships and uncovering contradictions.

Actors (Doers)		Mediator		Objective (Purpose)
Subjects	~	Tools	~	Object
Subjects	~	Rules	~	Object
Subjects	~	Division of Labour	~	Object
Community	~	Tools	~	Object
Community	~	Rules	~	Object
Community	~	Division of Labour	~	Object

Table 2.5: Activity Notation (Mwanza, 2001)

The argument is that culture and community are not merely independent factors which discriminate between settings. They are, as it were, the mediational medium with and through which ideas are developed. This argument underpins the Cole's (1996) model of culture (see Figure 2.5). He distinguishes between notion of context defined as that which surrounds, as in ecosystemic models, and notions of context defined as that which weaves together. The emphasis is on the active construction of context in action. The way in which individuals or groups use artefacts in effect transforms the model of context that obtain at any one time in a particular setting. Cole argues that when using the nested contexts approach it is important to take into account the fact that context is an actively created two sided process,

The relevant order of context will depend crucially upon the tools through which one interacts with the world, and these in turn depend upon one's goals and other constraints on action … According to this view of context, the combination of goals, tools, and setting constitutes simultaneously the context of behaviour and ways in which cognition can be said to be related to that context. (Cole, 1996, p. 137) concepts such as activity or practice. The emphasis on active creation context in practice or activity becomes the focus of analysis.
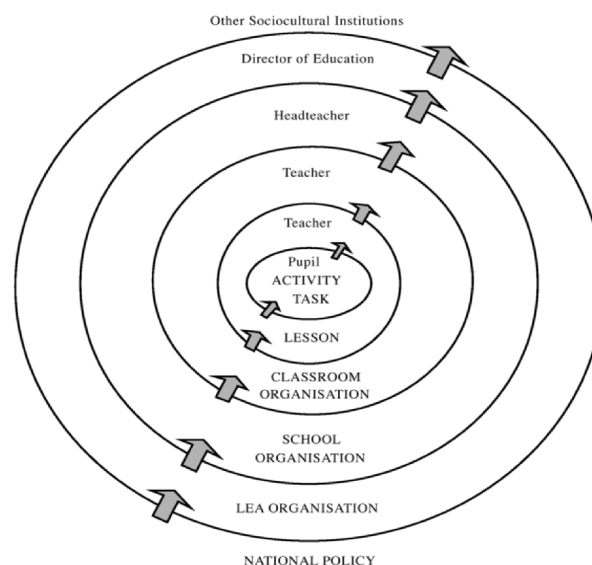
Figure 2.6: Context as that which surrounds as against that which weaves together (adapted from Cole,1996)

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of activity theory, which serves as the conceptual framework of this qualitative study. The principles set forth for activity theoretical investigations underscore the value of this analytical tool in promoting qualitative change and development within human activity systems. The next chapter will discuss the larger analytical framework for this descriptive case study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology of the study, which aims to explore the day-to day practices of middle school teachers working with diversity, investigate their practical knowledge and make sense how they use this knowledge in the classroom, and how the national policy and curriculum guidelines help or hinder in responding to their students needs. The specific research questions are:

1. What characterizes the classroom practices of middle school teachers working with socio-cultural diversity?

2. What competences do teachers posses to respond to the needs of students coming from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds?

3. What context-dependent relationships and tensions shape these competences?

4. In what ways can a better understanding of these classroom practices and context-dependent relationships and tensions inform professional development and policy with relation to their context?

In this chapter, I will first present the design and rationale for this ethnographic comparative study. I then employ rich, thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009) to present the context of the study and introduce the participants and the context of the schools where the research was conducted in Italy and in Spain. Data collection and analysis is framed through a discussion of qualitative practices appropriate for ethnographic study methodology, as

well as principles for conducting an inquiry guided by the theorethical framework of activity theory. Important to the rigor of this study, I expound upon the measures I took to ensure trustworthiness and discuss at length my role in this study as it relates to my epistemological and ontological views as a researcher. Finally, I review important ethical considerations taken into account to protect my participants and others who were indirectly involved or associated with this study.

Design and Rationale

This qualitative research entails a descriptive ethnographic com guided by the intrepretivist philosophy and conducted within a constructivist paradigm (Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2003). According to the interpretivist philosophy, we cannot separate ourselves from that which we know. Furthermore, knowledge is created and negotiated through our social interactions and our lived experiences. The constructivist research paradigm naturally compliments the interpretivist philosophy. Hatch (2002)describes the constructivist paradigm as one that assumes "a world in which universal, absolute realities are unknowable" and that "multiple realities exist that are inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points" (p.15). Epistemolgy or the theory of knowledge pertains to the study of the nature and scope of human knowledge, including how this knowledge is related to or affected by beliefs, values and notions of truth. Epistemologically, the constructivist paradigm subcribes to the notion that knowledge is subjective and is constructed by the knower and to better explore the knowledge, the researcher and participants should work closely to create meaning together (Hatch, 2002). Futhermore, research within this paradigm investigates phenomena in the natural setting through the use of qualitative methods for data collection and analysis.

In keeping with the ontology and epistomology of this paradigm, this research generated a descriptive ethnographic comparative study. Griffiths and Gobbo in Pescarmona (2014) define

ethnography as a method of research that is carried out with , and not on , the research subjects. This characteristic opens the range of possibility of relationship(p.26)(personal translation). Furthermore, Hitchcock and Hughes suggest that ethnographies involve the description of activities in relation to a particular cultural context from the point of view of the members of that group themeselves and the production of descriptive cultural knowledge of a group (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The activities to be studied in this ethnography are teacher practices to respond to socio-cultural diversity. The study also involves and comparative inquiry which according to Cohen, Manion & Morrison, it is one of the main naturalistic approaches where several cases are compared on the basis of key areas of interest (2013). Spindler and Spindler (1992) in Cohen, Manion & Morrison describe several hallmarks of effective ethnographies: observations have contextual relevance, hypthesis emerge in situ, and observations is prolonged and often repetitive. Events and series of events are observed more than once to establish reliability in the observational data (p.222). In the present study, observing the teachers in the classroom and school setting was essential to create a representative and fai rdescription of teachers' actual classroom practice. The context also informed my perceptions and interpretations of the interview data, leasing to a more complete understanding of teachers competences to respond to the needs of socio-cultural diversity in the classroom. In addition, a qualitative approach provides a more complete view of the institutional challenges teachers faced than would otherwise have been obtained through questionnaires or surveys alone, which would have excluded me from the context.

The ethnographic design in this study increases the capacity to make inferences from observation and various forms of ethnographic inquiry to use it to address insiders' views of reality and to elicit sociocultural knowledge from particpants, rendering social behaviour comprehensible (Spindler and Spindler in Cohen, Manion & Morrison,   2011). Some sociocultural knowledge that affects behavior and behavior under study is implicit and may not

be even known even to participants. One task of ethnography is to make explicit to readers what is implicit to informants. Also, to make comparisons and to suggests explanations for phenomena, reserchers might find it useful to go beyond the confines of the groups in which they occur. Based on this background knowledge, this study also includes a revision of national educational policy and curriculum guidelines. The schools and teachers in this study varied with regards to student population, resources available, teacher education, and on-site suppport and supervision. However, each context is representative of typical cultural models of sociocultural diversity present in schools in Italy and in Spain. Discovering cultural variations (i.e., relationships and tensions) in the transcultural comparative perspective natural over space and time.

The analytic tool and conceptual framework employed within this transcultural ethnographic study is activity theory. As noted in Chapter 2, activity theory allows the researcher to construct a holistic view of human behavior and human interaction within a given context or activity system. Activity theory was chosen as an effective tool for capturing the complexities of this context wherein teacher are not operating in isolation but are rather navigating a social world in which their activities, choices,behaviors and knowledge are shaped by those with whom they interact, including students, other teachers, and administrators. Initially, I planned to focus primarily on the teachers through an investigation of instructional strategies to respond to sociocultural diversity in the classroom. However, the richness of the situation called for he use of triangulation tecniques. Triangulation uses two or more methods of data collection in the study. It attempts to explain more fully the complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint (Campbell and Fiske 1959 in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, p.195). The study intended to go beyond teacher practices in the classroom to address other important mediating relationships within the larger context, such as those among teachers, students, administrators, policy, labor conditions that ultimately impact classroom practices and teacher development. The aim was not to prove a hypothesis through experimental research, but rather to generate

knowlege about middle school teachers' actual classroom practices in the light of their competences to respond to sociocultural diversity and as supported by opportunities for professional development.

My empirical study relies on the "classical" ethnographic and on qualitative interpretative methods (Werner and Schoepfle, 1987) applied to the discourse on teacher response to sociocultural diversity, teacher competences and professional development opportunities, and the texts and documentary sources on educational policies and practices. And just mentioning briefly the set of ethnographic methods I have used, they are basically:

- Non- Participant observation, Semi-structured ethnographic interviews, and informal conversatios(to teachers, school directors, and regional directors of professional development providers). These non -participant observations, interviews, and informal conversations have been carried out in a range of situations: during the planning and designing of programs, at meetings concerning work and decision making procedures, car pooling with teachers and school directors, having lunch or during coffee breaks or having coffee on non school days.

- Document collection (the programs text, official documents, etc.)

Context

During the three years I have been conducting my research, I have completed two ethnographic fieldwork studies:

a) In the province of Vicenza: data was collected from three sites in Italy

b) I conducted my second fieldwork in the province of Granada: In the four sites in Spain. Although the epistemology of community-based research allows for full disclosure of research partners, such as site or program names, the confidentiality of the participants in this study calls for the use of pseudonyms for both the participants and the sites for data collection. With this in

mind, the following are pseudonyms used for the sites in Italy: Vicenza 1, Vicenza 2 and Vicenza 3 and for the sites in Spain: Granada 1, Granada 2, Granada 3 and Granada 4. These sites are all public secondary schools that serve students in compulsotory grade levels. They reflect common differences across the schools in their teacher training, student population, class sizes, curriculum mapping, and scholastic programs offered. I chose to explore distinct contexts and countries to study and address regularities in social behavior and social structure as well as to catch the diversity, variability, creativity, individuality uniquess and spontaneity of social interactions. I will describe each in detail to give the full picture of this study.

Vicenza

This province is located in the west part of the Veneto region with approaximately one million people. Of importance is the presence of foreigners in the region. According to the National Institute of Statistics in Italy (ISTAT, 2015), the Veneto region ranks the leading positions among the Italian regions with 10,2% foreign residents (fourth place), just after Lombardy 23, 0%; Lazio 12,7%; and Emilia-Romagna 10,7%. In Veneto, the concentration occurs in provinces with higher manufacturing labor demand, that is, Treviso, Verona and Vicenza, where values are well above regional average (respectively 10.7% 10.5% and 10.4% according to census data and at the national level, these provinces account for the eighth, eleventh and twelfth provinces of Italy for the incidence of immigrants (Caritas, 2013). This immigrantion flow is closely connected to the presence of students of foreing origin in schools. The most widely spoken languages are Italian and Venetian.

Another relevant aspect that is worth mentioning is that there are 15.743 students with disability certification in the Veneto region who represent 36% of the student population which notably higher than the national average of 22%. Furthermore, the percentange in the province of Vicenza is 52% which represents more than double the national average (MIUR, 2014).

The Italian educational system; beginning with its earliest stages, is organized as follows: Kindergarten starts at the age of 3 and ends at the age of 6, and attendance is optional; it is organized and financed either by the central government or by local councils. Compulsory education spans the ages of 6 to 15 years of age and includes: primary school (from age 6 to 11, called *scuola primaria*), middle school (from 11 to 14, called *scuola secondaria del primo ciclo*), and the intial year of upper secodary school (from 14 to 17 or 19, depending on the chosen track, called *scuola secondaria del secondo ciclo*).

In this paper, I will focus on a specific stage during the educational career of a student: middle school or *scuola secondaria del primo ciclo.*

Another important aspect to keep in mind about public schools in Italy is that pupils who do not take advantage of the teaching of the Catholic religion an alternative is proposed to them: tutoring or delayed entrance / early exit if compatible with class timetable inccordance with Law on teaching religion. The Ministry of Education ordered that pupils who do not follow religion have the right to attend alternative activities. These activities must be educational and formative, though excluding from the curricular activities common to all pupils. The schools are obliged to provide teaching time alternative to Catholic religion teaching to be carried out during the time of alternative activities and it must be linked to the deepening of those parts of the programs most closely related to the values of life and civil society, the deepening of those parts of the programs of history and civic education more closely related to the issues related to the fundamental values of life and civil coexistence and it must contribute to the educational process of the personality of students. The three partcipant schools are part of the same school district or *instituto comprensivo.*

Vicenza 1

This school is located in the southeast of Vicenza in a rural area. Most teachers are also from the area and speak Venetian dialect among themselves and sometimes with students.Teachers in general are very nurturing to students, but discipline is not very effective or systematic. The fact that the school is s small allows teachers to know students very well even students that they do not have in their classrooms. However, this sometimes was displayed as some students not addressing their teacher respectfully. Sometimes they talk to teachers like they would have talk to a classmate (e.g. one teacher tells a student with no homework because he was absent… "you should use whatsapp to ask your friends your homework assignments. I'm a trendy teacher I use all the time," the student replies "you should use whatsapp to program exams with other teachers, so we do not have 5 exams on one day).

Teachers use a communication book to send information home, assign homework, communicate grades, etc. despite the fact that there is an electronic registrar that allows all these to be documented there. If a student is absent, they will miss the communication piece sent home via small communication book.

At the teachers lounge, some teachers are coordinating a night out t go eat pizza together since it is almost the end of school year. Some teachers expressed they will not go if certain others go. Therefore, the coordinators of the night out decide to call it off because teachers do not get along. At the lounge, teachers also expressed their discontent for the fact that they are required to have parent-teacher meetings during their receiving hours until school is over. The school director has sent a communication that allowing students to sit outside the classroom for group work is no longer permitted because such students will then be unsupervised. The teachers instead told students that group work is banned from school.

There are 5 hours of instruction with one 15 minute break. Most teachers observed sit at their desk and have students read their text book which for teachers might be a one hour lesson, but students are required to sit there for 5 hours. Students can only get out of their seats to use the toilet between periods. Most teachers do not use the smart board which is available in every classroom. They claim there is never internet connection; a lot of them claimed they haven't even tried to turn the computer on. The only teacher observed using the smart board with internet connection was successful at doing it in 3 different classrooms.Teachers complained about the demands from the director and expressed they do not receive the proper support, materials and equipment to fulfill those demands. Some teachers tend to standarized students academic performance by asking them to use the same type of notebooks, color of ink, way to handle paper, disposition, direction, how to think.

Some teachers used a very effective and systematic way to manage discipline of raising their hand to regain student attention. Some had a lot of difficult managing the classroom.

Students diverse cultural background were not acknowledge; in fact, some teachers did not know the origin of their students and asked the students right there at the moment where they were from toward the end of the year to inform the observer. Some knew their country of origin but seemed not to know much about their culture, language, etc. which could potentially help to better address difficulties these particular students were experiencing. A student from Moldova and the teacher said he should not be having so many difficulties with the language as he is because the language[7] is very similar. This possible assumption did not realized that there are minority languages in Moldova(Gagauz, Russian, and Ukrainian) with granted official regional status that have a different alphabet as is the case with these other Cyrillic-based languages from former Soviet Union.

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7 official language in Moldova in Romanian. Romanian, a -based Romanian orthography language

There was a girl of Cuban origin who was told I spoke Spanish and she did not want to speak in Spanish to me. She spoke only in Italian. The teacher introduced her as a girl from Cuba although she was born in Italy.

Vicenza 2

This school is also part of the same school district and it's located in semi-urban area. There are nine classroom, three per grade level. The average number of students in each class in 22. The school does not have smart boards in every class like the other two schools and teachers really resent that; and therefore, expressed the fact that a lot of them use only textbooks to teach is justified. Ironically, in this school, more teachers used the smart board(in the classrooms where available), videos, allow students to project their power points for their presentations and look up online for information they need at the moment.

Extracurricular activities such as rehearsals are not planned in a way that teachers know in advanced and plan lessons accordingly; especially when students who are failing and need to prepare for final exams and are asked to go rehearse for a show. Most teachers encourage memorization(knowledge) but vey little encourage the development of skills (competences).

Teachers do not seem to have a planning book, some have an agenda where they write the page numbers of the textbook that they will cover on their lessons.

The third library or resource room is very small and it seems like teachers don't really use it since one teacher was cleaning up and realise lots of books are obsolete and there were student work from 2002.

This school allows students to check out textbooks for the whole year ad return them to school at the end of school year. This allows families who have difficulties spending nearly €300 in books to have the books available at no cost.

The school policy is that grades are not calculated with arithmetic (quantitative), but effort, progress (qualitative); however, report cards have numbers.

The school has adopted a child from Guatemala and they support her and her family to continue her studies. The little girl is 12 and has written 2 letters to the school thanking for all help.

Vicenza 3

This site is located in the southest of Vicenza.It is located in the urban area near an industrial and commercial zone. There are 14 classrooms. All classrooms have a computer, a smartboard,bookshelves,and maps. There is a library, a music room, an art room, 3 gyms, and a small literacy room for foreign students.

The teachers' resource room has books on Maths, Education, Foreign language recovery, DSA, foreign languages, catalogues, magazines, technology, history and geography.

The books in the "Foreign Students" (ALUNNI STRANIERI) Section include: Piante e Animali in Europa, L'italiano per Amico, in Italiano, Anch'io parlo, leggo, scrivo in italiano, L'italiano… per incontrarse, lavorare e vivere. These collection of books focus on Italian as Second Language learning.

In most classes, students with difficulties either do not work in class or sit at the back of the class with a support teacher. Most teachers sit at their desk the whole lesson and almost never walk around the classroom. When sitting at the back, the observer could see students using their phone, looking at trading cards, exchange papers, completing work for other lessons.

Some teachers used pop quizzes to make up for the lack of preparation for their lessons. The lessons do not have a plan, format or cycle. Teachers ask students about what they did the previous lesson and what they should the next lesson. All teachers observed presented information mainly orally and there is very little use images(to address linguistic needs).

Teachers seem to lack interest to learn about students' culture. School does not reflect the culture of the students who are not Italian (art, posters, languages, flags, family pictures, etc).

Curriculum adaptations/modifications are not systematically applied in all subjects. More emphasis is given to Italian language/Mathematics. For example, dyslexic students or students whose first language is not Italian get support only for italian language class, but not in science, History, geography, music, art, etc.and other subjects in which language is the tool to access the curriculum.There is a noticeable more sensibility to special and low socioeconomic needs that there is to cultural and ethnicity differences with the visual aids on the wall, and the helper system for a student with autism.

All classes have a smart board and internet connection. The main resource used in class is the text book. The custodian said to me; since she keeps the key, that only one teacher teacher uses the library (as a classroom and not for students to consult books).

There is a tendency to assign content matter to be "learned" at home and come back to school to be "interrogated."

There was a Chinese (teachers at school do not know if mediator speaks Cantonese or Mandarin or the qualifications of the mediator or what exactly is the role of the mediator) cultural mediator who teaches the Chinese students some Italian language. The

Chinese mediator worked with the students at the library. The library is a small room with only Italian books and some posters in English and in French.

Some teachers wore inappropriate clothes to school allowing tattoos and under garments to be visible. Also, some teachers specially support teachers talk about inappropriate and personal matters in front of students. Teachers do not write on the register what they've done during the lesson. Most things seem unplanned.

The school conducts a self evaluation or *autovalutazione d'istituto* done by students and parents to improve school.

Teachers of non core subjects such as PE, Music and Art tend to be more inclusive than core subject teachers although these teaches not always promote student interaction. These teachers use multimedia methods(visual, auditive, kinestetic, hands on) instead of just lectures. Students have opportunities to have positive outcomes and identify their strengths and maximize them. The music teacher divides the class into boys and girls for teaching purposes. Then, the same male music teacher addresses and looks exclusively to the boys.

Most students take part of the Religion education class in the last year. The religion teacher says it's because they deal with topics related to coexistence, cooperation, world issues and not so much on Catholicism. However, with the other religion who has a more Catholic religion approach, some students choose to take the literacy class which is the alternative offered by the school for students who do not want to participate in this class.

The Italian language text books have quite appropriate topics such as friendship, social networks, and summer vacations. However, the names of the characters in the readings are Italian and do not address diversity or topics related to gender, bullysm,

alternative families and other topics teachers expressed concerns. Most teachers use the textbooks exclusively.

There is a student book with standardized test practice. The book has a Arabic, Chinese, Romanian and Spanish translations; however, if instruction is not in this language, assessment cannot be in this language.

French dictionaries that were used in the past by the French teacher are in bookshelves in the teachers' lounge because now the school offers Spanish classes as Foreign language instead. However, there were a few students from Republic of Côte d'Ivoire a French speaking country. In fact, one these students had to write a paper in Italian. There was only 1 dictionary in the class and it was Italian language dictionary for the whole class to consult. According to the Italian teacher, this student is repeating the grade and has only been in the country 3 years. Teachers do not have a lesson plan and particularly when they are absent, substitute teachers commonly play a movie on the smart board.

One of the sports magnet classes had a horseback riding course. There was a girl in a wheel chair who participated in 2011. Her picture hangs on the wall.

Many times, students are left with custodians or were left alone with me while teachers do other things outside the classroom. One of the Chinese student who had been having difficulties ran away from school while the class was left alone. Teacher student interaction is respectful and courteous most os the time.

In the morning, when teachers meet in the teachers' lounge, they do no talk to each other except in occasions to say good morning. However, they organized a night out to go eat pizza to celebrate the end of school year.

Granada

Granada is a province in the autonomous community of Andalusia, Spain. Its population is aproximately 235.800, ranking as the 13th-largest urban area of Spain (Instituto Nacional de Estatistica, 2014). Similar to Vicenza, Granada is an province in an area where the inmmigration flow is steadily increasing and ranks in the first positions nationally. Canary Islands (9.488), Balearic Islands (2.611), Andalusia (2.465) and Galicia (121) showed positive migratory balance in absolute values during 2014. Meanwhile, the most unfavorable migratory balance were in the community of Madrid, Catalonia and Valencia. In Granada, the percentage of immigrants is 25,58% predominanty from Morocco (Instituto de Estadísitica y Cartografía de Andalucía, 2016).

Another aspect considered to select Granada as a context for this study is that comparable to Vicenza, the diversity presentin this territory is not only associated to inmmigration. Andalusia is the Autonomous Community where Half of the "gitanos" (as referred to Roma population)in Spain live, about 350,000 people. Most of Roma population is sedentary, estimated at around 725,000 to 750,000 people, about 1.5% of the total Spanish population. They are distributed unevenly throughout the Spanish territory, residing particularly in large cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, Granada, Valencia, Zaragoza and Murcia; with a higher concentration in the regions of Andalusia, Valencia and Catalonia. In 2008, Granada had the highest percentage in Andalusia of neighborhoods and settlements of Roma population (Equipo de investigación D'ALEPH, 2008).

Based upon the *Ley Orgánica de Educación* or Fundamental Law of Education, education is compulsory for all children and young people who are resident in Spain between the ages of six to 16 years, with primary education (*primaria*) lasting six years followed by four years of compulsory secondary education (*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* or *ESO*), at the end of which a Certificate of Education is received. All students receive basic vocational training at

secondary level. State education is free of charge in Spain from preschool to 18 years, although in some regions parents may be asked to pay for books, other materials and extra-curricular activities.

The Structure of the Spanish Education System

The Spanish education system is divided into four stages, two of which are compulsory:

• Nursery and preschool (educación infantil) –optional

• Primary (educación or escuela primaria) – compulsory

• Compulsory secondary education(educación secundaria obligatoria)

• Upper secondary education(bachillerato) –optional

After primary, students go onto compulsory secondary education or Educación Secundaria Obligatoria(ESO) between the ages of 12 and 16 years old, at an Instituto de Educación Secundaria, Colegio Privado or Colegio Concertado.

Granada 1

This school is categoriezed as a "Compensatory School" (serves students considered at risk) in the south of Granada: There are 70 staff members serving 800 students in primary, secondary and vocacional cycles. There is a high percetange of Roma students; in fact, in some classes observed, there were only Roma students.

There is a smart board, an overhead projector and a computer in every classroom. Each teacher has some "substituting hours" and there is a systematic way to substitute teachers when they are absent. Every teacher goes to the staff room in the morning and sign in. Teachers conversate and greet each other very courteously.The book shelves in the staff room look very messy, there are many papers on the table, and on the bookshelves near the computers. There are three computers in the teacher's lounge. Nevertheless, most teachers do not work there because

they argue that the internet runs very slow. The blackboard in the teachers' lounge has a (Plan de Formacion) calendar with the professional development opportunities available at the regional Centro del Profesorado (CEP).

There is pullout program for students with adapted curriculum. Department meeting go on weekely. It is on the teachers' schedule, and there they decide materials, assessment, schedules, fieldtrips, and classrules to be consisted. Teachers meet with other teachers of the same subjects and with teachers teaching the same grade level. Sometimes, when students are experiences challenges in the classroom, they are offered the possibility to observe a "Solidarity Classroom" or a class distinguised for apropriate behavior. However, if a student break a school rule, they are sent to the "Convivencia" or Getting Along Classroom. There are two experts conducting research at the school on the effects of Yoga on students behavior. They also provide professional develoment onsite for teachers.

The school also has a bilingual program running. In the first year of ESO, students can opt to participate in the bilingual program which includes Maths, Science and History and Georgraphy class in English language. In addition to this, students have French a foreign language.

The school also has a student counselour onsite during the whole school day. The Counselour has a PhD in School Psychology. The counselour serves students but also serves as a resource and consultant for teachers.In the classrooms observed, there were big posters labeled " Second Trimester Exams" where teachers write scheduled exams to organized student assessment. Another project in this school is the one called *Peace Building*. The aim of the project is to used diversity to build peace.

Also, some teachers brought cleaning products to school to keep their classrooms clean. During the two weeks at this site, there were interdepartamental fieldtrips to Alhambra, French theatre, and the Science park. Teachers talked around the teachers' launge about the share goals and objectives they set u for these field trips. In fact, in the teachers' lounge during coffee breaks, teachers were always planning projects, talking about strategies for positive discipline, meetings, etc. They also discuss the difficulties they encounter teaching "these students" as they refered to; who exhibit displine challenges and low academic level. They discuss that some Roma students, in particular girls, come to school with their menstruation and have nor tampax or sanitary pads. They discuss that they have seen some students eat out on the streets after school and do not go home to eat with their families or do homework.

Most teachers in this school do not live in the area, but they all have to stay after school some afternoons to coordinated extra-curricular activities. Teachers were very diligent in calling the class roll during every lesson and documenting absences in the electronic register that sends phone messages to parents immediately. Every language teacher had their own stereo for listening activities in the classroom. Textbooks are given to students at no cost for the for years in ESO since it is compulsatory school. At the end of the cycle, students most return the books to be reused.

Granada 2

I could not help but noticing that at the school entrance, there is a big sign that reads "Escuela de todos, escuela para todos" ("School of All, School for All"). To get it the school during school hours, one must ring the bell and the secretary opens the door. However, she does not speak to people or ask them where they are going unless they approach her office. The school appears to be empty although students are there in the classroom.

The moment I got to the teacher lounge, teachers; as they get it to sign in, began introducing themeselves including the school counselour and an intern school psychologist. They both invited me to their office to talk to me about my research because they were really interestd about and to tell me about a project they had just began to impliment that year called comunidades de aprendizaje or learning communities [8]. To implement this project, they have a primary school teacher shadowing the secondary school teacher to support students performing below grade level.

Reading is promoted in many different ways such as "tertulias literarias"[9] (literary gatherings), 10-minute reading each day of the week at a given time at school, and giving students extra points for each book they read on their own time. The library seems to be a very clean, and visited place with students' art work.

All teachers' schedule is very visible to everyone in the teachers' lounge. The room is very large and has an overhead projector and audio system for staff meetings. The teachers' launge looked deserted during the whole week of my fieldwork. I was working in the room for over three hours one day waiting for my scheduled classroom observations and teachers only showed up at the room to sign in and read the board to see if there were announcements. During receess, most teachers stayed in the hallways and not in the teachers' lounge. It appeared as if teachers did not spend much time there nor together. There were no books, didatic materials or computers.

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8 a school learning community includes teachers, parents and students becoming to ensure learning for all students and their lack of a coordinated strategy to respond when some students do not learn. The community addresses this discrepancy by designing strategies to ensure that struggling students receive additional time and support. In addition, to being systematic and schoolwide, the learning community's response to students who experience difficulty is timely, based on intervention and not on remediation, and directive.

9 a "tertulia" is an informal gathering and regular meeting of students reading the same book to discuss and learn and share and compare ideas and opinions

Granada 3

My fieldwork in this school lasted only two days. A acquataince suggested I observed and interview a particular teacher in this site after I talked about my research in a methodology Seminar at the University of Granada.

The teacher works half the week in a primary school and the other half in a secondary school in the center of Granada. I interviewed her in the primary school and did my observations at the secondary schol since this is my research target group. The school was very clean. All students were getting things ready to celebrate "Comida de Convivencia" or Getting Along Feast as a activity to celebrate International Women's Day. Students prepared thematic stands with food and most stands feature an iconic woman from Spain and other places in the world or promoted awareness of gender equality. The school has a bilingual program in place, and they were hosting two teachers from Germany. The also have exchange students who benefit from the same services de school offers recent immigrants. This school has one of the 12 teachers trained by the regional profesional development provider to serve a "Aula Temporal de Adaptaciones Linguisticas" (ATAL). It a classroom where the teacher employs L2 strategies. Students attend this class until they have acquired a certain level of proficiency in the second language to attend the mainstearm classroom.

Granada 4

I conducted my fieldwork at this site after Easter holidays. Teachers greet each other and students courteously in the hallways. Some teachers have brought sweets to share with colleguees. There is high percentange of immigrant students; primarily of Latinamerican and Northen Africa origin; and the school is decribed as compensatoty due to low academic performance and discipline challenges. Some students have been grouped with students from

other classes because there is a group of students and teachers in a student exchange in Ireland. The school was very big and I was not allowed to walk around the school. I waited most of the time on a coach in the reception area until the teachers I was going to observe would come and take me to their classrooms.

Participants

The participants agreed to participate in this study. They were selected using criterion-based sampling strategies. The primary purpose behind the selection of participants for this study was to identify teachers who would represent information-rich cases for an in-depth study of the phenomenon in question (Patton, 2002), namely actual classroom practices in response to needs of sociocultural diversity . In selecting the study participants, the critical criterion was that the teachers in this study serve students in the compulsory cycle of secondary school. More specifically, I wanted to work with teachers serving students in the cycle of higher incidence of droput.

The amount of participants is closely related to their availabilty. I have also classified the participants in this study as Primary and Secondary. Primary participants are those who were available for classroom observations as well as being interviewed. Thus, I was able to examine their competences more in depht asked the questions about things observed in class, their personal reflections,their professional qualifications, and their values and beliefs. Secondary particpants, are those teachers who were willing to open their classroom doors for observation, but did not want to be interviewed; however, some provided very valuable data through informal conversations. Moreover, secondary participants include school directors and profesional development provider from the regional education service center (Ufficio Scolastico Regionale) who provided input in regards to school rules, resources and other meaningful information that will be further discussed in chapter 4. Primary participants in this study were assigned a number.

For example, T1, is teacher one and will be accompanied by the school were they serve students; T1/V1, is teacher one at the first school site described in this chapter.

Italian Participants

I contacted five "istituti scolastici" or school districts in Vicenza, three of them replied. Only one accepted. One rejected the request expressing they had too many activities in place at the moment, one director answer the questions I have scripted for interviews for directors but denied access to school without any reason and the other two schools did not replied despite a few attempts.

Several calls were made to the regional "ufficio scolastico" (Education Service Center). The first time the secretary asked me if I was calling to file a complain. Then, after I explained the purpose of my phone call, he asked to send my interview questions so that the director could have the answers during the interview. I did and waited for the phone call. I never heard back. I called again and I was told the director would have call me, but that never happened.

There were nine primary participants in Italy and twenty four secondary participants. Of those twenty four, twenty two are teachers and support teachers and two are school directors.

Teacher 1 (T1) is 34 year-old substituting Maths teacher. She has been a teacher for three years. Every year in a different school since still consider a "precaria" or teacher without a fixed contract. She holds a degree in Maths. She has taken a certifcation exam and a one year intership in teaching. Her only experience working abroad was observing a primary school lesson in Germany for two moths as part a European Mobilty project. Teacher 2 (T2) is 70. He teaches technology and started as a music teacher when he was 22. He has a degree in architecture. He has a studio and works as an architech as well. He travels abroad due to his work as an architech

and states he has self taught English, French, Spanish and some German language. He is in "ruolo," or contract teacher, which means that he has had greater job security. Teacher 3 (T3) is her fourties. She is a support teacher. With a degree in Language Arts, she holds teaching certification in Language Arts and support. She has more than ten years of teaching experience and a fixed contact as a a support teacher. She has studied English at the British Counseil of Rome. She is from Rome. Teacher 4 (T4) is 50 and teaches language arts since 1991. She was a support teacher for many years and was a volunteer in a commmunity for children with handicap or problems with their families. She still colaborates with a cooperative of suc nature. She holds a degree in Padogogy and conclude her studies in a vocational secondary school in Pedagogy. Teacher reports speaking a little English. Teacher 5 (T5) is 60 years old, holds a degree in Mathematics, and has been a teacher for 35 years. She has a fixed contract for teaching Maths and Science and has been at the same school for 30 years. She has no teaching experience abroad, and speaks English. She also claims that the only experience she has has with sociocultural diversity is some professional development opportunities. Teachers 6 and 7 (T6 and T7) are two support teachers. Both have nine years of teaching experience. T6 has always been a support teacher and does not hold a University degree, but he graduated from Music conservatory and a Art teaching habilitation and is currently getting his support teacher habilitation. He does not have a fixed contract, but hopes that with this new habilitation he will get it. He has been in the same school for all nine years despite the fact he does not have a fixed contract. T7 has a fixed contract but has only been in the current school one year. She has asked to be transferred the year before. She also has a Art teaching habilitation since she completed the Academy of Arts. She was an art teacher for four years and the last five years she has been a support teacher. Neither one speaks other languages or have any work experience abroad. Teacher 8 (T8) is 35 years old and has a fixed contract as a language arts teacher. She has been a teacher for seven years at the same school. Before teaching, T8 did her civil service and then work in an association on

intercultural projects for nursery and high schools. T8 says she attended many professional development trainings during her civil service and while working at the association she completed a Master in teaching Italian as L2. She holds a degree in Language Arts and completed specialization school for teaching. Teacher 9 (T9) is the last primary participnat in Italy. She is 43, with twenty years of teaching experience and the last eight years at that school, She holds a degree in Language Arts teaching and the first years she was a support teacher; then work a in middle school as a literacy teacher for recent immigrant students.

The secondary participants include teachers of all disciplines including Spanish and English as Foreign Language, Physical Education, Music, Religion Education, History and Geography and Art. It also includes the director of the school district, and a director of another school district who agreed to be interview, but did not allowed me to observed classrooms or interview teachers at any of the middle schools within the school disctrict.

Spanish Participants

I contacted three schools in Spain and all three acepted to be part of the study. The fourth school was suggested by one of the teachers. In this fieldwork, there were 8 primary participants and 9 secondary ones. These secondary participants include English as L2, Language Arts, and Maths teachers, a school psychology intern and a regional education service center director. Teacher 1 (T1) is a 46 years old. She has never worked in a school with more sociocultural diversity than the school where she iscurrently serving. She states she always always interest in issues related to interculturality and took some course through UNED (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia in Madrid) and CEP. She holds a degree in Geography and History and a Specialization in Ancient History and Prehistory. She has a B2 level in English and currently serves in the schools' bilingual program. Also, she took a course in England to learn CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) strategies. Teacher 2 (T2) is also 46. She is the

Biology teacher. She has been a teacher for 8 years and 5 at the current school. The first three years she worked in Almeria[10]. T2 has a PhD in Natural Sciences. She was a visiting professor for three months in England. She admits not to have formal training on intercultural education, but has attended some trainings with CEP and has read the Guidelines that the "Junta de Andalucia" (Regional government) has available. She is currently taking an online course at University of Oregon on" Learn Effective Approaches to English Language Teaching." She has a B2 in English language and is getting ready to take the C1 examination, and is also a serving the bilingual program. Teacher 3 (T3) is 40. She is a homeroom and Maths teacher. She has been a teacher for 10 years and 3 the last three in the current school. She states that she has had students of Roma, Indian, Arabic and chinese origin in some the schools where sshe has worked. She has taken many courses on living along and conflict resolution methodology. She holds a degree in Maths and Specialization in methodology. Teacher 4 (T4) is 31. She is a Maths teacher with a year and a few months of experience. She used to tutor students at home. On the previous year she was substituting teachers in a small town in Granada. The school was a "compensatory" school as well where she work mostly with "gitanos" or Roma students. She has a B2 in English and serves the school's bilingual program. She holds a degree in Maths and a DEA[11] (Diploma of Advanced Studies). Teacher 5 (T5) is 38 years old. She is a primary school teacher, but works in secondary school to supprto students performing below grade level. She has been teaching for 15 years. She began her teaching career working in a compensatoty school in a marginal town in Almeria at age 23. For three years she was in several marginal towns in that province. She had students with many learning challenges, Roma and other etnicities. She has a degree in Therapeutic Pedagogy and a Special education teacher habilitation. She took courses while in

10 This province is a very important geographical area in Spain, because, as a result of a policy of intensification in the agricultural production undertaken 15 years ago, farms increased in size and greenhouses were progressively settled. Employers have a high demand of labour, which is exclusively covered by immigrants who mostly work without a work-permit. This is also one of the regions where immigrants are having more and more problems to be integrated into society. In addition, this is one of the most controversial areas of Spain, where the hardest episode of racism took place in Spain (Agrela, 2002).

11 The DEA was a one-year stand-alone research degree which included bibliography and other grounding work for PhD research

Almeria on intercultural education and strategies to teach students who are blind and deaf. Teacher 6 (T6) is a 50 year olf ATAL teacher. She has been teaching for 30 years and for 7 at the current school. She is trying to go to a teacher exchange program in Canada. Also, she works in a NGO on projects for youth on intercultural dialogue, intercultural awareness, inclusion and other topics related to intercultural education. She attended the University 30 years ago, but never got her degree. She speaks French and German (B2 level) and a little bit of English. Teacher 7 (T7) is 53 years old. She has a degree in Phylosophy. She teaches several subjects including Ethics and Civics in compusoltory levels and other subjects in the second cycle of secondary school. She also coordinates staff development at the school. The school started this department this year to diagnose functioning and staff development needs of the school. She has teaching experience in Almeria in a area on high percentage of immigration. There was a 70% of immigrant students. T7 has been teaching for 24 years and 8 years at the current school. She has a B2 in English language and serves the bilingual program. She explains she attended trainings on interculturality and at the current school she coordinated a project with Erasmus and conducted a research with students regarding employment for immigrant students.

Important distinctions exist between participant teachers in Italy and those from Spain in terms of their teacher education, the types of teacher knowledge they possess, their beliefs about learners from diverse sociocultural background and their teaching contexts at the time of the classroom observations. These distinctions allow for a broader perspective on the classroom practices that can be considered by researchers and practitioners working in similar environments. The distinctions between these two groups of teachers will be explored at greater length throughout discussions in this dissertation, however it is worth noting here that while there are teachers who have been teaching for decades and some for only a few years, the number of years they have each been teaching has not been a relevant variable. The differences between

their teaching contexts originally manifested in class size and setting, teacher autonomy, level of supervision, and the extent of teacher training prior to contact with students.

We will continue to get to know each participant better as we delve deeper into the relationships and tensions that make up their activity systems at their schools in which they operate as the subject.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously over the course of two years. The multiple sources of data for this study include observations, interviews and documents. The teachers continued with their existing teaching schedules and did not have to adjust their teaching in any way.

Observation

The goals for the observations in this etnographic study included describing the phenomenon in its natural setting and understanding the phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants (Hatch, 2002). According to Bondioli (2007), observations are not immediate acts, but intellectual process that call for reflection (p.7).I observed middle school classes, compiled field notes and memos about the classroom activity (e.g., teacher behaviors, student behaviors, interactions, materials, topics, etc.) that contributed to a deeper understanding of the teachers' practices. I was a nonparticipant observer, thereby taking no role in the class beyond observer. Additionally, I followed up on my field notes with the teachers to clarify questions that arose during my observations in order to ensure accurate representations of the phenomenon prior to analysis. My notes consisted of thorough descriptions of everything that I observed in the classroom, including but not limited to instructional practices, teaching strategies, student behaviors, and material selection. I paid particular attention to elements of instruction related to

key competences areas for diversity published by the Council of Europe (see appendix 1), but I was also drawn to include information about student-student interactions and the students' ability to 'do school.' The distinctive feature of observation as a research process is that it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally ocurring social situations taking place *in situ* rather than relying on second-hand accounts (Cohen, Manion, Morrisson, 2011). Alongside my descriptive notes were memos made to myself during the observations that included potential themes for observational data units as guided by activity theory, questions to ask the teachers after observation and issues I wanted to investigate further with relation to instruction or teacher preparation and development. For each participant, observations ended when I felt that I had reached a point of saturation with the data (i.e., observations seemed to be reflecting prior observations and no critical new information was forthcoming). This point came at around four lessons with four different classes four classroom observation hours.

- Interview

The interview script in this study was developed using key competences areas for teachers which enable them to engage with socio-cultural diversity in the classroom and in school community (see appendix 2). Tuckman (1972), describes interviews as 'by providing access to what is "inside a person's head,"it makes it possible to measure what aperson knows (Knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences) and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs). Throughout and following the period of observation, I interviewed the teachers to understand what informed their classroom practice and to confirm the hunches that I had during the observation period. I also spent time getting a sense of their feelings about the school and national policy, the context, their teacher knowledge, and their educational backgrounds in terms of their formal teacher education programs. The scheduled interviews were semistructured, and the spontaneous interviews were informal conversations that arose naturally

following observations. The interviews aimed to investigate the research questions by exploring decisions made by the teachers in the class , and determining which challenges they identified in their practice within this context in terms of knowledge and understanding, communication and relationships, and management and teaching. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed me to influence the general direction with some guiding questions, but I maintained flexibility to add follow-up questions to the participants' responses and to allow for elaborate conversational responses from the participants (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The early interviews focused on teachers' backgrounds, training experiences, and insights about teaching socio cultural diversity. Interview questions were initially informed by the observations, allowing for a deeper consideration of themes that emerged in the observation field notes during the on-going analysis. As relationships and tensions emerged in the activity system, interview questions began to address them in order to determine how the teachers perceived them and what they considered appropriate measures to target the tensions.

Documents

Documents were analyzed to give further information about teachers' training and their classroom practices. From the classroom context, the documents included materials used by the teacher for instructional and assessment purposes. I also reviewed catalogues of professional develoment available to teachers at the regional education service center. A review of national policy and legal frameworks was done to identify any structural barrier that place a burden upon teacher education or to support teacher in responding effectively to diversity. The most important documents for the study were textbooks, worksheets, teacher resource books in staff room and library which followed up on classroom observations, explored their beliefs about teaching to students from diverse sociocultural backgrounds, attempted to gauge their awareness of certain contradictions in the activity system and probed them for initiatives that would address certain tensions that I uncovered.

Data Analysis

As noted above, data analysis happened concurrently with data collection throughout the course of the study. Given that data collection could go on for as long as the teachers provide classes to observe, data collection ended when the on-going analysis indicated that new categories or themes ceased to emerge (Merriam, 2009). The observational data (field notes) were initially coded to target instructional practices that focused on communication and relationships , classroom management and use of materials. Additionally, I coded observations of students' behaviors to keep track of instances of 'doing school' effectively or poorly. These codes allowed me to take stock of what I was seeing in the classroom; however, the general activity theoretical coding that targeted components of the activity system and highlighted central themes as represented by contradictions in each situation were the codes that informed the majority of the analysis (Merriam, 2009). The semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated from Italian or Spanish into English by me, allowing for deeper interactions with the data. As with the observational data, the interview data was organized into categories based on competences for engaging with diversity clusters and uncovered through the activity theoretical analysis of contradictions within the activity systems. Finally, the classroom documents were considered for referred to when reflecting upon the teachers' classroom practices. I did so in the same fashion as with the interview and observation data as guided by activity theory.

Data was analyzed using the constant-comparative analysis (Merriam, 2009), allowing for analysis both within each contexts (participating schools in Vicenza and Granada) and all cases throughout the study. This allowed me to consider case-specific data with relation to the particular activity system under investigation while also allowing me to explore trends that existed across activity systems. While within-case analysis provided rich insights into each activity system, the power in the findings from this study came from the cross-case analysis, which allowed me to make some broader generalizations about teacher practice and professional

learning based on similar findings in each case (Yin, 2003). I coded the data using traditional methods of marking and notation making with colored pencils, pens and highlighters. Unlike a statistical analysis running numbers, this analysis required the production of rich insights from social and cultural contexts versed in social theory such as the one used in this research. I decided not to use rating scales I had created to record the frequency teacher resort to a certain competence to respond to students needs a since I would have rate teachers based on different situations they have encountered. The analysis asked me to seak for some mentoring from anthropology and sociology expert.

Trustworthiness

In this section, I will discuss the efforts made to ensure the trustworthiness or rigor of this study. Trustworthiness is a measure in qualitative research that speaks the conventional notions of validity and reliability of research. Trustworthiness underscores that the study results are sound and the methods for arriving at those results encompass rigor and quality. Qualitative researchers traditionally spend a healthy amount of time writing about their choice of paradigm both descriptively and defensively. This practice is a reflection of the history of tension between practitioners of quantitative and qualitative modes of inquiry, the latter being considered less scientific in postpositivist circles, although I would argue that this sentiment is shifting in some fields with the continued output of qualitative research that maintains high standards. In an insightful article on quality and trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry, Sue Morrow (2005) argues eloquently for qualitative researchers to consider embracing criteria for trustworthiness in research that align best with the paradigm within which they are working. She notes that there are certain standards for trustworthiness that transcend paradigm, such as "… sufficiency of and immersion in the data, attention to subjectivity and reflexivity, adequacy of data, and issues related to interpretation and presentation" (p. 250).

However, she also states, "As long as qualitative researchers are apologetic for our unique frames of reference and standards of goodness, we perpetuate an attitude on the part of postpositivist researchers that we are not quite rigorous enough and that what we do is not "real science" (p.252). Eventually, qualitative researchers will feel confident about diverging from the tradition of justifying our approaches and move toward one of simply describing them. In this dissertation, however, I take a slightly more conservative approach in discussing the ways in which I ensured trustworthiness in this study. I highlight the criteria that are specific to the interpretivist paradigm of this study and the ways in which they added to the trustworthiness and more importantly, the social impact of this study.

Most qualitative researchers employ a set of "parallel criteria" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000), which loosely aligns with the quantitative standards for quality such that internal validity is said to correspond to credibility, external validity to transferability, reliability to dependability, and objectivity to confirmability. The value in these parallel criteria is two-fold but not without criticism. First, these criteria help to bridge the gap between qualitative and quantitative research traditions in that it makes qualitative research more acceptable in realms where quantitative research and postpositivist paradigms represent the dominant modes of inquiry (Morrow, 2005). Also, the practices in place to ensure that the parallel criteria are met do inherently promote rigor in the research and incorporate qualities that should be inherent in all research as noted above (Morrow, 2005).

Criticism for the use of parallel criteria comes to light when we consider what defines qualitative research, especially within a constructivist/ interpretivist paradigm. The nature of this paradigm is such that the participants and the researcher are working together to make sense of the multiple realities that they create and negotiate throughout the research process. Additionally, these realities are informed by the culture and context of the situation being explored, as well as the relationships formed among individuals involved in the study. For these reasons, satisfying

criteria such as confirmability presents a challenge. Nonetheless, I have addressed trustworthiness in this study by concurrently considering the parallel criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability alongside another set of criteria considered more relevant to interpretivist paradigms.

This unique set of corresponding criteria includes fairness and four authenticities:

ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln, 1995; Morrow, 2005). *Fairness* ensures that measures are taken to invite participant input on the researcher's interpretations and to create a space wherein their voices can be heard throughout the study. *Ontological authenticity* follows up on the fairness criteria in that it ensures that these constructions by the participants are expanded upon, giving both the researcher and the participants the opportunity to further negotiate understanding and perspectives while making sense of the multiple realities being explored. *Educative authenticity* gives the participants the chance to better understand the constructions of other participants and the researcher. Given the transformational nature of this study, *catalytic authenticity* is of particular importance as it highlights the action that is promoted by the research. By extension, the *tactical authenticity* speaks to the act of putting things in motion to motivate change as a result of the research process. In the next several paragraphs, I will describe how I have addressed all of the above criteria to the best of my ability in order to ensure trustworthiness in this study.

Credibility or believability of qualitative research is reached when the phenomena under study is clearly identified and described in detail. Credibility in this study was achieved in many ways throughout this study. In designing the research, I made certain to incorporate multiple sources of data, which is referred to as a triangulation of data sources in quantitative inquiry. In this study, the use of interviews, observations, and documents provided sufficient data for a holistic view of the phenomena at different points in time and from various perspectives. I was

able to compare interview data from multiple participants from two diferent cultural settings and compare this to the observational data to better inform my interpretations. Additionally, I addressed credibility through prolonged engagement with the participants and the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Given the ethnographic nature of this study, I spent more than 100 observation hours in different classrooms and additionally spent several hours speaking with the participants informally before and after observations and formally during our semi-structured interview sessions. There were also numerous opportunities to communicate over the course of this study during carpulling to and from school and during coffee breaks. With regard to the data, I spent many hours listening to recorded interviews, transcribing the interviews, translating them, coding observational data and the interviews and revisiting the data over and over. In addition to my prolonged engagement with the participants and the data, I kept a researcher journal, in which I tracked the progress of the study and noted emerging insights and burning questions to follow up on with my participants and colleagues. I also consulted on a regular basis with my two advisors in Italy, my advisor in Spain and anthropologist, Francesca Gobbo , which allow me to process my research, explore the method, problem solve, and keep me on track. Finally, and most importantly in this type of research, I have made a concerted effort to include rich descriptions of the participants, their experiences with the phenomena and the context of this inquiry.

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings in the study will be useful to readers working in similar contexts or to researchers investigating similar questions. Qualitative research is particularly challenged in meeting the criteria of transferability because sample sizes are often small, multiple realities are acknowledged, and the values of the researcher are inseparable from the inquiry process. However, striving to ensure trustworthiness is still paramount, and I have made great efforts to address this criterion through rich descriptions of the study, participants, and context. These rich descriptions allow other researchers and practitioners to determine if what I have uncovered is relevant to their particular contexts. I have also been very explicit about my

position as the researcher, my background, and my biases, all of which may impact my interpretations in this study.

The ability of researchers to replicate a study speaks to the reliability criterion of quantitative studies and can be addressed by the parallel *dependability* criterion in qualitative inquiry. While replicability is rarely the objective when designing a qualitative study within the interpretivist paradigm, ensuring dependability is crucial. According to Morrow, the key to addressing dependability lies in the audit trail maintained by the researcher. The audit trail is "a detailed chronology of research activities and processes; influences on the data collection and analysis emerging themes, categories, or models; and analytic memos" (Morrow, 2005, p. 252). I provided a clear account of the data collection and analysis methods, and throughout the course of the study, I carefully managed the data. I also tracked the progress of this study in my researcher journal. Marshall and Rossman (2011) further note that ensuring dependability requires that the researcher is transparent in extrapolating how and why certain changes in the design of the study take place as related to increased understanding of the phenomenon through analysis and prolonged engagement with the data. In response to this, I have noted in several places throughout this dissertation when changes to my design or plan came to pass, such as deciding not to use a rating scale to generate quantitative data. All data, including field notes, high quality audio files and transcribed interviews, along with my journal have been available for review by my peers, advisors and colleagues during this process.

The last of the parallel criteria is *confirmability*, which speaks to the concept of objectivity with the study. The measures taken to address dependability above, namely the audit trail, is also a means to address confirmability. In addition to the audit trail, I conducted member checks that followed up with my participants to confirm or contest my findings. I conferred with them to make sure that my interpretations were fair and representative of their experiences. I also

discussed some of my emerging findings with other teachers of a similar population in search of alternative explanations or experiences. Along these same lines, I read numerous publications from within the field to locate additional evidence to support my insights about the identified contradictions. Qualitative research within the interpretivist paradigm is inherently subjective, so I have done my best to own my biases and lay them bare in this study. However, in this study my role is action-oriented and is ultimately aimed at a reconstruction of the phenomenon through meaning-making and initiating expansive learning cycles with the participants. In this way, I am exerting control in this study not through my distance and objectivity but through "fostering emancipation, democracy, and community empowerment and of redressing power imbalances" to give voice to the teachers (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 118).

The extended constructions of validity include fairness, ontological authenticity, educational authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity. I will address them here to bring them into the qualitative research dialogue and show their role in promoting rigor in qualitative studies.

Fairness brings the balance to a study and demands that efforts are made to incorporate "all stakeholder views, perspectives, values, claims, concerns, and voices" in order to "prevent marginalization, to act affirmatively with respect to inclusion, and to act with energy to ensure that all voices in the inquiry effort had a chance to be represented" (Lincoln, et al., 2011, p. 122). In this study, many of the perspectives beyond those of the teachers were included, though often collected indirectly. For example, some insights about the realities faced by administrators or regional education service centers assessors were reported through first hand conversations . I have included some information from interviews and informal conversations I had with administrators and assessors in both cultural settings, to shed light on some of the contradictions. Additionally, my employment as a English language reader and workshop in middle schools in Vicenza have broadened my perspective such that I can bring additional experiences and

perspectives into the conversation. The principle of activity theory that outlines the multivoicedness of the framework promotes the inclusion of multiple perspectives and therefore aligns nicely with the fairness construction. My proposal to expand on the present study by taking an activity theoretical perspective on an entire activity system from the perspective of administration and another from that of the learners and their families suggests that additional fairness could be implemented in the present study (see limitations and future directions for this study in Chapter 6).

Ontological and educative authenticities are two constructions that compliment the fairness (and credibility) criteria in that by ensuring that participants are involved in the negotiation of understanding at two levels. Ontological assumptions address the nature of reality and in qualitative research paradigms; reality is noted to be something that is created by the social actors that live that reality. In other words, reality is relative and there is no one, true reality. In the case of *ontological authenticity*, participants have the opportunity to weigh in on the interpretations of the researcher with relation to their perspectives, while at the same time allowing for the researcher to articulate his or her standpoint and represent the multiple realities being represented. *Educative authenticity* gives the participants the chance to consider the multiple perspectives presented by others with whom they interact, including that of the researcher. In the present study, efforts were made to disclose the challenges faced by the entities that presented contradictions in the teachers' activity systems through top-down, teacher-excluded decision-making. Additionally, by inviting the participants to contribute their ideas for impacting change on the system, they were able to ponder the possibilities given the realities and perspectives of other stakeholders.

Catalytic and tactical authenticities align with two activity theoretical principles related to the role of contradictions and the possibility of expansive learning. *Catalytic authenticity* refers to the ability for research to promote action by participants as a result of the research process or

the findings. In this study, the catalyst for action lies in the contradictions that will be highlighted and the desire of those involved to address them in some productive, progressive way. *Tactical authenticity* inextricably ties the researcher to this transformation by urging involvement at the level of training participants on how to be social and political actors (Lincoln, et al., 2011). In the case of the present study, the training might involve facilitating the participants and other individuals in the activity system as they grapple with the discovered tensions and develop ways to address them as a community of practice.

Researcher Positionality

My involvement in this study was fluid and ultimately, I played an active role within the activity systems of some of the participants who seak for my help to improve their classroom practice. This role evolved, however, and my active involvement only occurred toward the end of the study as we began to collectively address the tensions we uncovered in the activity system. My earlier role during the classroom observation hours was one of a nonparticipant observer. Early interaction and convesations were more formal with participants, but they eventually became more friendly and comfortable. In some cases; particularly some participants in Italy I perceived a feeling of mistrust toward researchers, or perhaps the 'Ivory Tower' in general. Conversations during which they were given opportunity to voice their concerns and truly be heard in some cases created a relationship of mutual understanding and support. In other cases there was a refusal to procede with the interview. In some cases, there was an initial power differential due to the fact that I some particpants admitted not to have pedagogical background and did not feel confident to discuss about teacher practices. This shifted as we spent more time talking and expressing my understanding of the challenges teachers are faced with in the classrooms. In interviews with the participants our conversations moved naturally around the

topics we were discussing relevant to this study, but they also included casual conversations about our lives and our upcoming plans, both professionally and personally.

Through these conversations and discoveries of the contradictions in the activity systems, it was impossible for me to maintain a neutral, removed position with regard to their lived experiences. I did not plan to become inexorably involved beyond this study in the development of these professionals, but it is in my nature to seek empowerment opportunities when presented with even the slightest evidence of oppression or lack of voice. Fortunately, the choice of activity theory as the conceptual framework for this study strongly supports moving from simply identifying tensions to proactively transforming activity systems to address the tensions through expansive learning. Additionally, work within the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm warrants my involvement as a 'passionate participant' and 'facilitator of multivoice reconstruction' (Lincoln, et al., 2011). This involvement of inquirers in any action related to the study has led to criticism from positivist and postpositivist research practitioners who see action as destabilizing to the objectivity of the study (Lincoln, et al., 2011); however, I have already noted that my involvement is supported by my choice of activity theory as an analytical, catalytic tool and further promoted by the decision to conduct research within a constructivist paradigm.

As I am a former teacher educator with experience working as a special populations director in the US and with particular interest in training teachers to work with students from diverse sociocultural backgrounds, especially struggling learners, I had to make sure to be careful about my biases related to instructional techniques and strategies within this context, such that they did not misled my interpretations about why the participants made the choices they did in class. Fortunately, my formal training in dynamic psychology provided me with the capacity to use observation tecniques effectively without bias. In addition, any time I had a question, I simply asked them what informed certain decisions. My son is a middle school student in Vicenza who came to Italy in third grade in primary school. Unsatisfied with certain aspects of

the school I wanted to learn further. With this in mind, I had to make sure not to disfavor schools in Italy in my interpretations or let my personal experience color my analysis of either participant's classroom practice.

Coming into this study I had very clear assumptions about what competences a teacher engaging with diversity should have. The reasons for my assumptions and biases are based in my own classroom teaching experience with students at this level, but perhaps more significantly, in my experiences as a cooperating teacher in this context and as a teacher educator with a focus on this context. After working for five years training teachers to work with these learners, I have a set of criteria in mind for what makes an effective teacher in this context. For some teachers, diversity produces significant fear and they see themselves as needing to acquire highly specific and narrow skills in order to address the perceived deficits among their students and manage diversity in their classrooms (Allan, 2012). The Council of Europe identifies educators at all levels as playing an "essential role" (Council of Europe, 2008b p.32). The role places obligations on teachers to promote tolerance and understanding among diverse populations and to challenge negative. The Policies and Practices for Socio-cultural Diversity project commenced in 2006 and was coordinated by the Council of Europe. It was undertaken in three phases. A survey carried out in phase found that in many parts of Europe initial teacher education did not adequately prepare beginning teachers with the diversity which they met in their classroom (Council of Europe, 2008a). Given these beliefs and knowing the teacher education background of most Italian teachers in this study, it was my assumption that they might not possess certain practical knowledge for teaching students coming from diverse socio-cultural contexts . I had to keep this in mind as I observed the classes, interviewed the teachers and analyzed the data.

An additional and related assumption that I had was that the challenges faced by the teachers in this study would primarily reflect difficulty in identifying and applying strategies for teaching effectively, adapting existing materials effectively and assessing learners in the

classroom. These assumptions were based on my personal challenges in the classroom and my conversations with teachers in this context. I made sure these assumptions were not projected onto their practices so that I could remain open to the reality of their experiences. My limited experience teaching in the Italian context resulted in my having to clarify many issues related to policy and power throughout the course of this study. In this endeavor, my colleagues and beginning teacher were my strongest source of information about the politics of the instructional setting and issues related to power that I had only read about in articles and briefs, but had yet to experience in my own practice.

Ethical Considerations

In keeping with the code of ethics in academic research, I followed the procedures of the European University Institute. In doing so, I ensured that this study would uphold respect for persons, beneficence and justice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The participants were invited to participate based on adequate information that I provided them about the study. Given the qualitative, exploratory nature of this study, there was no way to predict the exact direction of the research, however, participants were provided with the purpose for the study, my original research questions and a general overview of the intended methods for data collection and analysis.

I made a commitment to avoid harm to my participants, and even as this study became slightly politicized, I ensured that no harmful testimonies would emerge to affect their professional lives. I guaranteed anonymity to the best of my ability, although as noted by Christians (2011), "watertight confidentiality has proved to be impossible. Pseudonyms and disguised locations are often recognized by insiders" (p. 66). I acknowledge that there is the possibility that individuals who know about this study will be able to identify the individuals in the study and knowing this, I have taken extra consideration when giving voice to their

experiences, making my interpretations and reporting my findings. In terms of justice, the study aimed to be fair and free of burden to the participants. Meeting times and locations were always negotiated such that the participants could decide when and where we would meet and for how long. The benefits of the study have already begun to emerge and impact the participants in positive ways. The continued benefits of the study are yet to be seen, but as a researcher, teachers and school administratosr, we are continuing to move forward into the expansive learning cycles.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXT METHODS OF ANALYSIS

In this chapter the stage for the discussion of findings of this study are set. The objective of this chapter is three-fold. First, I extrapolate the components of each activity system in the study and provide a graphical representation of each. Next, I present the data analysis in greater detail to show how the activity theoretical themes used in used in the reflection process resulted in particular interpretative category data sets . Finally, I provide a preview of the predominant tensions and relationships that impact each activity system. These will be discussed in more depth in chapter 5.

Modeling the Activity Systems

As noted in chapter 2, Modeling an activity system requires identifying what constitutes the various components in the activity system. Those components include subjects, community, object and desired outcomes, rules, division of labor and tools. Using Mwanza's Eight-Step

Model (see chapter 2), I have searched each activity system to clearly delineate the activity itself, teaching students from diverse sociocultural contexts, and to evidence the components of the activity system. I will discuss the constitution of the components in the two activity systems, Vicenza and Granada.

Given that classroom observations in each country were conducted in different sites, their activity systems also have distinct features. However, there are enough similarities that I will discuss them together, noting distinct features for clarification throughout the discussion.Following the analysis of the two activity systems, I will represent the activity systems visually using Engeström's triangles.

Subject

The activity system under investigation schools in Vicenza . This activity system is being considered from the teachers perspective, thereby deeming the subject of the activity system.

Teacher Narratives In Vicenza

The experience of the teaching staff ranges from 2-3 years up until 38 years.

The first cluster of questions during the interviews tackled the knowledge and understanding competences. These competences are considered to be prerequisites, enabling teachers to be sensitive to and respond effectively to diversity. These competences are based on a view of knowledge as reflective, critical and in a process of development(Council of Europe, 2009).

Teachers' answers from the very informed teacher who is up-to-date with the law and the community services available to address sociocultural issues,

" I always value literacy at this school .... both with Article nine and project rainbow[12] ... so I do literacy [Teacher 3 in School 1 *(T3/S1)]*

to the novice teacher who is overwhelmed and lives with the uncertainty of where will her next teaching assignment will be;

" not much before starting teaching... I used to tutor students at home... but students with learning difficulties only at school... I have discovered a new world (T1/S2)

and the experienced teachers who highlight in their narratives that their only professional experience working with sociocultural diversity are trainings at a very basic level.

"... the trainings we've had, were never up to the standards; therefore, if we want to do something; basically, we need to figure out on our own. The training can give you some input, but at a very low level." (T5/S3)

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12 Project rainbow is an Italian literacy school for foreigners. It is aimed at people who recently arrived in Italy. It is a place of cultural exchange, the classes are not rigidly structured, but are open classes with a duration that varies depending on the needs of the member .The goal is to provide the knowledge of the language as an essential tool for integration into society and working Italian language.

but there is also that teacher that considers that the interventions, modifications or adaptations needed to allow students from different sociocultural backgrounds to access the general instructional curriculum should be done by an expert teacher,

"no, because in middle school we now have support teachers... we collaborate but each teacher has his/her own role." (T2/S2)

The second cluster of questions refers to communication and relationship competences are at the heart of teachers' engagement with and response to diversity. It is where teachers create classroom and school conditions that are inclusive and where they build and sustain relationships based on trust and mutual respect. Parental involvement in the education of their children is important to children's success at school (Eurydice, 2009). However, many immigrant parents are likely to encounter difficulties of a linguistic or cultural nature and measures to ensure that information is passed on efficiently between schools and immigrant families, specifically by using languages other than those used at school, are therefore essential.

Most teachers in this study agree that having a different language origin can interfere with communication with students as well as with their parents. They also express this could have a negative effect on school performance

"... immigrant parents rarely come to school. No matter how many times you give them an appointment for a parent -teacher conference, these parents never come... those that come, are maybe those that are integrated, but if they come is because trhey speak Italian."(T1/S1)

Some teachers are a little bit more resourceful,

"I always try the physical contact to commmunicate... I've asked the foreign language teachers to help me or the cultural mediator, which we do not have at the moment, but we are in the process to get one since there are more models with more languages. However, I've also tried using simple words, basic, empathic language... because the school's burocratic language is too complex... I can imagine is not easy for immigrant parents to enter an Italian school." (T4/S2)

In their face to face contact with students, parents and parents from different socio-cultural backgrounds, teachers have to find ways of initiating positive communication. This requires being creative. In educational settings, one of the very important areas for success is the students' language skills in the language of instruction.

The last cluster of questions deals with management and teaching. This competence area involves actions by teachers to create a supportive, caring and safe learning environment, positive social interaction and active engagement in learning. The main aim is to build up a cooperative, non-discriminatory organizational culture which realizes optimally the idea of living and learning together. (Council of Europe, 2009).

In this area, most teacher demonstrated a lack of knowledge of intructional approaches methods or tecniques to plan activities making modifications to ensure that it is sensitive and responsive to diversity.

To the questions what approaches, strategies and competences do you use to address different aspects of diversity, most teachers responded they rely of the support teacher to do that. However, all three support teachers interviewed reported to be support teachers only to earn the points needed to get a fixed music teaching assignment since all three were music majors. They, on the other hand reported they try to do their best, but most of the time pull students out of the classroom and work on the same thing the rest of the class does.

" you need specific competences that us regular education teacher do not posses, we have to work next to the support teacher or specialized teacher,... (T5/S3)

"I will need a support teacher ...maybe prepared on the field... then dipending on the disability, I will try to work with a more competent person. Also, regarding a student with a diferent linguistic origin, firts I will need to see whether he/she speaks Italian well.Many times the school underestimates these things and has us take course for literacy that in my opinion are not enough. Therefore, students never recuperate.."(T1/S1)

One teacher said:

"my subject is tecnology which is a universal language, so there is no cultural diversity there."(T2/S2)

One teacher mentioned using cooperative learning as an approach, however, when asked to explain how did that look in her classroom her answer was:

" everyone is part of the game and serves as a leader" (T3/S1)

Careful planning will enable the teacher to establish a learning environment which is participatory and inclusive and this means both ensuring that all students are engaged and

that no-one is left out (Barton, 1997). Teachers can draw on the many sources of student diversity within their classrooms, for example relating to ethnicity, disability or gender, in undertaking lesson planning.

Teacher Narratives in Granada

In Granada, teachers' perceive and understand their community as an activity system in decline;

"the economic crisis has greatly influenced the circumstances for students and the possibilities we have as teachers. There is a general impoverishment, lack of resources. Ideally, we would have more human resources to meet the needs of students' diversity ... there have been policy changes, but from my perspective not a clear commitment on teacher training to take on these policy changes. There's are not any teacher competences evaluations, no projects nor assignments; in other words, it's on paper. There are interesting proposals for methodological changes, but they are not implemented (T7/S4)."

"In general, one can hardly believe the issue of professional development training because you can not send mixed messages, you can not ask teachers to take care of the training and at the same time increase their workload and the number of students . You can not ask teachers to deal with diversity found in the classroom and new methodological approaches and at the same time reducing salary, time to plan, then you take an overload. Also as there are fewer young teachers, there aren't novice teachers and teachers are becoming older. The changes I have found, in the last five years, it's that we used to have 10 more teachers. They were teachers on a fixed contract, young, attenttive, eager; like you, with energy and originality and an innovative spirit. Us, older teachers, also seek to invent, but it take us a while. What happened? Well, to cut resources for education, we lost ten teachers and the possibility of making any changes, how can we ask for innovation, you know? It is impossible, we do what we can, but it's very difficult (T7/S4)."

T1/S1 when referring to the activity system, she states:

"It is a reflection of society, when society affects us, it is impossible to walk into something more positive, there are loops along social stages, and now we seem to be coming out of one but society is very complex."

"People do not know how to listen, if you listen is not much more complicated to learn. Then, teaching is not so difficult. It is a matter of personal values and ability to listen"

Other teachers believe that it is in each teacher to utilize the resources they have available to be able to respond to the needs of sociocultural diversity present in their activity system;

"...resources... Teachers need to motivate students who are engaged all day with their mobile phone and have no interest in anything; so we have to be continuously innovating.....the TEC (Tecnologias de la Educación y Comunicación) or Education and Commmunication Technology those have helped me a lot...if you have and use the smartboard with internet connection because students... Man, I, in my math classes.... Mathematics is seen as something very abstract ,and then I always try to put an image and students are motivated (T4/S1)."

"...primarily the methodology, precisely to deal with diversity, not only of cultures, but learning rates, including student motivation. It is essential, I work a lot with technology to find students motivation. There is a concept I try to increasingly put into practice in my classes ... to teach using games(T2/S1)."

Some teachers believe that the measures to respond to sociocultural diversity at national level don't stay long enough in place to verify their efficacy, and there are very low expectations for student achievement;

"Each government changes rules. Some improve them and some get things worse, but the real problem is that things do not stay long enough to assess efficiency (T6/S3)."

"...but I think it (the school system) has changed a lot...we live in a country where every four years they are changing the law. Therefore now, we reward students for very little efford, and there are many students in class who do not want to work, they do want not do anything and still go on to the next grade level and that can not be. Students who actually work are not been rewarded (T4/S4)."

"Here we always complain that education has never been taken seriously. Then, it's a political football being thrown between the two political parties in Spain, and when a government comes, first thing they do is close the reform that the previous party proposed. Then it is impossible to see if it is really working because there is not enough time to see if it is effective. Unfortunately much of it depends on the political party that governs how you're going to find education from the bottom, even academic guidelines (T1/S1)."

The new reform, that is being implemented at the moment, will take us back in some of these issues because funds will be limited specially to the most repressed areas, and it will be difficult to pull people off the streets. Equality teaching is going to lose a lot. With the new reform, you can't deal with diversity, everything is geared to standarized testing. But these tests do not take into account factors that we are struggling for nor recognizes the little achievements we get here. Then, education in the years I've been working've seen much improved;however, I see more and more we go a little further back. As well as increasingly, we take the teaching professionals less seriously. Our role is increasingly discredited, we are not asked for anything even now with the new reforms. We lose specialists, so that what is intended is to spend less funds and thus have fewer teachers.

In terms of communicating and establishing collaborative relationships with other members of the activity system, some teachers express having experienced difficulties reaching out to certain members;

"I don't have any communication channels with parents coming from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds" and *"there aren't any teachers in this school coming from a diverse sociocultural background on our staff, not that I know of (T7/S4)."*

"It is hard, this is already the first step, the first difficulty we've had this year, because it has been very difficult. It is true that teachers let me in their classroom and most teachers I've known for six years. These teachers already know me and I know them too, there is some confidence, yet there still some friction and sometimes we have disagreements, but overall it is good (T5/S2)."

"Defensive, parents-students, student- parents, student-teacher, teacher-student , even among teachers and students, we are all on the defensive, administration, management team, teaching team, all defensive like we were always in an attack (T3/S1)."

when teachers were asked if there were teachers at their school coming from diverse sociocultural background, perhaps sharing the same ethnicity of the "minority students" which in some schools was majority;

" (about the mediators)... they are volunteers, but they get paid. One of them I'm not sure, but I think she is mixed with gypsy and the other one is not gypsy (T2/S1)."

" I don't think we have teachers from diverse sociocultural origins. There are a lot of us teachers, but I dont think so. We have teachers from various zones in Spain, right? I know we have someone from the North of Spain (T4/S1)."

"yes, there was a gypsy secretary. We also had gypsy students doing their practicum for their Master's degree. Carolina, the physical education teacher lives in this town and knows the area very well. She very involved (T3/S1)."

"Not that I know of (T7/S4)."

"yes, we have a Brazilian girl who has studied pschology and sociology, and she has worked a lot with the kids. A few years ago we had a girl giving some workshops with the children in compensatory classes. She was very important because she was gypsy and had studied in this school, so she was like a role model for students(T1/S1)."

Some others also express that the community now needs new professional figures to ease conflicts;

"yes;in fact, I have a friend who has taken a course to be a mediator. And I think this is a new and super interesting figure who generally mediates conflicts. And in the case of a school or institute, it can be implemented very well because there may be conflict perhaps between a teacher and a student or two students and the mediator seems very interesting. They are experts in solving such conflicts (T4/S1)."

"No, in this institute, the role of counselor is essential, in other schools where there is not so much diversity, they might not need it as much. This is important , if we had one more counselour even more students would be supported or if there were more support staff for students with academic gaps, with a deficiency in the environment. There more roles in other schools where they are not as necessary (T3/S1)."

"There is a person at our school to help us with communicating. They are mediators, and they are the ones primarily when we have a problem, as they are those who are responsible for going to the families homes. When absentee children do not show up, we notify missing classes. There are families that are not normal, so to speak, have no schedule, whether they are working maybe at seven is when they are at home. The mediators live in students' town. They are two ladies and they are in charge of visiting during the hours parents or the grandparents are home to talk to them, try to find a solution(T2/S2).

and state that they believe communicating with respect is being lost,

"treating each other with respect. I think that 's missing...I think that teachers themselves have to adapt, right? to this change. Before calling you "usted" (formal form of 'you'? It was always "usted"/ "don" or mister ... I remember some of my teachers were Don Pedro . Now, it's clear that is unthinkable . It is unthinkable (T4/S1)."

 or that there is not enough time to communicate;

"Lack of time, no gaps in school hours, there are mornings you walk in first time in the morning and finish teaching at the end of the day. You have not had a hole at all. And what helps is professional motivation (T3/S1)."

"Excessive working hours in the classroom, twenty hours a week with children and three guards, the department meeting , the meeting for parent tutoring; then each one of us have something different, for example I now have the bilingual department meeting or if you are the head of a department or ECCP (head of department) you need to attend those meetings. At the end, there are twenty-five hours we spent in the center. So there isn't really any time to meet and be in peace (T1/S1)."

In terms of management and teaching, the participants in Granada express that they need to utilize new approaches and methodologies to deal with the challenges they are faced with in the classroom;

"Adapt to the abilities of each, develop individualized instruction. What happens now is very difficult, but that is the great challenge and we must try by all means." and "*I think the most important is to learn to work in groups and not to ever stop learning, I continue with professional development, and understand education as something very broad. You have to adapt to the student, the student does need to adapt to you, to adapt the reality that you're finding (T1/S1)."*

"I like to use CLIL[13] methodology that allows you to do activities that reach different abilities, besides the sequences are tiered, and this is what I always try to do. I start with the lowest tier and rise in depth and then ensure that there are activities, some for example based in reading comprehension and more to manipulate, to create, so that the activities can be adapted to the students' difficulties(T1/S1)."

"I can give a lecture, but I do not like that style of learning. I want to ask them questions and have them answer them to me because that means they are thinking(T3/S1)."

"Well, but I can focus on all students equally but not all students get the same message because some students struggle more. I can focus on those students and organize them by groups,right? Depending on the abilities they have. Of course I can find each student's level, ...Man, I first have to explain the same thing several times, I walk around the class, I try to look at students' faces. Those I know have more difficulty, I work with them one on one. I have a student who is in the bilingual class who struggles a lot. One hour a week I pull her out of the class, and I take her with me and give her individual tutoring so she can keep up in class. I can't give this individualize attention during the regular clas; but I talk to her, and I think she is very happy because at least she can attend to the lesson now(T4/S1)."

Some teachers incorporate other members of the activity system when tension appear;

"Family meetings, for example with the Chinese girl, her parents did not know Spanish very well and a neighbor helped us. So I contactthis neighbor frequently, twice each month we call each other, and they are helping me. When this is not the case, then I rely on support teachers here at the center, and for example, if I need to work on a topic then I provide the support teachers some information on the pace that we have in class. The support teachers do some scaffolding so that the students can then follow me in class, collaboration(T2/S2)."

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13 CLIL stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning. It refers to teaching subjects such as science, history and geography to students through a foreign language

They reveal the sources where they look for materials or "tools" for teaching;

"I seek for material everywhere and can decide whether to use it or not because I read it before and because I know my students. I know if I can use them or not (T6/S3)."It is already been ten years so I've practically taught all levels. Each class is different, you always have to search for resources. I search the Internet, there are plenty of math programs that I use , different publishers. I make a mixture. The textbook helps the little ones a lot. It depends on the reality of the class if the class calls for it, you know you have to search more, if the class does not, you must guide people, then you need more publishers (T3/S1)."

Some of the teachers' remarks in regards to how do the assess if the outcomes or goals have been reached are the following:

"As far as possible, I try that assessment notes do not depend solely on exams, so there are many activities apart from the test, at least 40% of the final grade depends on activities and work. In that sense, everyone does what he or she can and what matches their abilities. Leave the student freedom to express their world the way they see it (T7/S4)."

"It is not the same for me, a four from a person who has a lot of difficulties;in other words,someone who does not have a minute to dedicate to their studies, the eldest of seven children, two girls in my homeroom class, twelve years and are constantly with seven other children. When those students get a four is as if getting a ten for another person. You have to pull forward and not look back, help this student not give in or throw in the towel. It's frustrating to get a four. To me is not a numerical value, but a personal evolution where the whole process has broken into knowledge and where that person has arrived. And if I have to help with work I do (T3/S1)."

"The assessment that I make is different. I appreciate the effort, each one's progress is different because all my students are different (T6/S3)."

Community

The community comprised in Vicenza's activity system, in terms of who shares interest in the object (student learning) and outcomes (goals) of the activity system, includes the teacher-participants in this study, the learners, other teachers in the school sites, the school administration, regional education service center, families of the learners and the greater community that comes into contact with these learners in society. The most active community members in this activity system are the teachers and the learners, however, the impact of interactions (or lack thereof) with other members of this community prove to be important in this study. The school administration includes members of the secretarial staff in the front office who get in immediate contact with students and parents. It also includes the school directors who make decisions about staffing (although very limited), scheduling, programming and professional development. The support teachers also play a role in this activity system, as will be revealed in the next chapter, as do other stakeholders concerned with the appropriate education for students coming from diverse sociocultural backgrounds. Other teachers in the schools sites play a large role in this activity system, and in greater ways you might expect. The role of teachers in this activity system will be uncovered in the next chapter.

Granada's activity system entails a different community make-up. Similar to Vicenza, Granada's community includes the learners, their families and the greater community with which the learners interact in society. Moreover, there is an administration more involved in the didatics of the school. As discussed in Chapter 3, Granada's system differs due to its reliance on critical partnerships. As such, there are community members in Granada that do not exist in Vicenza. These include University students and researchers from various departments who interact daily

with the participants's learners, and an on-site student counselour or school psychologist. In many of the correspondences (interviews, informal conversations and emails) with many of the participants, their reflections on community predominantly reflect their experiences where the tensions seem more prevalent. These participants's experiences were rather insulated, and teachers had a great deal of autonomy; however, there were some tensions, which I will discuss from this context as well.

Object and Outcomes

The object (objective) for each activity system can be labeled as teachers' competences to deal with sociocultural diversity. The outcomes vary slightly from one activity system to the next as they are shaped by the teachers' beliefs about what their learners' goals are, what their aim should be according to their respective programs, and, ultimately, what they think will best serve their learners. Underlying both activity systems is a desire to guarante equal access to opportunities to all students and to empower learners through increased access to quality education regardless of their sociocultural background.

In Vicenza teachers say what they need in order to provide equal opportunities to all students;

"training on those topics because unfortunately in Italy training for teachers is almost zero ... very little training in memoradums coming out of the ministry ... but they are very vague memoradums... you can not be trained with a memoradums and so we need courses, but we need to pay for our won training ... if one wants or if one does not want to do it ... well and all is very uncertain (T8/S1)."

"This is it, not having the competences to deal with students with disabilities or with students special needs ... I do not know ... surely it takes a path of professional development to be able to manage ...(T1/S1)."

"a personal approach ... try to establish a much more personal relationship with these guys ... just to hear them, to make them feel more secure and more attentive despite their difficulties (T2/S2)."

"I think young people around 40-45 ... 30 should have skills if they have studied seriously ... I think maybe in some people, humanity is missing ... to stop and to think about their humanity is missing ... to get a bit down from their pedestal because no one is on a pedestal. We can put people we love on a pedestal because to us their precious (T3/S1)."

"Meanwhile, knowledge...you have to know what disability your kid has, then knowledge of the pathology and knowledge of the law because sometimes these guys have rights that are not known neither by the parent nor by the school, and then the determination in bringing a student forward even if having to face huge walls ... but I think it's just the knowledge that is necessary ... if this boy is deaf and mute , and this kid has down syndrome; and so this is missing. I have to try to cover up what is lacking more knowledge of the law because I see that parents will come to say things that make me understand that they don't have the capacity to understand what their child has, or what they are entitled to...not because they know. When you work with children with physical problems , you have "to lose your face" and get dirty with them (T4/S2)."

In the case of Granada, the teachers say regarding what they need to provide equal opportunities for students to be successful;

"it all depends on the students' needs (T6/S3)."

" social ability, time availability and profesional motivation. Aside from the knowledge acquired previously (T3/S1)."

First , understand that although students in a sense are always the same, because adolescence is adolescence , but students have changed dramatically . Then, the relationship between teacher and student must be more democratic , not an authoritarian scheme. I think the teacher has to be more of a leader than a person with authority and many of the problems that exist between the teacher and student have to do with this. I don't have too much trouble; in fact, I think I had one, and it was in the cafeteria , so it wasn't either in class. So the key is to try to have a more democratic relationship, and worry about student 's personal circumstances , which are important to them . And then also , know how to use ICT , be capable of dialogue, try to innovate, change the scheme a little, because students live overstimulated and classes are rather boring (T7/S4)."

"to be eager to work because motivation, motivation, to learn to disconnect when we leave school. At our school, things are complicated. Learn to disconnect and learn to enjoy. Even thoughour classesare complicated learn to enjoy (T4/S1)."

"Patience of course, but I still say that the teacher's spark is innovation and personalized attention to students (T2/S1)."

Rules

Each activity system has its own set of rules, with Granada having a more structured set of explicit rules in place than Vicenza. However, in both activity systems there are explicit and implicit rules that are adhered to in varying degrees by members of each community. *Explicit* rules include the assessment procedures that are in place in each activity system. At both Vicenza and Granada, these procedures are guided by policies regarding standarized assessment (e.g.,

Prove INVALSI), the number of hours of instruction during the week e.g., in Italy 30 hours a week, (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, 2009) and rules related to administration (e.g., their role in hiring staff). There are additional explicit rules in Granada set forth for school psychologists, counselors and other specialists in middle schools that impact the participants' activity system; however, they were not a factor in Vicenza.These will be addressed in the discussion on tensions between teachers and other interacting activity systems.

Implicit rules at both Vicenza and Granada address scheduling, attendance and classroom conventions; however, the learners in Vicenza more closely adhere to these rules than learners in Granada. The more 'formal' setting in Vicenza somehow lends itself to better rule enforcement. In addition, the role of homework provides incentive to the students in the form of certain benefits for better grades and for attendance. The Granada on the other hand has a supportive, but casual environment, that strives to build trust and selfreliance in students. There is no incentives in place for homework; however, they do benefit from being part of a learning communities where students feel some sense of loyalty and belonging to the group (*membership*) that drive their desire to keep working and helping others, also the things that the participants do must affect what happens in the community; that means, an active and not just a reactive performance.

Division of Labor

The division of labor in each activity system has both horizontal and vertical dimensions. These dimensions address the distribution of power within the activity system, which can be horizontal as between teachers working at the same level within the system or vertical, as between the administration that makes many of the rules and policies and the teachers who are impacted by these decisions. Within the classroom, the division of labor can be considered from

the perspective of instructional strategy choice, which shapes the amount of control the teachers assume during classroom activities. In each activity system, the prevalence for teacher-centered instructional strategies assigns most of the control to the teacher; nevertheless, attempts were made within the Granada activity system to increase collaborative learning, at times resulting in tensions that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Tools

The component of tools within each activity system presents the greatest complexity for this model. There are both cognitive and physical tools within each activity system. The cognitive tools include the teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes that shape their decision making in the classroom. Language use also serves as a cultural artifact in each activity system and the teachers' use of language is considered in light of their practical knowledge and classroom practices. Physical tools include the handouts, texts, materials, visuals and ICT realia such smartboard and overhead projector that the teachers use to mediate their instruction, as well as in-class assessment practices and choice of learning activities. Teacher education and professional learning opportunities also serve as important tools in each activity system, guiding teachers' decision-making processes and providing resources for personal and professional development. The students' background knowledge also presented itself as a tool that some teachers used to mediate their approach to 'doing school'.

Availability of and access to tools are addressed in the next chapter.

<center>*Representing the Activity Systems*</center>

Using Engeström's triangles, Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 below provide a graphical representation of each activity system to demonstrate the context for teachers' practice.
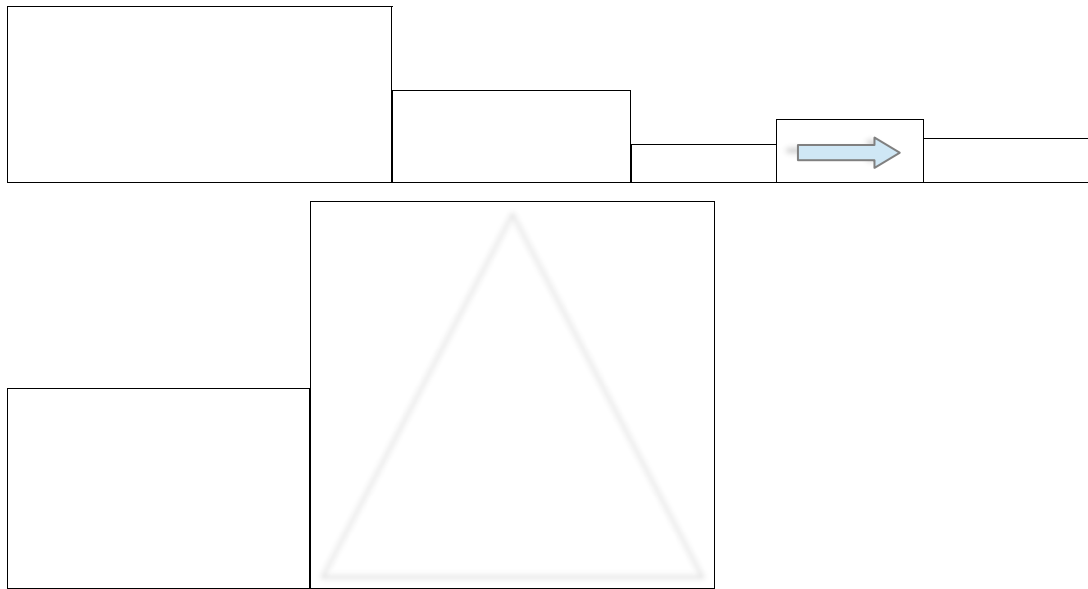
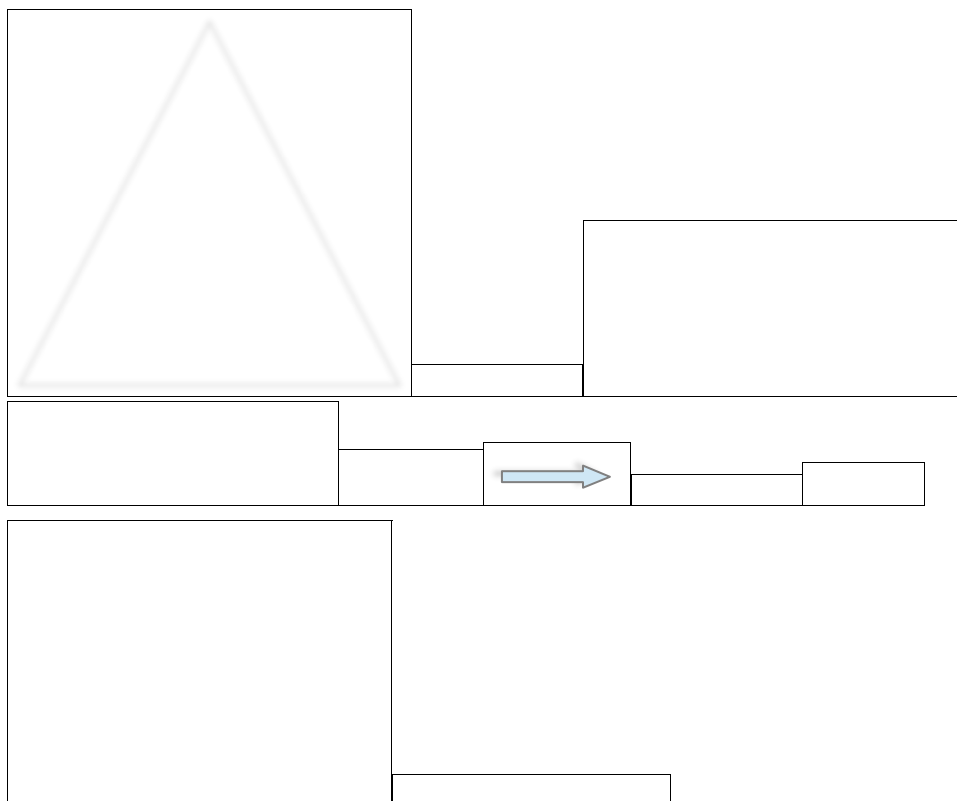<center>122</center>

Figure 5.1: Vicenza's activity system

Figure 5.2: Granada's activity system

In exploring the two activity systems, I uncovered several noteworthy relationships between components of each activity system. Some of the interactions between components in these relationships presented tensions that will be highlighted and discussed at length as contradictions in the activity system. Isolating the contradictions occurred through immersion in the data to discover themes as per the methodology set forth by Mwanza (2001). I decomposed the activity system into subactivity units for closer analysis, allowing me to target relationships between an actor (e.g., subject or community) and the object as mediated by tools, rules and divisions of labor. In decomposing the activity system, I discovered that most of the contradictions were secondary (i.e., between two components of the activity system). There were far fewer primary contradictions, represented as inner contradictions within one component of the activity system. Those that I did isolate centered on tensions between teachers' knowledge and/or beliefs and their actual classroom practices.

As far as tertiary and quaternary contradictions are concerned, they do exist and are largely impactful on the teachers' activity systems. Exploring a situation using the third generation of activity theory allows for a broad analysis, not only within one activity system but also within and between two interacting activity systems. In this study, I have uncovered tensions between teachers and the administration. It was beyond the scope of this dissertation to model and decompose the entire activity system of the administration, which would have required in depth interviews with the administrators and staff. Instead, I will discuss these tensions as they exist between the administration as members of the community component and the object as a secondary contradiction reflected in the experiences of the teachers.

Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the context for the activity systems under analysis in the next chapter. Each activity system has been modeled to provide a complete frame of reference through which to understand the ensuing discussion of relationships and tensions within the systems. The two activity systems are seen from the perspective of middle school teachers as the subjects of the human activity. Various tensions experienced as primary and secondary contradictions are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

EXPLORING RELATIONSHIPS IN THE ACTIVITY SYSTEMS

Uncovering Tensions within Activity System Relationships

While the two activity systems do possess several similarities in terms of the components that exist within each, the relationships between the components are not identical from one system to the next. Relationships between components in one activity system may represent negative tensions or contradictions while in the other activity system, the relationship between the same two components displays no tensions or perhaps, positive tensions. Negative tensions are those that somehow place a strain on the activity system or cause a breakdown within the system. For example, a contradiction between the students' goals in the classroom and the teachers' understanding of those goals could result in the students' needs not being targeted and met. However, given this same contradiction as an example of a positive tension, the teachers' goals for the students' could be more appropriate for the students as they will be informed by her awareness of what the students will need emotionally, physically or academically to function in society and interact with other students in school.

As discussed previously, exploring relationships in the activity system and subsequently identifying contradictions as represented by tensions in those relationships is not a cause for concern or discouragement. In fact, it is only through uncovering these contradictions that we can begin the transformation process through expansive learning and reformulations of activity systems to address the contradictions. I embrace the perspective that uncovering these contradictions is only the beginning and that activating important, progressive changes to the system in response to these tensions is the ultimate goal.

In this chapter, I will explore the relationships within each activity system and disclose the tensions that represent the predominant contradictions existing at each level (e.g., primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary). As discussed in Chapter 3, I initially conducted a within-case analysis for each activity system followed by a macro cross-case analysis to identify similarities and differences between the two in terms of the relationships and tensions present in each. As they are two separate macro activity systems representing the perspectives and lived experiences of unique subjects; participating teachers, they do present distinct contradictions. However, the cross case comparison also reveals that there are several contradictions that exist within both activity systems. Given the interactive nature of my data analysis and the complimentary nature of the findings, I will discuss contradictions within the activity systems together in this section, alternating between the experiences and insights of teachers in Vicenza and in Granada as coherently as possible.

Primary Contradictions

Each activity system displayed contradictions at the primary level within the subject component of the activity system; however, the contradictions were very similar. Most teachers' primary contradictions in Vicenza as well as in Granada exist between their actual classroom practice and their reported classroom practice, and I would argue, between their actual classroom practice and their "desired" classroom practice. I will elaborate on this last point shortly. After collecting data for numerous classroom observation hours, it was apparent that most practices were heavily weighted on teacher-centered approaching instruction from content. In other words, teachers with this teaching style did not seem as concerned with building relationships with their students nor did it seem as important that their students form relationships with other students. These teachers did not required much student participation in class. This contradiction is a weak contradiction in that many of these teachers acknowledge that they tend to focus more on content from the textbook because they have a scolastic program to finish by

the end of the school year but their practical knowledge, which has developed over years of teaching, includes the awareness that contextualizing learning and making it meaningful for learners is important. Some teachers expressed in conversations that they have a program/content to follow and spending time in other things make them loose time. The contradiction, therefore, lies in the fact that most teachers' practical knowledge for teaching students from diverse sociocultural background is still developing, and, in the meantime, teachers are doing the best they can given what they know; however, there is an unmet need in their instruction, which is making the learning meaningful by integrating students' diverse background and input.

Teachers in Vicenza relied rather extensively on their textbooks. Whereas many teachers in Granada used self-made worksheets, Youtube videos, or projected images on smartboards, students from other classes, book club discussions, and student presentations to complement their lessons. I observed in both activity systems that teachers rarely provided differenciated or simplified textbooks or materials despite the fact that there were students who were second language learners or that Italian or Spanish respectively was not their first language, students with dislexia, blind, Autism, ADD , ADHD and a student with severe Mental Retardation. The only ones doing modifications to materials and at times to instruction were the support teachers during the assigned hours. Some texbooks in the schools in Vicenza had a separate edition for Italian language learners. Interestingly, teachers used exclusively the edition that was designed with native speakers in mind, rather than the text for second language learners. Some teachers justified this choice to me in a discussion on materials, telling me that this textbook should be used during the "Literacy" pullout lesson Italian language learners have because it is rather simplified to be used in the mainstream class. Their decisionmaking for text selection reflected their belief that language development should occur in the pullout class and not in the mainstream where students should have enough content language to understand the teacher. Most teachers in subjects such as History, Geography, Science, Religion Education, and Arts in

Vicenza have routines based on reading or having students read pages from the textbook in class and highlight or take notes of main ideas identified by the teacher. Whereas teachers in Granada vary in their routines. Some used worksheets that reinforce previously learned skills, videos to prompt the lesson topic, and some teachers asks students to go to the blackboard to draw things they read about for homework, some other had students do presentations, book club discussions, and some had students from other classrooms present certain topics.

After several observation hours with on-going analysis of the field notes, it became apparent to me that the majority of lessons observed in Vicenza targeted memorization skills with very little attention comprehension, or even higher level thinking skills. Additionally, there were infrequent; at times non existent, oportunities for expansion to the students' real lives. Emphasis on the field of teaching approaches led me to develop a checklist with different teaching approaches for the classroom data to identify which and how often an approach was being addressed. I created a list of teaching approaches to target instruction that focused on

Student-Centered: cooperative learning, relational, mastery, authentic, inquiry based, communicative, integrated, direct, interactive; Student-Centered Constructivist: discovery learning, self-regulated, scaffolding, group investigation, and Teacher-centered: subject matter centered, teacher dominated, disciplinary, indirect, individualistic.

In Vicenza, the contradiction initially arose in discussing about how some teachers say they use strategies to contextualize the learning so that it is more meaningful to the students. The following transcripts from my field notes shows typical routines in class:

VICENZA 1

> **[History lesson: each student has a textbook, pencil case and a notebook They are all prepared to read the text all together and are used to the routine at this point. Students are sitting in rows. When teacher posts questions, there are 4 students who always answer. They are sitting near the teacher. Questions require yes/no answers or to complete teacher statements with one or two**

words. When students are asked to explain something or to relate it to something, their answers are usually wrong]

Teacher: [asks students what was the last page they read on the book]

After students argue about the last page on the book. They come to an agreement and the teacher begin explaining the content on the following pages, "municipalities "

Teacher: We will only study the municipalities in Italy because you are Italian and we live in Italy.[the book also adressed municipalities in Poland and in Germany ; also, not all students in the class are Italian.

Teacher: Who wants to read? [Students raise their hand and the teacher chooses who can read]

[the teacher summarizes what was read and students then write the teacher's summary]

Teacher: When you study all this, you will have to read the text again and the summary.

Meanwhile in another History class,

Teacher: [tells students she will "interrogate" two other students and the rest of the class should remain quietly] Asking questions to students orally is a routine in this class. The teacher uses only this approach for assessing her students.

Students: start talking among eachother while the teacher carries on with questioning the two students. Students are not engaged in any academic task.

Teacher: [after concluding assessing the students, asks students if they did their homework and then carries on with the textbook reading and taking about the Arabic-Muslim Empire) Brava! Bravo! (complementing students for doing the homework, but does not check if the homework is correct). All four immigrant students in the class came to school without homework.

During the class lecture, she refers to Africa as one nation. There are two students from Africa; however, the teacher did not acknowledge their cultural background during the lecture about the Arabic-Muslim Empire. Neither ckecked if their country of origin was part of this empire.

I noticed that one of the four immigrant students in the class had photocopies of the book. The rest of the class had textbooks. Books in secondary school in Italy have to be purchased by the families with an approximate cost of three hundred euros per school year eventhough secondary school is compulsatory until age 16. When I asked the teacher about why that student had only photocopies (where colors of images, flags and other things where black and white), she replied that she asked him to at least make cophies of the book because his family could not afford to purchase the textbooks.

An Art teacher in another school,

Teacher [without any further explaination tells students to make their own interpretation of the painting on one page from their textbook. The photo is very small].

Students: beging to do their work and talk a lot among each other. They are very loud. Some are play making paper planes and throwing them to

other students, some are just talking. Mostly only students sitting close to the teacher are engaged in the task.

Teacher: [sitting at her desk grading work from other students] I'm will come see what you are doing in a minute, you have to finish this work today.

One student: Today? It's too much, and we don't know how to do it.

Teacher: If you stop speaking to each other, you'll have plenty of time [then the teacher calls me from the back of the room to sit next to her. She knows I'm there to do classroom observations on how teachers deal with sociocultural diversity in the classroom.] We have some immigrant students in this class, but they speak Italian well. I think they were born in Italy.

A Religion education class,

Three students: [routinely go to Spanish class as the alternative activity to Religion because they are not Christian]

Teacher: [asks a variety of questions to students to check for understanding. She focuses only on the first chapter of the textbook which is about Christianity or the bible. Other chapters on the book are not reviewed because according to the teacher had nothing to do with Christianity. In April, they are still working on this chapter).

A Language support teacher substituting for the Math teacher;

Teacher: [speaking very loudly] shhhhh I will lower your grades if continue to talk. If you already have a 4 in your grade, you better be quiet. The law is not the same because you (refering to the class) are very quiet with some teachers and not so much with some others.

Students: [in general, they are all speaking. They have nothing to be engaged with. There were no tasks assigned to them for the lesson, so the substitute (a suport teacher) for the Math teacher is just "babysitting" the class for one hour/lesson].

Teacher: If anyone of you continues to talk, I will give the whole class some exercises. [students continue to talk, and she assigns some Math exercises from the textbook]

One student: teacher can I go make photocopies of "so and so" notebook to get what they did when I was absent?

Teacher: no

student: why not?

Teacher: because the school does not have any money to make photocopies. [then the teacher looks at me and rolls her eyes because students asked to reapeat her answer saying they did not understand.
Then, she begins to dictate some tasks to the class]

One student: teacher can you repeat. You are going to fast.

Teacher: that is your problem! If I repeat it, then I will give the whole class five more word-problems. [Since the support teacher is substituting a teacher, the student with DSA[14] is not receiving any support.]

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14 With the acronym DSA means Specific Learning Disorders, also known by the abbreviation F81 in ICD-10 International Classification of the World Health Organization and included in Chapter 315 of the American DSM-IVand counted by the LAW 8 October 2010, n. 170: "New rules of specific disorders of learning in schools" published in Official Gazette No. 244 of 18 October 2010. They are part of the family of specific developmental disorders. It is disorders in learning of some specific skills that do not allow a complete self-sufficiency in learning as difficulties develop on activities that serve for the transmission of culture, such as, for example, reading, writing and / or to account

One student: I can't finish this exercise.

Teacher: go review the formula (geometry formula) to solve it.

Student: I have already done it.

Teacher: do it all and you will see if the asnswer you get is correct.
Go and have a sit.

Students: [joking a lot, students get out of control]

Teacher: [assigns more work to the whole class.]

One student: It's not fair

Teacher: You be quiet, shut up (stai zitto), the Bazuka is in my bag.

Students: [use fault language in Italian] "cazzo" "porca…"

In Music class,

Teacher: [in a very loud voice] Good morning! Some of you will be "interrogated"(students have to play a musical piece from their musictextbook. Students were supposed to learn the piece at home)

Students: [I have observed this same class with other teachers and the disciple quite challeging during music class] play the assigned piece and some stop at moments to talk to other students. Two students play the keyboard instead of the flute, two others don't have the flute. Somestudents just put th e flute closed to their mouths.

Teacher: [addressing me] They have not studied at home as they were supposed. Then, [she talks to a student] Let me borrow your book because I forgot mine. [then, she addresses the whole class] I will call you one at a time to

play in front of me. The rest of you have to be quiet. I will start with the ones who had the best scores in the previous test; but whoever talks, I will call next. [calls out the first name]

Students: [breath in relief because their name was not called]

One student: plays the piece two times because the teacher gives him two chances since he made mistakes.

Teacher: [in Italian " Non ci siamo proprio"] We are not there yet!

In the the analysis of the next field notes, the setting is an Italian language lesson. During this lesson, they are working in groups. The teacher approaches me once in a while in the meantime to give some information in regards to the class dynamics. According to her, she would like to have students work more in groups, but they simply don't know how to behave appropriately during group tasks. She also expressed to me that there is a student from Moldova, that according to her he has been struggling a lot all year. She says, " is a language problem" but she does not understand why because he is from Moldova where they speak a neolatin language. I assumed she was referring to the official language in Moldova which is Romanian. Thus, I asked her if she knows where in Moldova is the student from because he could be from a region where they primary speak a minority language such Ukranian, Russian, or Gagauz(Turkish language). She replied that she did not know where exactly he was from and that she did not know these languages were spoken in Moldova. The teacher stated that it will make a lot of sense he speaks one of these language because he makes lots of orthographic errors in his writing assignments.

Students: [are sitting in groups assigned in the previous lesson]

Teacher: [addressing the whole class] You have 30 minutes to finish this activity

Students:[they have to finish writing a story they have been working on over a month] work in groups

Teacher: [tells one student according to her with DSA certification] Go make photocopies of this (a test)

Two Students (a boy and a girl): beging to argue because they can't agree on details of their story

Teacher: [pulling both desks apart] you're going to work alone because you don't know how to work together

VICENZA 2

This notes are from a History lesson; however, this is the same teacher for other subjects such as Geography and Italian Language. This school does not have smartboards in every class like the other schools. They have strategicly placed smartboards in classrooms where they have students with specific needs. In the case of this classroom, there is a student with severe dyslexia.

Teacher: [comes in the classroom smiling and greeting studentsand the support teacher who is already there with me since the previous lesson with another teacher] We will procee with the lesson on Napoleon's Empire [then she begins to ask them questions orally to which students respond correctly] take notes on everthing you consider important and then you go over them at home. [she the looks at the smartboard that is still on form the previous lesson] Can someone turn this off? You know I won't use it!

One student: [stands up and shuts the computer and the smartboard off as he smiles]

Teacher : [explains to the support teacher what to do with the to students who are certified with DSA]

Support teacher: [pulls the two students out of the classroom to work with them]

Teacher: [continues talking about Napoleon's Empire] I wish I had a map to show where the battle's took place.

One student: teacher we have a map on our book.

Teacher: [seemed like she did not know and she did not have her own textbook. She looked at a student's textbook] yes, look on your textbooks. You have a map there.

After this lesson, students have Italian language, but it is the same teacher. Therefore, towards the end of the hour,

Teacher: Do I still have to "interrogate" (assess) any of you? so I can use part of the next lesson as well.

This is a music school, so a lot of the students play an instrument or sing individually or in choir. This is the school's orchestra lesson. There are three teachers in the room at the beginning and towards the end of it, there are four: keyboard, violin, guitar and percusion. Students from different classes come to this lesson.

Students [get in the classroom talking very loudly, they walk around the room and playing]

Teacher 1: [after about 10 minutes the bells has rang, claps her hands to get students' attention]

Students:[do not respond to the signal]

Teacher 1: [raises her hand]

Students: [still do not respond]

Teacher 1: [in a very loud voice] If I raise my hand, what does that mean? You are all in the last year of middle school. You should know!

Discipline was very hard to maintain during the lesson. The teachers did not seem to have planned this hour. It seem like they are just sharing the space, but each one does his or her own thing.

Teacher 2: [works with students on the keyboard]

Teacher 1: [directs the rest of the class]

Teacher 3 and 4: [discuss what to do]

Students: [get a little bit out of control and start playing what they want with their intruments]

Teacher 1: If you continuo to that I will have do some research on "Klezmer." (is a musical tradition of the Ashkenazi Jews in Europe.) Yes! That is it you will do that.

One student: We can't and we don't want to do it.

Teacher 4: Then, we will "interrogate" you on this.

The next trancript is a regular music lesson, students are preparing for the end of school year concert,

One student: we still don't know how to sing "Sweet Home Alabama" very well. Can we listen and read the lyrics on youtube with the smartboard?

Teacher: no! It takes too long to turn everything on [they have 25 minutes left before the lesson ends]

Students: [do not do anything for the rest of the lesson because another teacher came to ask the music teacher something].

The following transcript is from a Italian language class,

Teacher : [had given the students some topics to choose from during the previous lesson. She is now handing conceptual maps back to the students]

One student's conceptual map:
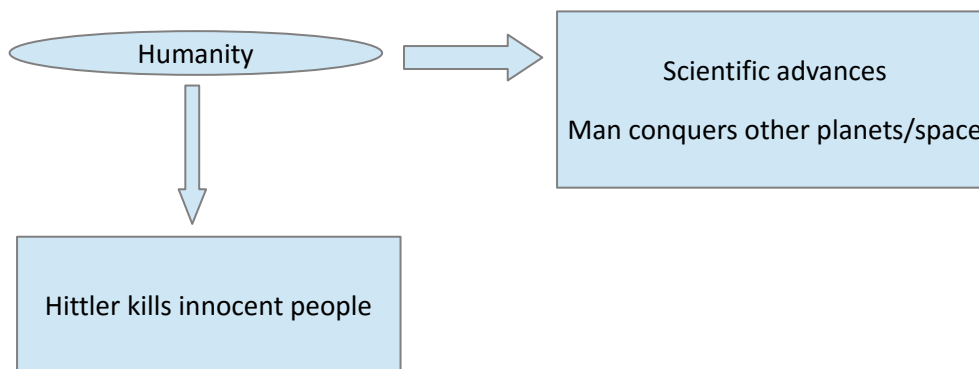
Teacher:I don't like it. Eliminate Hitler and perhaps you can add first man in the moon. Try to use more positive views of Humanity.

Students: [are supposed to write an essay on the topic chosen and based on their conceptual map] They are talking, studying for a French test they are having later that day.

Teacher: [swats her hand on the desk] "Basta cosi, grazie" (This is enough, thanks)

Students: [continue to talk and not work on their essays]

Teacher: [addressing me] students want to let you see how rude they are, "fanno gli stupidini" (they are acting silly)

Some students: begin to write .

Teacher: [Also, hands out some essays students had written before] you have to have your classmate next to you read your essay for feedback. Some of you have to had chosen an easiest topic.[then, she begins to read one essay to show the rest of the class all the errors.] Those of you who had the most errors will write another esayr because you choose the most difficult topic. [Then, she begins to call students individually to talk about their essays]

Students [stop working on their papers and speak very loudly]

Teacher: I'm too tired and if don't care to listen and study;then, why should I care. [After that, the teacher continues talking while students are supposed to correct their essay and ask them questions regarding Grammar rules and punctuation, but students do not respond]

Then, the first hour ends and the same teachers stays to teach History,

Teacher [begins asking the class some questions regarding subject matter from their textbooks]

Students: [seem not to know the answers to the teacher's questions]

Teacher : [poiting to the whole class] Stay on your desks and study. I just want to remind you that on June 14th you have exams (this is an 8th grade class and will take exit exams to be promoted to high school).

Students: [continue to be disruptive]I will start "interrogating you"

Teacher: [begins to "interrogate" students, but when she sees that students are still disruptive because they are not engage in any activity, she begins to explain things form the textbook]

Students: [are drawing, reading other books, coloring, playing with things in their pencil cases, writing on their diaries, cutting out drawings and copying things from other books.

This is an excerpt from Art class,

The teacher approaches me at the beginning of the lesson and tells me than in Italy, art is more the study of the history of art rather than the practical "operative" part of it. She also expressed that despite the fact the book addresses art history worlwide, she always focuses on European art, "classic art" as she described it because she hardly has time to finish European art history as she states. Students went to see the Art Exhibit " Monet" on a field trip to Basilica Palladiana in Vicenza. This exhibit reviews all artist movements around Monet's time.

Students: [come inside the classroom speaking very loud, laughing and playing]

Teacher.[takes a little while to have them to sit arounf 25 minutes] Please take your notebooks because I will dictate some information to you

[teacher dictates some lines from the textbooks that every students in th class already have]

One student: why do we have to write this if we have it on the textbook?

Teacher: because I've asked you to be quiet, and you have not done that so now you are going to work. [after dictation she asks students to draw something "related" to the image from their textbook]

Students: [begin to work on their drawings and to chat a lot. It seems to this point that it is a routine to use white paper pages and coloring pencils for art class]

Teacher: I need your notebook because I need to interrogate you [addressing one student]

Student: I did not bring it

Teacher: well then start any topic we have studied this semester

Student: No, you ask me a question

The rest of the class: [very disruptive]

Teacher: [bangs the fist on the desk] I don't understand why some of you talk [teacher very seldom smiled, speaks very loudly and uses sacarms to students requests]

One student: [trying to wash his hands in the classroom sink] is there soap to wash my hands?

Teacher: [being sarcastic] sure, and a towel and hand lotion... what are you doing?

Student: washing my hands because I am going to study (for another subject)

Teacher: why?

Student: are we not allowed?

Teacher: no

student: but everyone else is doing it

teacher: you can all study if you are at your seat and quiet

another student : [approaches the teacher to ask her a question]

Teacher: [responds very loudly] Basta! L'ho già spiegato (Stop it! I've already explain that)

Student: no, you did not

Teacher: yes, years ago... you need to remember things

The following is a sample routine of English as a foreign language class,

I wait in the class and students begin to start coming in alone. After around 10 minutes, I am alone in the room with the students and I ask them if they know the whereabouts of their teacher.

Students: [replying to my question] don't worry teacher (they address me as teacher) our English teacher is always late to class.

Teacher: [comes in and greets the class in English, then she does a warm up activity (sit down-stand up). The lesson then continues in Italian language. She calls students one by one to return their scored exams] Some of you did a very good job on your test (the test is a photocophy of some exercises from the students' textbook)

Students: [make exams corrects with the teacher]

Teacher: [translates every word in the exam, she is not very proficient in speaking English, but seems very knowleable of Grammar strusctures).

Two students: teacher, we did not take the test because we were absent that day.

Teacher: well, then come here and I will "interrogate" you [teacher gives them statements in Italian and students must translate them into English orally. The sentences the teacher is giving them have conditionals, future tenses, past tenses and the use of prepositions

One student: teacher but I thought the test was about compatatives (like the written test the rest of the class took).

Teacher: well, but we already study this too. [teacher did not count the number of sentences she gave to each student]. She gave both students a failing score eventhough most of their sentences were correct.

Students: [have a frawn on their faces]

One student: I never get a good grade in English!

VICENZA 3

Students are in Italian language class. They are going to the ICT room to do individual research for an assignment. There are only 14 computers working in the room, but the are 19 students. Students share the computers.

Students: [seem very unclear on the instructions] what webpage do we have to access? What information do we need to search for? Do we have to write a paper or a conceptual map?

Teacher: [the site students are supposed to access is not working) since the webpage is down, you are going to do some online Grammar exercises.

Students: [look a little upset and are very disruptive]

One student: [gets up] teacher!

Teacher: Fila! "sit" (an Italian expression usually said to pet animals to make them sit down). If you (to the whole class) continue not to work, you will write 200 times how to behave in the ICT room.

There is a Chinese student in the classroom. She has been in school for the entire school year. She is completely disengaged.

Teacher: [addressing the Chinese student] do you know what are ants?

Chinese student: [nods]

Teacher:[brings a book about animals to student who has been given the Italian name "Giulia"]

Chinese: [chooses the elephant and copies o a piece of paper what is on the book and draws a picture of the elephant].

The chinese student is sharing a computer with a student with Autism. The computer does not work and it is shut down. The student with Autism is reading a text called "Le Formiche, " Ants with exercises to build vocabulary. The teacher tells me that there are other immigrant

students in the class but that she does not know where they are from, but that she knows that some of them have been attending Italian schools for 3-4 years. She also tells me there is a BES[15] students that is yet to be diagnosed and certified.

Meanwhile in a Literature class; the teacher knows I am in this school to do research on teacher practices to respond to sociocultural diversity; therefore before the class starts she tells me there are foreign students in the class, but that she does not know where they are from. She asks the students and finds out there are two students from Serbia and one from Romania (who is absent) and a student whose mother is from Spain. The teacher then says, she does not know how long these students have been in Italy, but she does think that they have not been here too long. She also expressed there is a student with "legge 104" and "legge 170" which corresponds to a student with mental retardation and a student with dyslexia.

> *Teacher: [have the students read a poem projected on the smart board and then collectively analyzed the meaning of the poem. Then, some students begin to be disruptive] Michele! Michele! [teacher calls him out many times eventhough a lot of students are being disruptive]*
>
> *Miguel: my name is Miguel not Michele*
>
> *Teacher: [teacher does not reply and then tells students about Summer assignments] I will give you a list of suggested books to read this Summer. The books address gender differences, violent, strong and adventures for the boys and sensitive, emotive books that girls like.*

15 The expression **Bisogni Educativi Speciali** "Special Educational Needs" (BES) entered into extensive use in Italy after the publication of the Ministerial Directive of the 27 December 2012 "intervention tools for pupils with Special Educational Needs and territorial organization for school inclusion". The Directive itself spells out succinctly the significance: "The area of educational disadvantage is much broader than that explicitly refers to the presence of deficits. In every class, there are students who have a demand for special attention for a variety of reasons: social and cultural disadvantage, specific learning disabilities and / or specific developmental disorders, difficulties arising from the lack of knowledge of the Italian language and culture because they belong to different cultures

One student: [returns from pullout (because he is a second language learner and dyslexic) after they have read the poem that was projected on the smartboard just a few minutes before]for the rest of the lesson the discuss the poem, but this student can not particpate in the discussion because the poem is no longer on projected and students do not have it.

In another History lesson, the teacher informs me that in this class students very commonly get into physical fights. She states that recently a student was excused from school by the doctor for 3 weeks because during a basketball game he was injured on his genitals by another student. Another important piece of nformation the teacher provided me with was that a student refuses to do any work at school. She says he gets good grades, but does not do any assignments in class or any homework. The student's father died 2 years ago in a car accident. Since then, he gets in physical fights very often. When I asked her if the student was getting any support to deal with the lost of his father, she said she did not know, but she did not think so.

Teacher: comes in the class and opens her textbook before greeting students.

Custodian: [is in class with the students because the teacher came in late]

Teacher: [addressing the custodian] Could you please reserve and leave the library open for us?

Custodian: don't worry. No one is ever there.

Teacher:[begins asking questions to students about a chapter from the textbook]

One student: [slepping]

Teacher: wake up! Get your desk and chair and come sit here (next to her)

The text they are discussing is contextualized in Europe and more expecifically European consequences on Italian territory. There is no references to the consequences of these general

events in other countries such as Russia, Germany, Serbia and other countries where some students in this class come from.

In Geography lesson,

Teacher:[in a lesson about European state countries. Today they re discussing Romania]Please don't memorize in which zone it is located. Use cardinal points. Let's take a look at the map on your textbook. Also look at te cardinal points to identify the bordering countries. [Then, she draws pictures on the board to help students understand the formation of coastal lakes with the help of students comments]. What things connect Romania and Italy?

Students:[do not say anything]

Teacher: Immigration, language, adoption of Romanian children by Italian citizens, unemployment, density

Students: [students write on their notebooks]

One student: I went once to Romania for a championship

Teacher: Oh nice! So you know what are we talking about

Another student: [tells teacher the student who is absent is from Romania]

Teacher: Really? Why? Is he Romanian?

In Graphic design and technology lesson,

After the weekend. This is the first lesson. The teachers comes in and immediately tells students they will be interrogated.

One student: Can you show us how to do the spiral?

Teacher: ok [he proceeds to explain and has students do one]

Two students : [give the teacher an assigment that apparently was due a while ago]

Teacher: [accepts the assigments depite the fact they were overdue]

One student from Ghana: [I had observed this student during the pullout literacy class. She was very participative, smiley and enthusiastic. However, in the mainstream class, she hardly ever speaks]

Teacher: [addresses the Ghana student in a very loud, and straight forward tone in the regional dialect language looking at her spiral] Varda che roba! "Look at this thing"

Teacher: [begins interrogating students] then... aha...

One student: [says parts from the textbook verbatium]

Teacher: brava! Bravissima!

Another student (a second language learner): [tries to answer questions with very limited language skills in Italian, recalling certain things form the book]

Teacher: That's not what says on the book. Did you study?

Student: nodds

There is a lot of conflict in this class that at times almost ended in physical fights if it was not for the teacher and other students interfering to break the fight. There is one student from Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa who seem very disturbed emotionally. He continued to say "stop looking at me" or "be quiet" and nobody was looking nor talking. The student also

continue to look at me during the lesson and waived at me. He is diagnosed with a severe cognitive delay. Teacher told students to sit down when they tried to "calm him down" whenever he got too agitated. He also said not to disturb him.

Then, I observed an Italian language teacher with this class and another class. These two classrooms; I was told previously, are "very difficult to handle" because there are many foreign students (5 out 20 in one and 7 out of 19 in the second one)

> *Teacher: you have one more hour to finish the essays you were writing yesterday (students had 2 hours the day before for their essays)*
>
> *Three foreign students: [are pulled out to literacy lesson where they will do the same assigment they started in class]*
>
> *student with cognitive delay diagnosis from Republic of Côte d'Ivoire: [is told to sit next to the teacher to do some exercises and he does. After a while, the whole class moves to another room, and he sits at the back of the room where he does not complete his work. In fact, he never even started]*

The same teacher in the second class,

> *One student: teacher did you finish marking the other essays?*
>
> *Teacher: not yet [teacher uses her cell phone while students are writing their essays, and after a while she begins marking some tests. Then again, she is on the cell phone.] I will collect your finished essays at 11:55*
>
> *Students: [they were told they can use the dictionary to write their essays. There is only one dictionary in class but it is italian dictionary. There are no bilingual dictionaries in class despite the fact there are 7 foreign students out*

of 19, including students from Ghana, Pakistan, Morocco and Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and Moldova. A couple of this students have been in the country for less than three years]

Teacher exchanges foreign students' names in several occasions. At 1:00 p.m., she collects students' papers even though they were supposed to turn them in at 11:55. She calls students "bambini" children although they are 14 years old. Some students attend literacy lessons during Italian class where instruction is simplified and they use a simplified version of the textbook. However, these students still have to write their essays the same way the rest of the class is expect to. One of the students who goes to pull out was born in Italy and has only attended Italian schools. The student's parents are from Morocco; therefore, in Italy citizenship is not determined by place of birth but by having one or both parents who are citizens of the state (Jus sanguinis). For this reason, she still goes to pull out because she is considered a foreign student. There was a foreign student who is repeating grade level. He sits in the back of the room near where I was sitting. The student did not do any work during the whole lesson. He convinced another student to help him write a part of the essay, half a page. The teacher was sitting at her desk the whole time and never saw this happening. She got off her seatt in two occasions remaining behind the chair when discipline got a little bit out of control.

The next trancript depicts a male History teacher in a sixth grade classroom,

Teacher: [is reading through the book and explaining to students what he is reading. He looks mostly at the book and does not see some students have their hands up to comment]Has anybody here ever visited Milan?

Four students: yes

Teacher: did you see the Waterways?

Students: No

Teacher: [continues talking]

One student: [puts his hand up to have a turn to speak]

Teacher: Let me finish talking

The lesson continues the same way. The teacher poses questions that require yes/no answers and when he asks information questions does not provide enough time for students to answer and he reponds the questions himself.

English teacher: [comes in the classroom because she has some hours for support. She pulls one student out and asks him to bring his English language materials. The student will work on English during the History lesson outside the classroom]

Next it is Math lesson in the seventh grade,

Teacher: (addressing the whole class) Do we have Geometry or Arithmetic today?

Students: Geometry

Teacher: What are we doing in Geometry?

Students: we finished building the Geometric house

Teacher: ok, take out your houses so we can review the concepts

Students: [answer to different questions the teacher ask about the house]

Teacher: [switches to Arithmetic even though they are supposed to be doing Geometry]Tell me what exercises did you have to study for today.

One student: [approaches the teacher and shows teacher her book]

Teacher: [emphasizes that some of those exercises will only be reviewed superficially because they are not going to be included on the test. She begins to explain them on the board using the students book because she did not have her own in class]

Students: [begin to ask a lot of questions about the exercises]

Teacher: come to my desk one at the time if you have any questions

Students: [kept coming with many questions]

Teacher: You were supposed to do and study these exercises at home [gets up and begins giving all answers to students since they were not able to do them]

There was a student with dyslexia in class. He was going to remain for a little while in class while the teacher explain the tasks and the English teacher was waiting for him in the pull out classroom. The Math teacher never send the student to the pull out classroom and the English teacher never came to get the student. It was not until the saw eacho other in the teachers' lounge during recess that the Maths teacher said to the English teacher that she had forgotten to send the student. The English teacher said she waited in the classroom the whole time.

In reviewing the observation notes from the classes in Vicenza, it is clear that data shows how content is not made meaningful for students most of the time. The above transcripts are representative of many of the schools' lessons. Teachers employ a lot of dictation, and oral explanations that in many cases are in the regional dialect (Venetian dialect) which is was not very effective for students developing a second language or students with learning difficulties. The majority of the teachers rely exclusively on their textbooks to guide instruction . Most of

these textbooks do not considered all aspects of diversity, and sometimes they are biased. In addition, assessment in the form primary of oral interrogation, is used to enforce discipline in the class, as a punishment or as a "lesson" when teachers come unprepared to class. This is a primary contradiction because it occurs within teachers who are a single component in the activity system. Teacher report the importance of contextualizing content to make meaninful for students and yet their own practices do not reflect that.

My classroom observations did reveal attempts to use strategies to contextualize learning and make it more meaningful for students, but they were limited both in quantity and quality. At times, some teachers attempted to build background knowledge prior to introducing a new topic, or deviated from a dictation by using the smartboard and other resources. In most cases, the level of depth and breadth of the strategies, meaningful instruction is not sufficient. The following samples of classroom data show ways in which teachers attempted to get at student comprehension or activate background knowledge:

This transcript is from a Religion education, but not all students participate because some are not Catholic; 5 students are Hindu and 4 are Orthodox. They are usually pull out but they did not have a teacher available to pull them out. Therefore, they stay in class doing homework quitely in the room. The school also has a policy that if the lesson coincides with the first or last lesson,students can come in late or leave early if they waive to attend this course,

> **Students:[do their small group presentations on work and unemployment]**
>
> **Teacher: [plays a video about Nick Vujicic, a motivational speaker with no arms or legs who has overcome adversity]**

The whole class engages in a discussion about unemployment and the Pope's view on youth unemployment.

> *Teacher:it's ok to go abroad to find a better life, but you should return to Italy to contribute to the growth of this county. Besides, that when you can have a support system from your families when raising a family.*

During Spanish lesson, the teacher decided to use me as a resource for students to practice their language skills. Students were encouraged to ask me questions about my country of origin in Spanish language.

> *Teacher: [first uses the smartboard to help students visualize with a map where is Costa Rica located, then, using their textbooks, the teacher assist them in reviewing possible information questions they could ask me]today we are very look to have someone from another country in our classroom. Having people from other cultures in the classroom enriches our knowledge*

> *Students: [ask me a lot of questions scaffolded by the teacher when they can contruct sentences properly] teacher compliments all students for trying even is their questions are not always correct and sometimes they use Italian words.*

In music class,

> *Teacher. [comes in the room very enthusiastic, smiling and greeting students]*

> *Students: [know what to do. They where to stand because the teacher has already classified them as sopranos, tenors, etc.] sing jazz, and Italian music,*

Although I had observed this same class with different teachers, the disciple challenges observed before are not an issue during music lesson. All students are engaged. In fact, they all participated in a concert a week before, every student had role either playing an instrument or

singing. However, the teacher seems to know very little about the student as individuals other than their competences as music students. The teacher did not know most students' names.

In another room, the same teacher,

His approach to teaching was a little nationalist since he only addresses Italian composers, italian invensions, and Italian actors or characters in movies.

> *Teacher:[has students watch a video about Beethoven] Beethoven despite his disability (deafness), he was a musical genius*
>
> *Students: [seem excited to finish watching this movie they had started watching in the previous lesson]*

Many times during the student are watching. The teachers stops the movie to explain certain things and students take notes. The foreign students are not taking notes,

> *Teacher: Beethoven composed classical romance music. We are learning about Barocco. We will need a video of Bach, but we do not have it.*

Another example is a Maths lesson,

> *Teacher: Can any one tell me what are statistics?*
>
> *Students: [remain quietly]*
>
> *Teacher: [gives students and short explaination and then provides examples] during these days you will hear a lot about statistics because of political elections. [Other examples he explains, young people choice of color (qualitative), home phone calls to interview, ask people who they will vote for, students weight and students' grade average (quantitative). He discussed how they collect the data and how they create the sample)*

Following these teaching moments in Examples one above, the Religion education had the students do class presentations in small groups. Although she focuses exclusively on learning about Christianity and the study of the bible, this teacher has an approach of teaching where student learn Christian values apply to real life situtations. She does not emphasize the religion itself but its values. Therefore, any student could feel part of this lesson despite their religious origin. The teacher also talks during this lesson about how families are a team where everyone has a role just like working in small groups. Moreover, she tells the class that in the future when they work, they might find people they do not like, but they need to learn to work together. They engaged in a class discussion where student had to reflecton the positive and negative aspects of their parents' jobs. Nevertheless, students who are not Catholic(5 Hindi and 4 Orthodox) have waived to participate in this course. They are usually pulled out of the room and go to a class to do homework. However, on the day I observed the lesson, they stayed in class and were asked to work on their homework quietly.

In the second example, the Spanish teacher acknowledges in front of the whole class that having people from other cultures and countries enriches the knowledge of the whole class. In fact, she is originally from Colombia and was adopted by Italian parents when she was little. She encourages students to speak in Spanish and accepts Italian words from students to focus on the meaning rather than the structure. During one classroom observation with the 8th grade, students were very proficent and the class discussion was mostly in Spanish. In the 6th grade class, however, only one student participated for the most part of the lesson.

In a discussion with the teacher, she tells me that it was great to have me in the classroom because students got to use what they have learned in a communicative way. She partially acknowledges the inconsistent and scattered approach that unfolds in the class. Many of her instructional practices are dictated by the textbook she uses. She admits that she usually relies on

the textbook, but she usually does not give enough opportunities to students to use the language skills because sometimes the discipline is difficult. On the contrary, she often spent too little time developing connections between new vocabulary used to their actual meaning or relevance to students' lives.

The third example, is a music lesson in which every student plays the flute and then sing in Italian and in English from African-American, jazz, blues and different rhythms that appeal students interest. Nevertheless, there is no reference to music from the country of origin of minority students who in this class are almost majority. There are students from China, Russia and different parts of Africa. However, the teacher appears to know very little about students in a personal level. He seems to know very well about their music competences. In particular, he seems to know very litlle about foreign students. Every examples he gives in class, he uses an Italian student name "Giuseppe," "Luigi," "Antonio" despite the fact that nearly 50% of the class is of foreign origin. Moreover, he seems to know little about students's challenges. Everytime a student with severe cognitive delay makes mistakes, he stops the whole class and points out to the student that he is making a lot of mistakes.

In addition, he has a nationalist approach to teaching about music, when learning about classical periods of music history, he focuses only on what happened in Italy. The last example is a Maths teacher. He is also the school coordinator. This teacher; during the class observation, appear to have a good grasp of practical knowledge for contextualizing content to make meaninful. He tells students the necesity to have a lesson cycle where he explains, students have guided practice and then individual practice. It seem very rehearsed and student did not respond as if they were used to having this lesson structure. Besides, it's almost the end of the school year. Some did not attend to his explanation and were coloring, talking to one another, did not respond to the questions he posed. When he asked a student from Morocco who disturbed during the

entire lesson, the whole class laughed about the fact that the teacher had asked him a question and the student responded "si ciao," or yeah, right!

Teachers decision making in the class and the competences to teach sociocultural diversity could be mediated by the tool of professional development. Nevertheless, the relationship between the actors in the activity system and the professional development tool presents a great tension in the activity systems that manifests as a secondary contradiction. These will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Some of these teachers would be considered novice teachers, while others would be considered expert teachers if we were determining expertise by years alone (Tsui, 2003); however, experience can be defined more broadly to account for effectiveness.

Teachers and administrators might define experienced teachers as those who have taught for many years, are able to motivate students and hold their attention, know how to manage their classroom effectively and can change course in the middle of a lesson to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities to enhance student learning. (Rodriguez & McKay, 2010, p. 2)

In reality, some teachers have worked for over 25 years whereas some others for less than five, the primary contradiction of acknowleging the importance of contextualizing content to students' life, but not doing it during instruction was observed regardles of the years they have been teaching which complicates being able to identify teachers as novice or as experts. In addition, the majority of the teachers' education has centered on the subject they teach and have very little or no preparation on the didatics of teaching that subject and especially not much preparation on how to teach students coming from diverse sociocultural background. Given this focus in their preparation, most of them demonstrate an exceptional knowledge of their subject. Nonetheless, teaching seems to be concerned with the teacher being the controller of the learning environment. Power and responsibility are held by the teacher and they play the role of

instructor (in the form of lectures) and decision maker (in regards to curriculum content and specific outcomes). It appears as they regard students as having 'knowledge holes' that need to be filled with information.

The primary educational technique observed was simple oral recitation. In an approach where students were ask to sit quietly at their places and listened to one student after another recite the teachers' lesson, until each had been called upon. The teachers' primary activity was assigning and listening to these recitations; students studied and memorized the assignments at home. A test or oral examination is usually given at the end of a unit, and the process, which I call "assignment-study-recitation-test", was repeated. In addition to its overemphasis on verbal answers, reliance on rote memorization (memorization with no effort at understanding the meaning), and disconnected and unrelated assignments, the lesson's content and delivery are considered to be most important and students master knowledge through drill and practice (such as rote learning). In fact, sometimes it seems that during the lessons, content needed not be learned in context. The most common seating arrangement observed during the observations is rows.

GRANADA

Within Granada's activity system, the contradictions are more evident at other levels than primary. However, in very few cases primary contradictions exist between teachers' practical knowledge and their perception of their own practical knowledge. For some teachers in Granada 1, there is a contradiction issue that arises from time to time, which stems from the fact that they have many years in the teaching profession and view themselves as experts. However, time and again during the classroom observations is evident that some teachers lack of competences to

deal with sociocultural diversity present in the classrooms they serve.Therefore, they fail to engage students and to make learning meaningful for students' lives.

One of the teachers, during informal conversations tells me she has been teaching for over 30 years many different school because she stil does not have a fixed contract. She states she has had many different students and she has acquired experienced about diverse students needs.

Students are required to read book because the author will be visting the school soon. Most students do not have the book because they were told to acquire one last minute and because there are limited copies in bookstores. The teacher does not have the book either. Only a couple of students could buy it. One student has e-copy. Therefore, the teacher has already arranged with him to bring it so that they can make copies for the whole class to read it. These are two excerpts from some of her lessons,

> *Teacher: this book is about a student in Yugoslavia. We will have the author visiting soon and I will give you 0,25 on your final grade if you ask the author questions during his visit.*
>
> *Students:[are very excited about the topic of the book, Balkans war]*
>
> *One student: can I explain the Balkan war?*
>
> *Teacher: yes, but without any ideological connotations*
>
> *Student: [seem very knowleable about the war...talked about muslims being exterminated and compared the war to that of URSS]*
>
> *Teacher: [interrumpted him in several occasions and try to cut the student's intervention short]*

The teacher approached me to tell me that this student's mother or father (she is not sure) is from Serbia or Bosnia. She says that during history class she always has to cut this student short because he knows a lot about history; particularly wars, and has many ideologies that always wants to share in class.

Then, the same teacher in another class,

The teacher again tells this class about the book they have to read. Only two students in the class have the book. There are only 11 students in this class because it's a compensatory class. The room is very large with at least 20 extra students' desks and students are sitting in rows. During the lesson, the teacher asks the two students to read a chapter aloud for the whole class and then to lend the book to other students so that everyone can read a chapter or part of a chapter.

One student: [reads the first chapter and skips some pages]

The rest of the class: [since the curtains are closed, students lay their heads down, but the other student with the book notices the student has skipped pages]

Teacher: [did not notice it prior probably because she is trying to get the smartboard going to show students a map of Cuba]. The story is a about a child from the ex Yugoslavia. The student immigrates to this country and to other countries like Cuba. Yugoslavia does not exist anymore. It is now divided into more countries.

Another student: [reading lacks fluently and it is hard to understand the meaning of what is being read because of the pace]

Other students: [Yawn and look sleepy, rest their heads on the desk or lay back on the chair. They do not have a book to follow the reading]

Most students struggle reading fluently. This is an compensatory 8th grade class. They get stucked sounding out a lot of words on the reading. They are reading the same book students in the mainstream class read.

> *Teacher: You have not been reading as much as you are required to read in class [the school has intitutionalized 1 hour a day split in 10-15 minute segments thorughout the day. Teacher justifies that one students' reading lacks fluency because he recently arrived from South America. The student came from Ecuador, a Spanish speaking country]*

The next excerpts are taken from classroom observation of another language teacher in a pullout lesson at the library. During this pullout hour, some students go to Maths, some to language and students not struggling in these two subjects go to French class. Teachers mix all classes from the same level and send their students to the lesson where they require more intervention. Before the lesson starts, the teacher tries to tell me a little bit about the students in the class. She says she is the classroom teacher. She has 26 students. She describes her students coming from diverse sociocultural students as those students coming from another countries (1from Ecuador, 1from Morocco, 1 Romania and 1 is half Roma and something else according to her, but she does not know how long these students have been in Spain).

> *Teacher: take out your readings*

> *Students:[all have different versions of a book which makes it hard to follow*
> *each other's readalouds]*

> *Teacher: [asks one student to read, after a couple of minutes, she interrupts the student] tell me about what you have read [she did not provide enough time for student to respond and she provided and explanation about the part of the book that was read] you [addressing the whole class] have to take notes of what I just said. [After a while, teacher chooses some students to read aloud and aftewards they have to summarize what they have just read. For the last 15 minutes of the lesson, the teacher has to make*

a new sitting chart because other teachers have complained about the disciplince in this class. Since she is the classroom teacher she will create it and tells students to quitely read individually] I will ask you something to see if you read it, and if you don't know, you will have to write the entire chapter on your notebooks. The students look completely uninterested about the topic of this book.

The teacher does not seem to have read the book. Students approach her to ask her questions about vocabulary or the meaning of some passages, she cannot respond to the questions. The teacher never smiled during the lesson and continuosly peak on her watch.

This contradiction within some teachers' in Granada's activity system impact their decision-making in the class, which I will address in the next section on secondary contradictions. In addition, this contradiction reveals that teachers who exemplify good classroom practices and display rich practical knowledge in certain areas of instruction need to be acknowledged and celebrated. Not doing so runs the risk of decreased teachermotivation.

The most hopeful discovery in revealing these primary contradictions in the two activity systems is that they are tensions that can be targeted and reformulated. In each case, transformations can take place by addressing the ways in which teachers mediate their practice through the development of teacher knowledge and the reshaping of beliefs to increase their confidence and motivation. In my discussion on expansive learning cycles (Chapter 6), I will present some guidelines on content based strategies to teach students coming from diverse sociocultural contexts that are currently taking place within European institutions to enhance teacher practical knowleage and to promote critical conversations that will lead to greater teacher development.

Secondary Contradictions

The contradictions at the secondary level are rather extensive and will be discussed as they pertain to the sub-activity units of the larger activity system (Mwanza, 2001; see Chapter 2). This section focuses on secondary contradictions that impact the activity system in noteworthy ways, leaving some of the less overt, nuanced contradictions out of this discussion. In this section, I will address contradictions within these sub-activity units: subject-tools, subject-division of labor, community-tools, community-rules and community-division of labor.

While these are listed as dyads of interacting components in the activity system, it is important to remember that the relationships between two components entail actions directed toward the object (objective, purpose) of the activity system, which is to promote learners' development and equal oportunities for learning and to be successful, by the subject (teachers) through the mediation of another component (rules, tools, division of labor). This is worth noting here, because while all actions in this activity system are directed toward the object, some of the tensions within these relationships hinge on misaligned perceptions about what the object and outcome actually are or what actions should take place toward the object to generate outcomes.

Subject and Community ~ Tools ~ Object

The tools component in each activity system comprises a large number of physical and cognitive mediators that affect the actions of the subject and community toward the object. The tools that emerged as most impactful on the relationships within each system include: teaching materials, teacher knowledge (e.g., practical knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, beliefs), professional development, students' background knowledge and experiences (e.g., in relation to 'doing school') and assessment. They will be discussed in terms of their role in mediating the relationship between the subject and the object as well as that between the community and the object.

Subject ~ Tools ~ Object: Teaching Materials

In both activity systems of this study, there is a tension related to the materials available for teaching this level. They navigate these tensions differently because of the relationships they have with the materials. On the one hand, most teachers from the Granada activity system use a more eclectic approach to material selection in their class, at times moving from one curriculum to another within one class period and regularly within one week. The great majority of teachers in the Vicenza activity system on the other hand tend to adhere more closely to one curriculum consistently for extended periods of time. I attribute the difference between their relationships with materials to the difference in education preparation. On the one hand, teachers is Granada have higher level degrees that include didatics. This resulted in more engaged students.

For the teachers in Vicenza, the impact of limited materials for this level and their inexperience with adaptation means that they spend an extensive amount of time in one text. Moreover, this tension is negative for the students. The prolonged engagement with the primary text results in apparent student lack of interest, discipline challenges and rote memoration of sections of the textbook to take oral examinations and not meaningful learning. For example, despite the fact that almost every classroom observed had a smartboard to project images, videos, to have interactive educational games, guess speakers through teleconferencing and a limitless of more possibilities, most teachers did not use it or the use was very limited, almost like projecting the textbook on the smartboard.

In addition, most teachers in this study employ regional dialect when explaining what was read from the texts which could hinder students' development of academic language necessary to understand scolastic reading, especially for second language learners and students with reading difficulties. Another practice observed was some teachers dictating parts of the textbook or simply asking students to copy sections of their textbooks on their notebooks. The excerpts from

Vicenza's classes that I discussed in the section on primary contradictions are exemplary of most of lessons observed. Teachers begins lessons by asking students what was the last page they have read on the textbook, followed by reading some more pages in class either by the teacher or most of the time by students. Next teachers provide some sort of explaination or summary of what has been read. Finally, they assign some exercises or further study for students to do at home to come to class for an oral examination. A potential downside to this tension between Vicenza teachers in this study who used this methodology and the limited available materials that they utilize is the potential for teachers burn out on the textbooks; students seem very unmotivated, unengaged, and there were lots of discipline challenges.

In the case of teachers in Granada, their teacher preparation provide them with a sense of confidence and comfort when moving between curricula. They seem to make decisions quickly in response to the students' engagement with the materials as well as their beliefs about what they should be learning. In general, they also appear to have a more critical eye when it comes to choice of materials for their students, and this often reflects their attention to student needs. Some teachers expressed ideas for how they would approach designing a text differently, using visuals to depict concepts or evaluating diversity within teaching materials to better serve their learners. A lot of teachers paid close attention to didatic materials such as textbooks, videos, media and even their own interpretation of these to be culturally sensitive. In general, they draw from experiences with students from various backgrounds. In some conversations and during interviews, when talking about materials, some teachers talked about websites they have found with materials; especially teachers in the bilingual program. In addition, some mentioned professional development opportunities where they have learned about tools they can either construct themselves or exchange with other teachers to respond to certain students' needs. Their attention for these details shows their experience and their deep knowledge about what is important for student learning.

Given the obvious value in using a range of teaching approaches and instructional methods for responding to diversity, students from various sociocultural backgrounds were present in both activity systems; however, teacher approaches differ. Almost all teachers in the Vicenza activity system typically control the entire lesson, keeping all students' attention on themsleves and the task at hand. They very often structure lessons in such a way that they are always leading the students through the textbook. As demonstrated in the section on materials, they move from having students read passages on the textbook, but scaffold the activity by providing an explanaition or summary of the reading to students. Then, teachers assign exercises to do at home or further study (rote memoration). Finally, teachers have students take an oral examination, which requires recitation of the textbook.

In Vicenza, teachers in this study used primarily a teacher-centered approach. They are the main authority figure in the teaching/learning process, and it seems as if they viewed students as "empty vessels" whose primary role is to passively receive information (via lectures and direct instruction) with an end goal of testing and assessment. It is the primary role of teachers to pass knowledge and information onto their students. In most lessons observed, teaching and assessment are viewed as two separate entities. There was very little or no effort at all to use assessment to promote and diagnose learning or to emphasize on generating better questions and learning from errors. Also, students lives and experiences are not taken into account to build upon background knowledge. Teachers seem to know very little about students on a personal level; consequently, they come in to view as failing to meet their students needs.

Arguably one of the most influential approaches to effective teaching in recent decades has been Student-Centered. The majority of teacher education courses place a very strong emphasis on cooperative learning, active learning, inquiry-based instruction and student

interaction. Teachers are taught to avoid being the transmitter of knowledge and fight the Atlas Complex that would otherwise have them feeling the weight of the world (class) on their shoulders. Teachers should not view the students as an empty vessel waiting to be filled.

In Granada, most teachers expose a deliberative effort to facilitate learners to achieve learning objectives by creating conducive learning environment using a variety of activities like activity based teaching with effective interactive relations between learners and teachers. Some of the activities observed were book clubs, where students took turns to mediate the book discussions. Students sitting in circles. Moreover, a psychologist was invited to class to discuss a lesson on sex orientation and gender studies. One school had"Convivencia" or Getting Along classroom Some teachers provide students with learning strategies such as mneumonics, students writing poems, teachers' self -made worksheets not copies from a book, students being encouraged to ask questions, teachers promoting automy among students and this allows them to have time to work with student who need one-on-one direct instruction, key concepts and words games activities prior to a new unit, students being encouraged to share current news they have seen or heard on TV or radio to discuss in class. Teachers seem more aware that in quality education, "one size does not fit all." However, teachers find fault in not having enough planning time to find the activities to create more engaging learning environment.

The tension, therefore, comes to light in both activity systems when their pedagogical knowledge compels them to engage the students in collaborative learning but their approaches appear to fail them. On the larger scale, this is a quaternary contradiction because a neighboring, interacting activity system (teacher education programs and school administration) and the present activity system (classrooms) are approaching the object of student learning from different paradigms. However, here we will address only the secondary contradiction, which is that between the teachers' actual instructional practices and their pedagogical knowledge about teaching diversity practices.

In workshops and courses on working with second language learners with lower oral proficiency skills; unlike our participants from Granada, the teachers from Vicenza have promoted a trajectory that begins with a contradiction related to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The current approach with this learner population I have observed is pullout instruction with a literacy teacher and focused student learning supported by teacher centered approaches, with the ultimate goal being learner autonomy. Cooperative, communicative learning bridges the two ends of the spectrum, however, effective peer learning at this level requires the reformulation of teachers' pedagogical knowledge. Reconceptualizing 'what works' with second language students appears to be a challenge for teachers, and I see that this challenge was more evident in the tensions of thes Vicenza activity system in this study. Instructional strategies, including how student learning is structured (e.g., individual, pair, small group) can determine the success of a learning activity and the extent to which learning is being managed well. In several conversations and interviews, the topic of cooperative learning came up with participants . The trend in all classes was that the teachers designed and delivered the lesson, exerting a good deal of control over the students' involvement and interactions. In exploring the potential for cooperative learning in these classes, most teachers expressed that it is not typically effective. T8/ S1 says she has the students work in small groups "a bit." She recounts, "Working in small groups is hard. If one of them is doing it and then, you're giving some attention to that one group, the others just stop and begin to be disruptive. Students like to work in groups, unfortunately, it's difficult to do because it's time-consuming and you can't do it all the time." Granada participants' experiences do not mirror this sentiment. "I try to focus on all of my students equally, but not all of them learn at the same rate. Some struggle a little bit more. So I try to organize them in groups so they can help each other? … but a teacher has to be open-minded to look for strategies to get to all students (T4/S1)." These comments show that the

teachers in both activity systems have attempted to have their students work together and after reflecting on these experiences, some teachers have concluded that it is difficult" to carry out and some that small group can guarantee all students to be supprted by someone in the classroom.

Teachers in Vicenza expressed their experiences about the strategies they use to support second language development for students with a diverse linguistic origin.

T8/S1   access to the curriculum? well there are some activities that do not depend on the individual teacher, but just on wether you have the hours for them ... the specific times where you can take the boy out of the classroom if he has has problems with the language and work only on Italian language, work on vocabulary, verbs ... basic things ... so for example with the student from Kosovo this year we only did 10 hours (pullout);10 hours is almost nothing.
This year we studied the Iliad and the Odyssey. Clearly that the boy who had just arrived that still does not know Italian did not make sense then he was exempted from this part of the program. The focus was more on giving him the lexicon structures and foundation for learning the language ... so it's through these hours out of the classroom, we propose him a simplified text ... if the class can then try to involve him

T4/S2   I'm just not well prepared for students with diverese linguistic origins because the "user" (students)did not push me

T3/S1   Look, I have alphabetized a student in the space of four months; he was a Cuban boy, by bringing him out as the boys with a certification for DSA. However, he had difficulty with English because he hated it because he had never studied before, but I have alphabetize by taking him out with students certified with DSA, and then I use cooperative learning where every one gets put into play and is a guidefor the rest.

171

T2/S2	for how much concerns my subject, technology is an international language so there are topics that may be different or far away or very close ... technology language is so universal. Therefore, it depends on the preparation ... because I know my students, but I do not know others. Sometimes they come to this school but they lack of preparation ... naturally it depends on the conditions of their countries of origin
T1/S1	students with different linguistic origins... first I will have to see if he speaks Italian well or not. The school often underestimates this thing and provide these literacy courses and preparation that I think are not enough. Then the boy in the end never recovers.It is just the school that should ... the municipality. Otherwise, the school should create channels for the student who arrives and must attend a school in Italy is first prepared at least linguistically because then...
T6/S2	It depends greatly on the person with whom you're dealing ... you look at the difficulties of the person you are helping, and then try to ... ...
T7/S2	using materials simplified by mothers, computer programs at the level of writing, even looking at images; that is if you have to study Geography.
T9/S2	Meanwhile, you have to adapt to them, go down to their level, adopt all the strategies they need; for example,the computer. This is not to say that he or she is allowed to everything, jus to a minimum to help you

Two key breakdowns emerge: 1) Most participants believe all students from diverse linguistic backgrounds learn Italian the same way. There is a tendency to believe that second language learning should occur outside the mainstream classroom during pullout direct instruction on language grammar structures. In other words, most teachers in this study believe students should attend mainstream class only after acquiring enough skills in the second language. 2) teachers appear to lack pedagogical knowledge of CLT and to have limited

strategies for supporting second language development in the mainstream classroom. 3) Many teachers seem to have the assumption that students from diverse speaking backgrounds have learning disabilities rather than problems with language acquisition.

Teachers in Granada attempt to employ strategies in the class to support second language development for students with a diverse linguistic origin also resulted in some tension. Teachers have identified some methods and strategies to support language development, some of them still believe students should learn the language of instrution during pullout.

" I like to use the CLIL methodology because I get to do activities that call for different abilities, besides the sequences go through levels and is what I always try to do. Start with the lowest and rise in depth. Then ensure that there are activities, for example based on reading comprehension and others more hands on, to create, so they can adapt to the difficulties. It is difficult but the only way it's reinforcement, that is, giving reinforcement materials, assessing their abilities at first rather than their knowledge and also trying to have peers help them, designing actividades for group or pair work. (T1/S1)."

"The first thing is linguistic adaptations. The first step if you have not master the language is proficiency in the language, starting from there to work with adaptations. Sometimes it is necessary for a teacher to come to the classroom and support the student for for the student to go out with a support teacher to help him with both language proficiency as not to run too far back in the content area. I had an Iranian girl who knew nothing about Spanish or Algebra. She came the first week, we started to teach Algebra on the third of ESO. She was phenomenal, without knowing any Spanish, simply because it was a universal language (T3/S1)."

"Family meetings, for example with the Chinese girl. Her parents did not know Spanish very well and a neighbor helps us. So I get in touch with this neigbor very frequently, twice each

month we call each other, and they are helping me. Where this is not the case, then I rely on support teachers here at school, and for example if I need to work on a topic I provide the support teacher with some information about the pace we have in class, and what I need to have the student reinforce, collaboration (T2/S1)."

In the absence of extensive high quality teacher education and preparation for work with second language learners, much of what these teachers do in the class is based on trial and error. The above comments shed light on their feelings about the efficacy of collaborative learning at this level. In an effort to maintain some 'control' over student learning, they rely primarily on teacher-centered approaches to instruction and do so based on the feedback from their experiences. Arguably, there are ways to promote student interaction at this level and ensure student comprehension of the task at hand in the mainstream classroom, however, this practical and pedagogical knowledge does not grow without sunshine. In other words, as the teachers navigate these challenges and reconceptualized their knowledge for this context, they need opportunities to reflect with peers and problematize their situation in order to come up with effective solutions.

Subject ~ Tools ~ Object: Teachers' Beliefs about Students

The learners in each classroom observed in Vicenza and in Granada are all part of the community of the activity systems but also intrinsically linked to the object of having equal opportunities to learn and to be successful for all students regardless of their diverse sociocultural background. The tensions present between the subject and the object are reflected in a potential mismatch between what students need for their learning and what the teachers' know about their own students in order to meet those needs. For example, data collected for the 2012/2013 show that as many as 38.2 % of foreign students (all school levels)evidences an achievement gap at

school, compared to a much more contained number of students with Italian citizenship (11.6%) (Miur, 2013).

In the model of the activity systems, the overarching goals or aims that the teachers articulated are represented by the outcomes component of the activity system because this is what the teachers are striving for in their classes. What if their goals are misguided by their *beliefs and assumptions* about what the students need rather than what the students *actually* need? All actions from all components of the activity system are directed at the object of students' learning, however, some rather striking contradictions arose during conversations with the teachers about their knowledge of their students at a personal level to be able to determine what students really need to learn and to be successful learners.

The tension became most apparent when most teachers in both activity systems demosntrate lack of knowledge in regards individual learning or processing differences and could not articulate exactly the students' country of origin and years these students have been in the country if they were foreign students, any issues related to gender, sexual orientation, or diverse religion origin.

Partipants in Vicenza:

T8/S1 says, "then ... with the anthology you do a little bit of everything. It's quite easy to do so for gender issues or topics related to religion because these topics come up. Moreover, there are also texts in other anthologies and is easy to talk about it. It's harder to have discussions on sexual orientation though because there aren't any texts in the anthologies that deal with this issue. Therefore, it comes out every so often as a joke on their part. Like if one student calls the other student "gay," I take the joke. I try to turn the thing over and tell them that's not something to joke about or offend. How do I intergrate the culture of origin of students in the curriculum?

… For example this year we did an Albanian fairy tale ... I would have done it anyways, but having the little boy from that area; actually two (one student from Moldova and one from Kosovo) ..so if there are songs or texts related to their cultures even a better reason to use them in class. Then, usually in the first year, I usually have the students watch a cartoon called AZZUR the ASMAR[16] There are two children in the story, one European and one Arab. They meet when they are little and you see all of their journey. This is how we have a discussion on cultural diversity."

T9/S2, states, "no, ... I beyond this ... I always try to convey to all students that all religions, cultures, languages, skin color, traditions and tastes, even trivial things ..even if maybe there aren't "any" in class. Thus, respect above all and never judge based on appearances ... I encourage them to get to know new acquantaces on a deeper level."

T6/S2 tells about his experiences, "sexual orientation, no ... I've never had to address this in class ... religious orientation yes ... ..in sense of very fundamentalist kid in their religious affiliation; usually Muslim or Jehovah's Witnesses, and therefore precisely for the same teachings they received, they struggled to integrate in school. Even though this school is secular, but some traditions are Catholic. Therefore, we have Christmas concert and I've had cases of kids that families did not allow them to participate in the Christmas concert or parties. By now, these celebrations are established heritage even for those who do not go to church or not practice. The traditions are a cultural heritage, so in some cases I have encountered difficulties."

In a Italian language lesson,

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16 it is a fairy tale inspired by the folklore; including, but not limited to, the One Thousand and One Nights, and decorative art of North Africa and the Middle East .

teacher:[adressing one student from Pakistan and one with Moroccan parents] you too should have chosen the easiest topic to write your essay. This is too hard for you. You need to write your essays again on another topic.

Students: [look at the each other and say nothing]

Then, in the same class with a student who "has difficulties" according to the teacher,

Teacher: [writes on the board]

 T***********

T***********

You put a 't' before each line in your essay. This is the first time I've seen something like this. It is a little weird for me to see.

In Math class,

teacher: [teacher did not make any photocopies for the student cerificied with a specific learning disability and speaks to the support teacher]don't give her (student) a photocopy, she won't be able to do it. Write something for her on her notebook.

Support teacher: [writes some things on the student's notebook]

        In a conversation with a support teacher, she gives some information in regards to some students with BES and a student with dyslexia. She tells me that in this Math class she provides a support to only one student. When asked about the students disability, she replied that she was not certain. She also said she is an architect, but she has to be a support teacher in other to be able to get some points to get a permanent teaching job. During our conversation, she also spoake to me about another students she works with in another school, who I happened t know. She told me that the student is from Santo Domingo. I know for a fact that the student is from République de

Côte d'Ivoire. Knowing a students country of origin helps a teacher know the language the student speaks.

While Some participants in Granada,

T7/S4 replies to the question What strategies do you implement to address different learning styles in your classroom?, "the truth is I don't use any, I have never thought of this."

Teachers' understanding of the students' needs is guided mainly by their own perceptions of categorizations they make in regards to students sociocultural background as opposed to getting to know students on a personal level so that they can understand what each individual student needs. "Gypsy students attend class only because is compulsatory, but they don't care about school. They show very little effort to learn" comments at teacher in S1" She also notes "these families dont't value education, so ." In our conversation about students' goals, Sofia said that she spends a good deal you can't try to work with them because they don't care." Another teacher from S4, states after a students struggles reading a text aloud in class " he reads like that because he comes from South America." Moreover, a teacher from S1, tells me " these students are like three grades below the level they are in. They are just not getting anything," yet she continues to use textbook and exercises at the grade level they are in and not the grade level they are performing.

In the same vein as not knowing exactly what their students' needs are, most teachers in Vicenza have demonstrated that the general ability to communicate at a deeper level with their students is a challenge. However, this was less evident in Granada, were a lot of teachers attempted to communicate with their students beyond school matter. In fact, T1/S1 says "Now everything is more familiar. There is more coordination and more understanding as education is something that has three pillars, one is home, another is school, and one is the student's own interest."

Related to instruction, teachers lamented on the challenge in teaching students who are below grade level and yet need to be assess at grade level during standarized testing. To this one Social Studies teacher in Granada S1 says " You want to bring more materials like videos and articles to work some topics with the students, but they will just not get in because they lack basic concepts." In addition to not being able to convey to the students the rationale behind their instructional choices, teachers are left to speculate about their feelings toward the learning process and the potential factors the impact their learning. During classroom observations and in conversations, something some teachers dealing with struggling learners shared, "I can't do more than what I am doing, you need to study" (teachers in S1 in Granada). "I think many of my students feel frustrated."says a teacher in Granada. "They come to school for months, and they still struggle to read. They have busy, overwhelming lives that leave them little time to think about working outside of school. Some of this of course, this frustration is a two-way street for teachers who have no sense of the true impact of their efforts. Although the road is still long, teachers in Granada used phrases that made me reflect on an article about Paulo Freire. It is stated on the article that in order to understand Paulo Freire's work, cultural workers; in this case teachers, have to become "border crossers."This means that teachers and other intellectuals have to take leave of the cultural, theoretical and ideological borders that enclose them within the safety of " those places and spaces we inherit and occupy, which frames in very specific and concrete ways (Borsa, 36).

T3/S1 when asked what is needed to guarantee equal opportunities to all students, she responds "tranquility, serenity, to put yourself in their place, empathy" and T6/S3 adds " empathy...let students propose the topics to discuss so that their background is always present. I learn from what they (students) bring to our discussions." I heard the word "empathy" three times during this study. The third time I heard the word 'empathy' was when talking to the director of the three particpanting schools in Vicenza. She expressed that in order for teachers to work with diversty

efficiently they need communicative competences to talk to students, and that they also need empathy. This make me reflect everytime I heard it. I though these teachers and this school director who believe empathy can make them effective teachers are becoming border crossers, and so I used that phrase that inspired the title for this dissertation ('Becoming a Border Crosser'). In a conversation about teaching and classroom management, T6/S3 expresses " Knowing students at a personal level allows me to respond to their needs... not to be so concern with content, but the human beings I have in front of me." Again, this statement made me recall and reflect on that article about Paulo Freire where Giroux (1992) in the article Border Crossings states, "becoming a border crosser engaged in a productive dialogue with others means producing a space in which those dominant social relations, ideologies, and practices that erase the specificity of the voice of the other must be challenged and overcome."

The same question was asked to the primary partcipants in Vicenza, and these are some of their responses regarding what is needed to guarantee equal opportunities to all students, "definitely at least a basic training in special education because many things you either know or do not know. That is not an area where you can improvise in the sense that everyone desires to do good, to help but this is not charity ... we are an institution (T6/S2)."

"It takes specific skills that us mainstream teachers lack and should work right next to the support teacher and professionals to exchange some experiences, we risk ... ... closed in our own ways, we do we make a little effort to be open to changes (T5/S3)."

" well...this, not having the competences to work with students with disabilities or with specific difficulties … I would not know. I'm sure it takes professional development to be able to manage, to understand why maybe you see a kid who seems do well, and then you actually find out that it is not like that. Also, maybe a kid comes to you with a diagnosis and the whole packet perhaps the greatest difficulty is...finding out that … even on the diagnosis there are 4 lines

telling you that the student is hyperactive ... do this ... not to give up .... but are 4 things save you dome time (T1/S1)."

"First of all knowledge. You have to know the disability or special needs of your student, then knowledge of the pathology and knowledge of the law because sometimes these guys have rights that are not known neither by the parent nor by the school. After that, you need the determination to bring forward in front of the huge walls , but I think it's just the knowledge that is needed. This student is deaf, this kid is down (down syndrome) ..... This is what is lacking, and I have to tried to cover up what is lacking, more knowledge of the law because I see that parents will come and say things that make you realize they don't have the ability to understand what he has, and what these kids are entitled to... .no ... because they know when you work with children with physical problems, you lose your face and get dirty with them (T4/S2)."

"professional development on those specific topics because unfortunately in Italy training for teachers is almost zero. In the sense that you are trained before you start working ... maybe just with the schools, the ASSIS the TFA (alternative teacher certification programs). You do a little, but then when something new such as BES[17],, special educational needs, comes out it's a rather wide category and indeed even to understand which students can be included, how to behave, what do. It would be important to have professional development, also on DSA[18]in the sense that research is always changing .

Then, I asked the teacher if they ever have any professional development on these topics?

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17 The expression "Special Educational Needs" (BES) entered into extensive use in Italy after the publication of the Ministerial Directive of 27 December 2012 "instruments of intervention for pupils with Special Educational Needs and territorial organization for school inclusion"

18 DSA are learning disorders affecting some specific skills to be acquired by children of school age.

She replied, "very little meaning we have memos that come from the ministry ... but they are very vague memoradums .... you cannot consider those profesional development; therefore, we need specific courses. But of course if there are any courses, they are all paid courses.... whoever want to do it, does it and whoever doesn't , they don't . So it's all very random (T8/S1)."

"skills that we should all possess. First of all to be very human. Beyond all, we must attempt to understand individual cases, and also be very specific with some cases in which you have to understand that you can not do more than certain things. We can not think beyond our task to be able to teach them notions that they will never learn . Consequently, you have to be a little malleable and adapt to the case in front of you. They are also human. I realize that these children are increasingly insecure and have a self-esteem that often does not exist. That is the reason why we have to work on these basic things, and then you can think to build all the rest (T9/S2)."

"the 'personal approach'... groped to establish a much more personal relationship with these guys ... just to hear them ... that they feel closer safer and also more attentive despite their difficulties (T2/S2)."

Subject & Community ~ Tools ~ Object: Professional Learning

Professional learning communities hinge on the availability of opportunities for collaboration among members of a community of practice. Collaboration within a school can greatly enhance teacher learning and professional development and conversely, the absence of opportunities for collaboration can lead to feelings of isolation, lack of power and frustration - all of which surfaced in conversations with participants in Vicenza and to a lesser degree, with participants in Granada. Further, professional learning communities provide essential support to teachers as they continue to develop their knowledge base and theorize practice, which is particularly necessary for many novice teachers who struggle to connect theory and practice

when the base for each is not well formulated. Finally, professional learning communities require support from the school administrators and others that impact decision-making related to professional development of teachers. In this discussion, I will touch on each of these themes as they arose as contradictions in the activity systems of Vicenza and Granada.

Professional Learning and Communities of Practice

In Granada many schools are beginning to plan the implementation of learning communities as an initiative of the CEP. While at S2 in Granada, T5 shares groups of learners with other teachers. They have a co-teaching model in which S2 who is a primary school special education teacher co-teaches with a middle school teacher during compensatory hours to help students who are achieving below grade level.

Me: Did the school start with the learning communities? I thought they were in the planning stage.

T5: Yes, we are in the first year, but I've already started with some teachers, with the teacher we've been with just now, and I work throughout the entire time, with the language teacher I work two hours, with the math teachers two hours, so it is in progress.

Me: How do you think these changes have affected the dynamics of relationships between members of the community? Let's say, you're in a class means you have to work with other people and this not always easy.

T5: It is challenging. This is just the first step. The first difficulty we've had this year because it is hard, and althoughit is true that teachers let me in their classrooms, and I've worked with them for six years, so they know me, and I know them too, there is some confidence. Yet there still arise friction, and sometimes I do not agree with the other, but overall is going well.

Almost all partcipants in Granada expressed their feelings about the value of collaboration, but they also expressed a desire to have more time for collaboration.

"In general, one can hardly believe the issue of training because you can not send mixed messages. You can not ask teachers to take care of professional development, and at the same time, increase the workload and the number of students. You can not ask teachers to deal for example with attention to diversity and new methodological approaches, and at the same time reduce their salary and time to plan. Then, you take an overload. Also, there are fewer young teachers, and no interims since teachers are becoming older (T7/S4)."

Teachers noted the isolation that the they are experiencing in schools during several of our conversations. *Insufficient time* appeared to be one of the greatest predictors for the lack of interaction between teachers. "We (teachers) communicate through email, whatsapp and in person on the hallway. We have very little time to communicate. The schedule does not include planning time (T6/S3)."

"We have worked with an association of English teachers. We have presented about what we do that is innovative at conferences or courses because we try to carry out a process of alternative assessment using assessment rubrics. We share these materials we generate and our experiences in these forums (T2/S1)."

Participants in Vicenza did articulate some conceptions about teacher collaboration. Support teacher T3/S1 says, " let say the planning I do it on my own; and then I let the class teacher see it. I have always been allowed to plan what I want .... maybe they have confidence in me"

Now we see the lack of collaboration, adding a new tension between classes that serve the same students.[19] According to some teachers, the lack of interaction between teachers negatively impacts the students because there is no discussion of aligning curriculum across levels and within levels. One teacher shares, "we are missing group programming that it is different from group work where one does everything. The programme or curriculum is done for us. It depends on someone else at the beginning of the school year even if I've seen teachers here presenting it at the end of the year, but it is also something there that is not shared with the other teachers of the same subject or teachers of other subjects. Then, we could do it in a different way, less sterile and something more structured set by the school. More or less like a mathematics program. You know it and from time to time you share with your collegues ... where are you in the programme ? What are you doing ? But it's really sad because there isn't collaboration (T1/S1)."

Underlying this teacher's comments about the lack of collaboration was a simple desire to create a system of exchange among the teachers. Given the limited available materials for this learner population and the absence of an active professional learning community in this school, it was not surprising that this teacher craved interaction with her colleagues to gain access to ideas and resources.

"to collaborate, someone must speak first; especially on social projects, it takes someone who believes strongly and then involving other teachers. There are those who agree with a smile, and there are those who do not accept at all. Therefore, I ask the students' families to help. Then, I have to take charge of the timelines and the steps of everything concerning the project. I have to pull it of from start to finish, but in the end … the whole school benefits... but about 10 years ago

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19 This could be a tertiary contradiction (e.g. a contradiction between one activity system and slightly more advanced version of the activity system) in that the instructional practices, material selection and knowledge base of a teacher in one class could be more effective at targeting students' needs, goals, strengths and weaknesses than the other. However, further activity theoretical analyses from within the other classes and informed by those teachers' perspectives would be needed to make a fair claim one way or another.

we started with a drama club where the slogan was ... the drop is part of the ocean, without the drop there would not be the ocean. With a class where I had 4 very severe disabled students, we put them on stage...(T4/S2)." One can sense in this teacher's words that there is a level of anger or resentment about her isolation. The lack of opportunities for collaboration seems to not only be affecting her sense of place in the school but also her sense of camaraderie with her colleagues. Perhaps, more accurately, she is simply upset to see what she perceives to be a deterioration of the school system that she has belonged to for so long.

"So let's see, maybe let's separate things. Perhaps among colleagues so often is difficult because we are always very busy. There is never a break where we all sit calmly to reflect on things. Sometimes we are meeting with an 'agenda', and we follow it, maybe there is some communication in small groups... (T5/S3)."

"It depends greatly on the school and how the support teacher is viewed. I must say that most of the time is now a common thing that support teacher is viewed as any other teacher. I am very well. In this school there is collaboration. We (support teachers) are involved and come together. In many schools where I have worked, they have been lagging far behind in the sense that the support teacher takes care of the childwith special needs, and there is no dialogue (T6/S2)."

In addition to wanting to 'bounce ideas off one another' for the benefit of their practice, teachers also noted the value that collaboration would have for the learners. "...in a very simple way. That is, as any other person. Then, it is certainly easier with colleagues who teach the same classes you teach, maybe we discuss how the class is achieving in general and about the activities during recess or in the corridor. Also, with colleagues of the literacy department, we discuss the program, what is everyone doing ... how someone did this .... I can't think of particular

things(T8//S1)." In this light, this teacher sees the value in collaboration as a tool to support students.

But for most teachers in this study, the lack of collaboration is a tension because of the impact they believe it has on the students' ability to navigate through school successfully. Additionally, some teachers note the need for more collaboration as a catalyst for teacher development and curriculum alignment.

As far as workshops related to teaching sociocultural diversity are concerned, this is what the participants from Vicenza say,

"no... not specificly (T9/S2)."

"yes, I've had some courses (T5/S3)."

"no, nothing (T6/T7/S2)."

"no, but because in the middle school there are support teachers. We collaborate, but each one has a role....no, too many things you can do it all, it's betters a few things done well (T2/S2)."

" no, unfortunately no... workshops all by personal choice , but unfortunately the school does not give us information on what we need. We choose workshops by our common sense, and it's voluntary (T4/S2)."

"before teaching (7 years ago), working in Padova ... .I attended some workshops during my civil service. Then, I worked in an association that deals with courses on intercultural education in schools from kindergarten to high school; courses on cultural diversity, diverse origins and religions...in the year of civil service, I attended workshops on this with faculty experts from various areas. Then some more while working in the association I completed a master to teach Italian to foreigners (T8/S1)."

"...the difficulties are that the professional development workshops are not beneficial, so if one wants find use of them for when working with the current learner populations, you have to virtually deal with it on your own. The course can give some input but always at a low level (T5/S3)."

"I think new teachers who come have a greater openness available to innovative teaching. I think the problem are the teachers of a certain age who have a harder time dealing with change. "Teachers of different generations work together in the same school with different ways of understanding the teaching that is a richness, but this means that innovations come. It takes just a generational change. I did a bit of research among my colleagues to see if anyone knew what was that the PAI[20] the Annual Plan. I do not know hardly anyone knew. Yet for two years is expected to be written. School is a little crystallized company. There are certain habits we don't get rid of (T6/S2)."

Participants in Granada had rather different opinions regarding professional development workshops,

"Official workshops no, but the counseling department who are experts at the school are there to help and the teacher center (CEP-Centro del Profesorado)for help on how to deal with diversity. The board of Andalusia also has a guide for teachers to work with multiculturalism (T2/S1)."

"Courses about coexistence, methodology for conflict resolution, I have taken several courses in this field (T3/S1)."

"I have had many professional development opportunities because I also work at an NGO on topics such as intercultural dialogue, intercultural awareness, inclusion and other courses on intercultural education (T6/S3)."

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20 Piano Annuale per l'inclusività Direttiva M. 27/12/2012 e CM n° 8 del 6/3/2013

"I have participated in intercultural days in Almeria and organized a project with the current Erasmus. The subject of the research we did with the students was precisely the integration of immigrant students in the employment world (T7/S4)."

"That is my specialization, therapeutic pedagogy and special education teaching. Then in Almería I took a course that was a guide to cultural diversity and then specialized workshops on everything, deaf, blind, on all (T5/S2)."

" Yes, but even if I've never came across any kind of intercultural situation, It has always interested me. Then from my previous teaching site in a town of Jaen, called Siles-, I started going to classes, first by the UNED, Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (online university), and then when I got here to Granada through the CEP (teacher center) (T1/S1)."

In one school in Granada, a teacher (T7/S4) explained to me how the school is trying to provide teachers with professional development opportunities at school site,

"The student counselor figure has been for quite some time in the schools. The professional role that is perhaps new is the one I am taking, the professional development department coordinator. It has been implemented for about five or six years and then also the administration has been enhancing plans and educational projects that are also very interesting such as the equality plan, which we have here in this eco-school?

Me: What is eco-school?

Teacher: Eco-school is a network of schools in Andalusia which also corresponds to a national and international network that aims to promote educational values to care and to protect the environment. Ecology, we have been working long in this field at this school, and I think it very important."

In the absence of well-established professional learning opportunities within the actual school, teachers seek professional development elsewhere. Teachers note that their "only

opportunities for growth come from when [they go] to workshops." The schools do not provide paid leave for teachers to take advantage of professional development opportunities, so they attend workshops on their own time and at their own expenses in many cases.

Although teachers don't receive financial support, a lot of them enjoy the chance to recharge a bit, see what people are doing and bring ideas back to try out in the classes. For example, participants told me,

"No, it's what I would like to do now that I just passed my teaching practicum.It is the next thing I would do, take courses on CLIL, a special methodology (T4/S1 in Granada)."

"Teaching in another country is my pending task (T5/S2 in Granada)."

"I surely would like to attend science and math workshops, maybe along with other teachers maybe even from other countries...why not?... or perhaps a small group of Italian teachers to have an open discussion to share. You might get foreign students and you can learn the reality of the place where they come from, so I think it would be interesting a thing (T1/S1 in Vicenza)."

" I'd love to do observations in an English school or maybe and Italian/English school (International schools in Italy) or an American school (T3/S1 in Vicenza)."

"I don't want to do anything else. I think what I do is enough (T2/S2 in Vicenza)."

"I'd like to get a Master's in Communication and Inclusion, but I'm not just a teacher. I'm a mother, a wife, a daughter among other things (T4/S2 in Vicenza)."

However, conferences, like one-shot workshops run the risk of inspiring teachers momentarily, only to have teachers return to their teaching context and resort to their 'business as usual'. This 'loss of inspiration' can be attributed to lack of synergy in the schools. Teachers thrive, as do all social beings, in a community.

Although the participation of teachers in this study was voluntary, most teachers in the participating schools in Vicenza were Italian citizens mostly from the same region were they were teaching. There were two primary participants from Southern Italy, and a secondary particpant; a Spanish teacher who was born in Colombia but was adopted by Italian parents when she was little.

In the participating schools in Granada most teachers were from various regions in Spain. This is mainly due to national policy. For example in Italy, one most be Italian citizen to teach in a public school and in Spain teachers must be EU citizens.

During my observations, students were very curious about what was I doing at school. Many of them asked me; particularly foreign students from African countries, "are you a new teacher?" "what is your name?" "were are you from?" There I was a black woman speaking to the class and with teachers. They also saw me working jogging my fieldnotes at the teacher's launge. Some Roma students in Granada, stared at me and asked me if the could touch my "cool afro hair." Students smiled at me in the hallway all the time, and asked me if I could to do observations in their classrooms. They asked me what subject did I teach.

On the contrary, very frequently, on my first visits to the schools, the clerical staff assumed I was a parent even when I was in the teachers' launge. Many school secretaries approached me to see what student I was waiting for or if I needed help" to find my child's teacher." During the interviews to teachers, most of them said no without hesitation when asked wether there were collegues from a diverse sociocultural background. Some others teachers in Vicenza stated;

" I wouldn't know, not from another country(T8/S1)."

" It doesn't seem like. I'm from Trentino[21], but it is still part of Italy (T2/S2)."

" no, I don't know... from different region yes, but we're all Italians (T3/S1)."

T: our collegue who teaches Spanish. She was adopted, but I think she is from Ecuador.

Me: Colombia.

T: Brava! Yes Colombia (T5/S3)

This is what participating teachers had to say in regards to the same question,

"Wel, I don't think so. There are a lot of us, but I don't think so. We come from different areas of Spain. We have one teacher fro the north, but no (T4/S1)."

"Since this is a school with a lot of gypsies, we have two volunteers who are gypsies. They help us (T2/S1)."

"yes, we have a lady from Brasil. She studied Psychology and Sociology, and she has been working a lot with students. A few years ago, we had a lady giving some workshops with students from the compesatory program. She was very important because she was a gypsy who had studied in this school too. Therefore, she was a role model for students (T1/S1)."

"Not that I know of (T7/S4)."

It is important to expose students to a diverse teaching staff within schools. Every child has a basic right to a great public school with a qualified and caring staff, including educators who look like them, who share similar cultural experiences, and who can serve as role models demonstrating that education and achievement are things to be respected. An analysis of teacher diversity prepared by the National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force found that

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21 Trentino is an autonomus province of Italy in the country's far north

increasing the percentage of teachers of color in classrooms is connected directly to closing the achievement gap (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004).

Most of the data currently available on connections between teachers of color and student performance are generated from small-scale qualitative research involving single or multiple case studies. These data focus on a number of significant, though under-recognized, school achievement markers, including attendance records, disciplinary referrals, dropout rates, overall satisfaction with school, self-concepts, cultural competence, and students' sense of the relevance of school.

School Support for Professional Learning

Given the benefits of professional learning opportunities to both teachers and schools, it is surprising when a school system is not supportive of professional development. In some countries, professional development is honored and prioritized, while in others it may never become part of the agenda. Of course, between these two extremes there are various levels of support and numerous approaches to promoting professional learning within programs (see Chapter 2), which are often influenced by various macro-level constraints (e.g. funding, scheduling, policy).

Most participants in this study often articulated their desire for more professional development opportunities, especially through collaborative engagement with their colleagues. Much of their disappointment stems from a perceived lack of support for professional learning in their school system.

During my interviews to directors of school districts, out of all the schools I tried to contact in Vicenza only two agree to the interview. Furthermore, in regards to what resources does the school have available to support teachers' professional learning, they state; "teachers

have access to implement enrichment projectst with funds from more sources: state, municipality, voluntary contributions of families;" "teachers can organize remedial courses for students, technology for greater impact, and different teacher training when possible."

The director of Vicenza's teacher center refused to particpate in an interview, but through the segretary suggested to view their portal for information. Some of the information gathered in the portal[22]: There were not any topics regarding education of immigrant students, students with disabilities, or nomads despite the fact that their statisctics show a continous increase of students from these backgrounds. Courses for teachers did not include intercultural education, second language teaching or curriculum adaptations/modifcations for students with special needs eventhough school directors hightlighted the need to have teachers with this competences. Moreover, the last project monitoring of schools interested valuing heritage of ethnic minorities was in 2007-2008(Law 482/1999).The was a memoradum from 2013, called "Azione Solidari 2013: Interculturalità e Cittadinaza." This memoradum stated how the European funds for integration of third-country nationals would have been distributed. Their actions include second language courses for immigrant students and projects for immigrant students inclusion and their families.

Some participating teachers in Vicenza feel that the administration does not share their views about the need for ongoing teacher development. They have also expressed their frustration over the fact that some administrators simply do not know what the teachers need to develop professionally because they do not have teaching background and think that a Memamoradum can be sufficient. Some even suggest ways to target professional learning through peer observation. However, administration seem to believe that occasional projects will give teachers the necessary competences to teach diversity.

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22 Retrieved from http://www.istruzionevicenza.it/ on November 15, 2015.

In Granada, all directors contacted were available for an interview but lacked time because they were very much involved in the didatic part of the school program. I did have some informal conversations with the participating school directors, and all four expressed that teachers have a regional teacher center to support their professional development, but teachers had to attend workshops on the own time. Some expressed that schools are trying to take the workshops to the campus after class so that teachers don't have to commute to attend the courses. One school even has a department made up by teachers to coordinate teacher professional development.

A coordinator from the teacher center helps us undertand the following:

Me: My first question would be whether the CEP does any research to find out the training needs of teachers?

(C): Good question, we are trying. Normally we don't, so far, until last year it was very intuitive, qualitatively. We asked the schools' administration about educational needs where teachers needed training and we report it to the technical training advisory team. Typically, for public schools, it is compulsory to report in their yearly plans the training needs of all teachers. This year AGAEVE[23] (Agencia Andaluza de Evaluaciones Educativas) has adopted a new law for professional development and how to evaluate quantitatively. Schools are using new evaluation indicators, but there trends related to socioeconomic level. From that schools need to build a plan of self-evaluation. From the self-evaluation come the training needs and that's when we come in. From indicators of things going well at school and things that going wrong is where we will see what kind of innovation we can get, see what fails and how we can address such training needs at the teacher center. We assess good practices to advertise them at other schools as training and innovation.

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23 Andalusian agency coordinating educational evaluations

Unlike the teacher center in Vicenza, Granada's school system seem to have begun a more systematic way to evaluate teachers' professional development needs to address them.

Subject ~ Rules ~ Object: Implicit and Explicit Rules for 'Doing School'

An additional tension that exists in the relationship between the subject and object of both activity systems is that the students' diverse sociocultural background has an impact on their approach to 'doing school' that sometimes leads to frustrations on the part of the teachers. In the culture of formal education, there are certain expectations that teachers espouse for their classroom, which might be reflected in the implicit and explicit rules of the school. For example, an implicit rule might be that teachers assign a lot of homework that in many cases require the help of parents at home. Of course, these implicit rules are arguably only implicit to those members of the activity system who have had same educational experience including the teachers, who may not be taking into account the fact that not all students have parents who speak the language spoken at school, or have a level of education that would allow them to support their children or even just understand that it is expected for them to support their children while doing homework. In addition to all this, teachers may not be taking into account the importance of teaching students exactly what is expected of them.

To this, the school director of the three participating schools in Vicenza states, " we have the highest dropout rate at S3 because we have more students from diverse backgrounds. Parents are not able to support students to do their homework.They do not understand what is expected of them by the school and the demands of study."

During the classroom observations, I witnessed a few amusing examples of student behavior that surprised the teachers but not the other students. A teacher in Granada was telling the class; where 90% are Roma students, that soon they were going to have a guest at school. The

guest was the author of the book the were currently reading. She was encouraging the class to be prepared and to ask questions during the lecture and anticipated that she will give extra credit to recuperate their grades since the class is a compensatory class if they participate actively. One student shout out in a derogatory way, " cuando viene el tío ese? Para no venir" (when is that guy coming? So that I don't come). The teacher appeared really upset, but the other students began to laugh out loud and agreed with the other student.

For many students this event that the teacher was organizing was of very little value, and they do not find the practicality of it. Students were expected to comprehend this book to ask questions to the author, yet alone reading it fluently was a huge challenge. Potential distractions are abundant in the classrooms. In some classes in participating schools in both Vicenza and in Granada, students played around or had small conversations while the teacher is talking, slept, ate in class, pass notes around, left temporarily during class for various reasons.

These types of behaviors can be distracting to the teachers at the very least and certainly earn their place in the activity system as a tension due to the failure of rules to effectively mediate the teaching and learning activity. However, a tool (rules) is only as effective as the training to use that tool. In this situation, the rules are unknown to the students and the rule-based training can be difficult for teachers to deliver. Again, as with most contradictions in these activity systems, the power of professional learning opportunities to create a mediational space in which to negotiate these breakdowns is evident. Discovering ways to harness that power is a critical first step toward expansive transformations in these activity systems.

Subject ~ Division of Labor/Rules ~ Object: Top-Down Decision-Making

Tensions between the subject and division of labor impact the teachers' actions toward the outcome. As noted in Chapter 2, divisions of labor often reflect vertical and horizontal distributions of power within the activity system. In these activity systems, the key contradictions

between these components are vertical and exist as a result of the myriad top-down decisions that impact the teachers, but fail to seek their input. They are also guided by rules within the system, so it is multifaceted contradiction. The key tensions I will present in this section address students with diverse language origins and students with special needs who have a support teacher or participate in compensatory programs as in the case of schools in Granada and redesign of programmig.In both activity systems, the teachers reported that they had nothing to do with the initial intake, language and academic assessment, and placement of the students in their schools upon arrival.

The tension arises, however, when the individual completing the intakes with the students and their families either fails to address educational and linguistic goals with the students or does not relay that information to the teachers. Additional critical information beyond the intake is language origin for foreign students, educational history records if available, certification and medical recommnedations for students with special needs, as well as any relevant family related information. In the participating schools, there was not any testing process in order to more closely identify the areas to target through instruction. When teachers are not involved in the testing process, they benefit from receiving the results of the tests to get an idea of areas in which the students are facing the greatest challenges. Unfortunately, these processes are not implemented at the schools and the potential scenarios that can unfold are those experienced by teachers in both activity systems in this study. T3/S1 explained how the process for newly arrived foreign students works at her school in Vicenza,

"with the use of the funds that the province gives, I teach literacy for students who arrive in Italy and have language difficulties, so they are literate before school starts. We will do it again this coming year. Students who are foreigners or have largely attended school in a foreign country like the student from Moldova, I do a project; for example, last year I did a project speaking. Therefore, the objectives expected were accomplished during the first year with a colleague of

mine. I alphabetized a kid, but the hours are continuosly diminishing, in 10 hours you can not do wonders to literacy. This year, we had 10 hours for a child, but we could not. I did five hours and my colleague the other 5, what can you do in 5 hours?

She goes on to say regarding students with special needs she supports:

"I put; beforehand, that I have never been given serious cases besides last year. I try to do a lot of teaching, doing and teaching, and get students to reach the minimum goals, the goals of the class. My aim is to get them to normality for integration."

Support teachers in Vicenza and teachers in compensatory classes in Granada are given the reponsability to fill in the achievement gaps. However, a lot of them were not able to express the diagnosis of the student they support nor the current levels of achievement or specific areas of difficulties. Therefore, teachers pullout students and give them work. During my observations in both activity systems, sometimes, teachers have students do the same work the rest of the class is doing in a separate classroom, sometimes they work on a different subject, and sometimes they have them do very simplified work that appear not to present any challenge to students. This commom practice seems to perpetuate and broaden the achievement gap because struggling students are missing mainstream instruction and peer interaction during pullout and the objectives that are being address do not seem aligned with what goes on in the classroom.

The greatest impact of these changes in the division of labor within the activity system was decreased access to important information about what the students to need achieve in school and what challenges they face in their language acquisition process and in learning new knowledge and skills.

A secondary support teacher participant in Vicenza expressed " I know I don't have the competences to support this student's special needs. I attended the music conservatory and now work as a support teacher to make points to become a music teacher one day," but he still made a

point of investigating the best way to support the student by discussing his challenges with colleagues.

As with many tensions in the activity system, those related to initial assessment and information gathering and distribution could be targeted through the reformulation of actions around these procedures, including the choice of assessment tool and data collection, the availability of the information for teachers and necessary training in interpreting the results.

Language and academic assessment are vast fields unto themselves. The fact that teachers are not familiar with the assessment process or with second language teaching/learning can be problematic when attempting to target the objectives of an activity system. Professional learning opportunities will, again, provide that mediational space for school administrators and teachers to collaborate and democratically select assessment practices that best fit the school, best measure student gains (e.g., in class assessment) and provide teachers with useful information to inform instructional practices.

Top-Down School Decisions

There are many decisions made about the structure of programming that can impact teachers and students, ranging from class scheduling to the impact of funding sources on program offerings. Some of these decisions that appear to be coming from within a school are actually mandated from entities above the school, such as funding entities or policy makers. I will explore a selection of top-down decisions that impacted teachers, and therein their activity systems.

In both activity systems there was top-down decision-making as the core of that model which is that the school administration is not in charged of staffing. Teachers are assigned a school based on national calls. There were tensions related to teachers being reassigned every

year or not being even sure how long the would stay in a school. Another aspect is that a school cannot hire a teacher based on the schools' needs; for example , if the school had a large population of Italian language learners, the administration can not hire a teacher with competences to teach Italian as a second language. Or if there were several students with dyslexia, it would be useful to have a teacher with knowledge and skills to assess and implement interventions. However, it is not up to a school director to decide who stays and who goes.

Macrostructures and the 'Struggle for Voice'

These conversations, while they often begin with an attempt to discuss classroom practice and theories related to teacher competences for diversity, often come back to charged discussions about the various tensions in the system that exist due to its place in a larger macrostructure. It appears impossible to extract the activity systems from this larger context, and, thus, even classroom practice is impacted by decisions far removed from the actual building in which it takes place. The greater frustrations exist for many teachers. In attempting to make sense of some of these frustrations, they have uncovered several sources of anger related to feelings of disempowerment and marginalization as a result of exclusion from decision-making, isolation from colleagues and lack of meaningful professional learning opportunities.

As illustrated in chapter 3, many teachers perceive the "whole system" to be "broken." A teacher in Vicenza remarks that the ministry of education is not interested the instructional practices of their teachers. "What's taught in the class is not important. They don't give a flying flip because it's the reporting that matters." She has a very strong disposition about the 'voice' of teachers. On several occasions, I have inquired about her efforts to be heard or make suggestions for changes in the school. She has been silenced by her experiences, which I can guess are also informed by her strong personality.

No, I don't try anymore; I just keep my mouth shut. … It's just not worth the, worth the beating up that you get when you try to ... you know … The Russians have a saying: the nail that sticks up, gets beat down the most. And I've been that nail a long time, so I've decided… I'm just not going to be that nail anymore.

Her feeling is not only attributed to her personal experiences but those of colleagues over the years. They all contribute to her beliefs about the role of teachers in the larger system. "When good teachers speak up and say *No, we shouldn't do it this way*, they are marginalized. Most good teachers cause problems because they don't agree with the way the system is being run. They learn to keep their mouths shut and heads down until they get a pension." All of these experiences, biases, dispositions, and emotions contribute to her contextualized personal, practical knowledge. She has reconceptualized her role as a teacher and re-envisioned her teaching context to fit with these experiences.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Implications of the Findings

The support for teacher collaboration and establishing communities of practice in educational settings is strong. Wilson and Berne (1999) found patterns in their mainstream educational research that echo the sentiment that "teachers enjoy the chance to talk about their work, that it takes time to develop a community, that teachers have very little experience engaging in a professional discourse that is public and critical of their work and the work of their colleagues" (p. 181). Numerous teacher educators and teachers assert that teacher learning and teacher change take place when teachers are supported with opportunities to observe one another, reflect upon their practices in light of their colleagues' practices and engage in "professional discourse that includes and does not avoid critique" (Wilson & Berne, 1999, p. 194).

Transforming practice is not straightforward and may be particularly challenging for teachers who have been teaching and learning within one context for years and now find themselves in a starkly different context, as was the case for many of the participating teachers who have been teaching for more than 20 years. Acknowledging the challenge in transforming practice and enabling teachers to participate in professional communities that promote risk taking is essential for teacher development (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

This review of tensions highlights three key benefits to cultivating professional learning communities within teachers dealing with sociocultural diversity. First, the words 'community' 'collective' and 'collaborate' in and of themselves underscore the sense of oneness and belonging that teachers will hopefully experience. The morale can be low when teachers feel isolated. They can become disenchanted and perhaps even angry at the notion that there is so much more potential for qualitative change and development in the school system and therefore in their practice. Coming together as a community helps teachers overcome the 'struggle for voice' that Britzman (2003) portrays in her ethnography.

Secondly, collaborative approaches to professional learning, such as peer observations, lesson study, and study circles, workshops with experts at their own campus are immediately accessible by the teachers because they are based in their teaching context and reflect the learner populations with which they are working. They can discuss cases related to students they share and problem solve based on collective experiences. They can jointly develop theories and test these teacher generated theories in the classroom. Tasker notes that "a teacher-directed collaborative professional development activity, focuses the teachers' attention on gaps in their students' learning by creating a mediational space that encourages sustained dialogic interaction about student learning issues that are central to teachers' everyday teaching practice" (p. 204). Professional learning opportunities for teachers should, above all, be relevant and accessible to the teachers.

A final key benefit to professional learning communities is that the teachers are available to one another for consultation and feedback on a regular basis as members of the same community of practice. Teacher-directed approaches to professional development enable teachers to "move beyond being not only consumers of top-down expert knowledge, but also producers of school-based, self-directed knowledge by adopting a 'researcher' lens" (Tasker, 2011, p. 204). For those conferences and workshops that do inspire them and provide practical insights that they wish to apply, they can rely upon their colleagues for ongoing motivation

and engagement in a feedback loop with implementation, evaluation and revision stages. In this way, they jointly theorize practice, construct solutions and take ownership of their professional learning.

Limitations of the Study

As with all research, there are limitations to the present study. This study attempts to better understand the lived experiences of middle school teachers teaching sociocultural diversity and provides findings based on two activity systems. Three participating schools in Vicenza, Italy and four in Granada, Spain. Participating teachers; primary and secondary, as well as school administrators and teacher center service providers bringing their own set of beliefs and a range of teacher knowledge and experience to the classroom. This study has provided a picture of their reality as it played out over the course of many months in two particular teaching contexts. It is my hope that the rich descriptions and my ensuing insights provide enough information to the readers such that they can decide the extent to which this study is relevant to them. Having participated and presented in a number of professional learning contexts, I feel that I can safely assume that it will resonate with many readers. However, I concede that others will find it too particular to the participants in the study and therefore not significant to them.

Additionally, this study is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, and, as such, it is strongly guided by my interpretations and, therefore, potentially influenced by my biases. I have taken measures, as noted in Chapter 3, to ensure trustworthiness and keep my personal beliefs, assumptions, values and expectations in check; however, I cannot deny that my values merged with the voices of my participants in order to promote action through this study.

Finally, the central tenet to both rigorous qualitative research and activity theoretical inquiry is that multiple perspectives are honored and represented throughout the discovery and writing process. As this analysis was conducted within activity systems from the subjects'

points of view, it is possible that the perspectives and voices of other community members were not sufficiently represented in this study. Given the scope of this dissertation, there was limited opportunity, space, and time to explore the respective activity systems of other administrators, other teachers, learners and their families. Where possible, I did contribute the insights that I collected from these individuals through informal discussions, but it would have been ideal to collect interview data from them for a deeper understanding of the situation. I have noted this as a recommendation for future directions in this study and activity theoretical research in general.

Contributions of the Study

Teacher knowledge is continually growing and evolving as teachers develop their instructional practice and come to terms with changing contexts and changing learner populations. For many teachers dealing with sociocultural diversity, this changing context is a byproduct of issues far outside of their control, such as which populations will be arriving from school year to school year from all over the world and diverse sociocultural backgrounds. Families of students coming from diverse sociocultural backgrounds often do not take into consideration the knowledge base or education of the teachers that will be greeting them in the classroom. This would be an unrealistic expectation that nonetheless poses a challenge to both the teachers and the learners.

As a professional teacher education specialist, I have been a visiting scholar at Østfold University College in Norway and in several conferences and seminars in Europe to teach several workshops for teachers teaching sociocultural diversity. In these workshops, teachers often list the challenges they face, which reflect many of the tensions discovered in the activity systems of this study, such as lack of knowledge of teaching approaches that address diversity, uncertainty about how to teach to address different learning styles , prevalence of mixed level classes, isolation, and lack of support for paid professional development

experiences. Often, these workshops are the only opportunity many teachers have to meet with colleagues who are also teaching diversity, and without doubt, these formal professional development workshops are better than nothing, but largely insufficient on their own to promote teacher development and expand the teachers' knowledge base.

Expansive Learning Cycles

In isolating the key relationships and uncovering the tensions in both activity systems, we generated action items to begin exploring the expansive learning cycles for these activity systems. Identifying the contradictions was only the beginning of the journey, and we are all hopeful that critical transformations will continue to take place in the months and years to come at the particpating schools and perhaps, throughout the counties. Through these expansive learning cycles, we will start to reformulate some of the negative tensions and contradictions within these professional contexts.

Some of this work has already taken place on the smaller scale. Having identified both lack of confidence and feelings of disempowerment among some teachers, I wanted to find a way to honor what they know and do and give voice to this teacher knowledge. During the course of this study, I started writing an Erasmus+ project with teachers in Granada and teachers in Vicenza and other partners to try to jointly review the tensions and contradictions revealed in this study with the aim of gathering effective ways to deal with diversity in schools.

We have been gathering data of the instructional practices teachers use to target address various needs of students from different cultural backgrounds and their families. Some teachers presented first-hand accounts of why certain techniques work in their class. Involving these knowledgeable teachers in writing a project proposal for a capacity building at the level of 'expert' or instructor validate their practical knowledge and show them that they do have something valuable to share with colleagues and peers.

In addition to targeting their confidence and honoring what they know, there has been a good deal of resource sharing and dialogue that has both activated and augmented their teacher knowledge. As I learned about various online resources that induce and help teachers to use the pluralistic approaches, the FREPA/CARAP[24] furthers the development of professional skills listed among the key competences. This is particularly true of the following competences: Competence4-knowledge of avariety of approaches, methods and teaching materials for responding to diversity; Competence 9-creating an open mind and respect in the school community;Competence 7-establishing and maintaining constructive communication with pupils, parents and colleagues fom diverse sociocultural backgrounds.I passed this information on to some teachers in the study interested in improving their teacher practices. There were various other opportunities for us to share ideas for activities, materials, websites, and professional learning.

Perhaps the most exciting development and the greatest opportunity for transformation as a result of this study was a dialogue that we have initiated between the teachers, the administration, and myself in a move to enhance the professional development opportunities available to the teachers at activity systems. In several conversations with the participating teachers, I asked them what would be their 'utopia' if we could do anything to improve the teaching and learning environment in the school. The dominant themes in these conversations were 1) more chances to collaborate with the other teachers to lesson plan, develop materials, and discuss curriculum; 2) time to observe one another in the classroom, and; 3) paid professional learning opportunities. In addition to these major themes, I also teased out their desire to be more involved in both the initial intake and on-going assessment of students so that they can better target learner's needs when developing learning objectives. Finally, and perhaps the most challenging contradiction to address, is the top-down decision making in the

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24 A framework of reference for pluralistic approach http://carap.ecml.at/

school systems that impacts the teachers in many ways, yet fails to include them in the process.

After reading at length about studies on professional learning for teachers in mainstream, language and special education, I felt that I had enough information to propose a guidelines for intercultural education for the teachers in Granada who had asked me for strategies, methodology and approaches to teach sociocultural diversity and for teachers in Vicenza who would like to benefit from it as well. I contacted the lead teacher in Granada for a Skype meeting to discuss potential next steps. I framed the conversation through the lens of what I had uncovered in writing this dissertation, in terms of what the research reports as best practices for teachers dealing with sociocultural diversity and what central themes emerged through my study of the teachers' activity systems.

With this study, it became obvious that the participating teachers needed professional development and training on intercultural communication skills and on problem solving abilities and also needed to be provided with examples of good practice and creative solutions. Some of the guideliness I propose based on review of literature are the following,

1. Get to know your students on a personal level: learn about their lives outside school, their family, the afterschool activities. The more you know your students, the better you can identify their needs.

2. If you have students from different countries: take the time to learn names. Apologize when you get names wrong, and work really hard to learn names the right way. Sometimes students who are used to teachers mispronouncing their name will settle for you doing it "good enough." Stress that you don't want "good enough." You want to call them by the name they want to be called.

3. Do not Lower or Raise achievement expectations based on ethnicity, special education label or socioeconomic status: First, we need to spend some serious time reflecting about our own

internalized biases . And if we are working to understand our biases, then we can begin to mitigate their effects. Second, we need to be sure that we are using effective, non-culturally-biased measures to determine student ability and to push them to their zones of proximal development. By making sure we are basing the ways we push our students in data drawn from legitimate measures, we can hopefully use that data to check some of our own biases.

4. Try to be culturally responsive rather than 'Race Neutral' :Start by reading the amazing literature on culturally responsive teaching, looking to Geneva Gay, Beverly Daniel Tatum and Gary Howard for starters and get creative! One of the most amazing things I see in teachers is the wonderful imagination that so many use to reach students. Apply that creativity to a race-conscious classroom, and we could see some powerful (and innovative) results.Then share! Blog about them or publish them in educational publications (while being open to critical feedback) so that we can all learn together.

5. Avoid Using Racially Coded Language: Whether we're referring to our students as (gentuza in Spanish) "ghetto" or to their parents as (delle iene in Italian) "tiger moms" or saying "if only the parents cared about their kids education," there are many overt ways that we can introduce racially coded language that devalues and/or otherizes our students and their families. We as educators know the power of language, so we must be extra careful and precise with ours. We need to be hyper vigilant about how we talk about our students and their families/communities. When we do the work to build relationships and to partner in the areas where we teach, then we see our students and their families as fully-realized human beings, and as a result,we can talk about our students in more humanizing ways. Thus, we have a responsibility to do more than to just connect with our students. We have a responsibility to act in solidarity toward collective liberation!

6. Be aware about not enforcing harsh discipline practices that disproportionately impact students coming from diverse sociocultural backgrounds: In our own classrooms, we have to

be willing to carefully investigate how we dole out discipline and work to change our practices. Do our management procedures reward students whose cultural backgrounds and expressions of, say, showing excitement reflect our own while punishing those who express these things differently. Perhaps more importantly, though, this is a problem that must be addressed in community.

7. Avoid (Inadvertently) valuing the dominant culture: One of the more insidious ways that teachers bring racism and discrimination into schools is in how we (often inadvertently) value predominant culture and European ways of being above all others. Whether we are strictly teaching the "canon" that is almost exclusively White or using examples in math or science problems that are more accessible to predominant and/or wealthy students than others, teachers inject the predominant culture into our classrooms all the time.

   During classroom observations, I found that teachers were calling their Italian students or Spanish students respectively (in an almost all-foreign student classroom) by name when they couldn't remember the names as readily of foreign students. We need to do obvious things like diversifying our curriculum and our materials, but beyond that, we must look inside for the more insidious ways that we value the predominant culture. By questioning all aspects of how we teach to consider whether we are devaluing some people and valuing others, we are taking important steps toward social justice in education.

8. Abstain from tokenizing students' cultures to connect with them:

The other side of the coin that comes with diversifying our curriculum and materials is that it can be done in a tremendously tokenizing way. If we don't get to know our students first, then we might assume that our Moroccon students and our students from République de Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa all are the same and that they all could relate to a cartoon about an Arab woman in Europe (from clothes presumably in France and in the historical period of the late Middle Ages), who takes care of a rich child, blond and blue-eyed, Azur, acting as his

nurse and his son of the same age, and dark with dark eyes, Asmar. Thus,we have to be careful not to tokenize students' identities in our efforts to connect with them.It's a lot more work, but we ought to consider waiting to decide on the books we teach or the curricular examples until we've had some time to listen to our students and their families. Ask questions about what they want to learn about, and listen and respond accordingly!Unfortunately that means that we can't just teach the same exact ways every year, but there are all sorts of resources to help!

9. Create space for authentic and accountable cultural exchange in your classroom:

For many teachers who grew up with little-to-know exposure to people from diverse sociocultural backgrounds and and other cultures, it can be hard to know how to connect with students. Eliminate trying to be culturally appropriate in an effort to connect with students. This means to exclude appropriating other cultures, particularly those of our students, to try to connect with them. Invest in understanding your own ethnic, religious, and cultural heritage.Then work hard to create space for cultural exchange in your classroom.

10. Do Something to Advocate for More Teachers and Staff from Diverse Sociocultural Backgrounds: Advocate for alternative licensing options for teachers, support teachers and other school staff from diverse sociocultural backgrounds.

11. Actively seek to build relationships across difference and seek input in your classroom: When we decide that teachers are the gatekeepers to what works in education and when the vast majority of teachers are from the predominant culture,we end up devaluing the insights and knowledge that many people from different sociocultural backgrounds offer. From parents to community leaders to other staff from diverse backgrounds in your school,there's a lot we can learn if we are willing to humbly listen to people from diverse cultural backgrounds and implement what we learn about intercultural education.

I presented some ideas to a lead teacher in Granada and a lead teacher in Vicenza, and the coordinator of a local teacher center in Andalusia. The teachers in Granada showed more

enthusiam to initate change n their systems. We discussed the possible structure and availability of support for professional learning communities. The conversation went very well. Together the cohort of participating teachers will have the opportunity to confer and generate a plan for future professional learning opportunities. This transformation is in its infancy, however, the likelihood of increased teacher involvement and empowerment is strong. The most encouraging aspect of the conversations thus far is that the school directors are very supportive and want to see the teachers get the support they need and want.

Promoting Activity Theory for Educational Research

In addition to the contributions of this study to the participants and the potential for transformations in their workplaces and practices, this study further contributes to the developing history of activity theory as a tool for catalytic research. As noted throughout the study, several disciplines are employing activity theory to address tensions and promote change and development; however, the majority of this work is taking place outside Italy. It is my hope that disseminating this research will draw attention to the power of activity theory as a great tool for contextualizing qualitative research that aims to explore the collective activity that encompasses all human cognitive development. A preliminary account of this research was presented recently at the I Seminar: Fundamentacion metodologica de los problemas de investigacion educativa at Granada University, resulting in a general "buzz" about activity theory. I received emails from , academics, and students working with learners from diverse socioultural backgrounds who were interested in what literature I would recommend to learn more about applying activity theory to both classroom based action research by teachers, collaborative community-based research, and research at the university level. I hope to see activity theory gain popularity as a research tool so that we can continue to explore human activity with the intention of providing a holistic perspective on situations while at the same time, moving activity systems toward a more advanced version of themselves.

Reflexivity of the Teacher Educator and Researcher

The impact of this study on me was perhaps the least expected of all the contributions of the study; however, as a "special populations" and language teacher, teacher educator, and educational consultant, the impact has been significant and is worth sharing. First, I have taken a very critical and reflective look at my practices as a professional developer and as a teacher educator in general. I previously offered one or two-day workshops either alone or with colleagues on various topics but primarily second language teaching and intercultural education. After all of these workshops, the feedback was very positive and the participants seemed to be screaming for more - more resources, more information, more ideas, more workshops. In hindsight and after completing this study, I have come to the conclusion that the positive reception of our workshops was more indicative of the poverty of available support for these teachers than the level of 'awesomeness' in my presentations. To my credit, I do believe that I have delivered some very important workshops, providing very useful background knowledge on this learner population, effective top-down and bottom-up strategies for addressing special needs, important sequences to incorporate into classroom practice, resources for on-going investigation and a ray of hope for those teachers working in isolation. But, what did it look like when the teachers returned to the classroom and unpacked what we delivered? Aside from positive feedback on forms and surveys delivered at the end of the workshops, I have little insight into the long-term impact or effectiveness of my 'interventions'.

I was most struck by this realization when I read the following paragraph in a chapter entitled *Developing Practice, Developing Practitioners: Toward a Practice Based Theory of Professional Education.* This chapter depicts the United States context almost 20 years ago; however it is very relevant to the activity systems decribed in this study:

> ***Although a good deal of money is spent on staff development in the United***
> ***States, most is spent on sessions and workshops that are often intellectually***
> ***superficial, disconnected from deep issues of curriculum and learning,***

fragmented, and noncumulative (Cohen and Hill, 1997; Little, 1994). …
Teachers are thought to need updating rather than opportunities for serious
and sustained learning of curriculum, students, and teaching. Instead they are
offered one-shot workshops with advice and tips of things to try, catalogues
filled with … activities for the latest educational ideas (cooperative learning,
problem solving, literary analysis, or something else), … six-step plans for a
host of teaching challenges, and much more. These offerings get a steady
stream of subscribers. Participation

… is the professional equivalent to yo-yo dieting for many teachers. Workshop
handouts, ideas and methods provide brief sparks of novelty and imagination,
most squeakily practical. But most teachers have a shelf over-flowing with dusty
vinyl binders, the wilted cast-offs of staff development workshops. (Ball &
Cohen, 1999, pp. 3-4)

Considering for a moment that my efforts at supporting teachers through one-shot
professional developments could be viewed in this way was shocking and even upsetting. The
reality is that this quote, though hard to swallow, is perhaps accurate.

I recall leaving professional conferences with wide eyes and big ideas, handouts and
new materials weighing down my tote bag, only to return home and never re-read a single
handout or print a single article that I starred in a lengthy bibliography while absorbing every
word of a presentation. It was never because the information was less useful when I got home,
but rather because when I got home - I was alone. The buzz in conferences and workshops
exists because, like a hive full of bees, there is a swarm, a collective consciousness to interact
with and develop alongside. Some of the more prolific and rich times in my teaching career
were during my first year teaching in the state of Texas in the United States when I was a
preschool teacher in collaboration with the Head Start Initiative, so co-teach with a teacher

from head start. Our classroom was part longetivity research for early interventions funded by The University of Texas Health Science Center's Children's Learning Institute, under the direction of Developmental Psychologist Michael Matthew Knight and Professor Dr. Susan H. Landry my co- teacher and I attended workshops, we implement strategies learned at the workshops. Our weekly routine was to meet, brainstorm, problem solve, reflect on assessment and instructional practices and of course, vent a little bit. I got to observe her and she observed me. We also have researchers observed as and sit with us afterwards to discuss the observations. Through uncovering the tensions in the activity systems of the participating teachers, I am reminded how much I thrived as part of a cohort and how prolific we were with instructional design and program development. This reminder has changed me as a professional developer and teacher educator. My continued involvement with teacher professional development will surely reflect this shift in perception and I will strive to implement community-driven, sustainable approaches to professional development, such as facilitating the establishment of professional learning communities in schools.

Secondly, this study has greatly contributed to the formation of my researcher self. At the early stages of this dissertation process, I did not have an identity as a researcher. Every step of the way presented me with a challenge and I questioned myself through the entire process. Once I jokingly remarked that I suffered from 'Imposter Syndrome.' In my early experiences with research, I struggled to find my voice and understand how I could extract data on humans in a way that would be not only informative but also impactful while at the same time, respecting those from whom I was gaining knowledge. Through this process, I walked with the memory of an incident on a trip to Morocco when I kept taking pictures of entertainers at Jamaa el Fna square and market place in Marrakesh's medina quarter. One man shook his head, followed me around and lowered his hand for money after I snapped his portrait without asking.

I was going to him money, but my trip budies strongly advised me not to give them money so as to avoid setting the wrong precedent. Our respective views on intercultural exchanges conflicted and neither was more 'correct' than the other, but they were strongly and emotionally informed by our personal values.

In the case of research, the following sentiment reflects my epistemology about qualitative research: "Objectivity is a chimera: a mythological creature that never existed, save in the imaginations of those who believe that knowing can be separated from the knower" (Lincoln, et al., p.122). My lived experiences, values, beliefs and biases will be present as I conduct research, but I will use my narrative skills and rely on rich, multi-voiced descriptions to share as much of the story as I possibly can to ensure trustworthiness. I have found my voice in a research paradigm that supports my aim to use research as a tool for promoting empowerment and social justice, engaging in the cocreation of meaning, informing communities of practice, while allowing for my intimate involvement in the inquiry process.

The level of reflection that I have experienced during this dissertation has promoted a closer look at each of my selves and the result is a better understanding of my identities. Researcher reflexivity, according to Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011),

> *demands that we interrogate each of our selves regarding the ways in which research efforts are shaped and staged around the binaries, contradictions, and paradoxes that form our own lives. We must question ourselves, too, regarding how those binaries and paradoxes shape not only the identities called forth in the field and later in the discovery processes of writing, but also our interactions with respondents, in who we become to them in the process of becoming to ourselves. (p. 124).*

This study was born of an interest in effective strategies for teaching sociocultural diversity and the source of that knowledge in teachers, but it evolved into so much more. I was inspired by early conversations to dig deeper, to go beyond the surface of classroom

practices and expose the myriad factors that have a direct impact on teacher morale and therefore teacher development and classroom practice. I was inspired by participating teachers to cultivate confidence and voice in teachers by giving privilege to the experiences of these teachers in this dissertation.

In the future, I will continue to explore applications of activity theory to uncover the relationships and tensions in various activity systems. I am already conceiving of ways to apply activity theory in my current job to disclose tensions that exist within various university departments with regard to instructional practices, professional learning and student learning. I look forward to continuing my work alongside my participants to develop approaches for reformulating tensions into opportunities for growth and expansive learning. This study does not end here because I have been changed by it and I cannot walk away, having packed my bag with data and generated a document for the 'partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy.' This dissertation, on the contrary, is only the beginning of a study, which will hopefully leave a legacy of transformations.

Future Research

This study demonstrates that exploring the classroom practices and knowledge base of teachers dealng with sociocultural diversity is a complex endeavor that should take into account the multitude of factors that impact the teachers' day-to-day professional lives. Making judgments about a teacher based on learner gains on standardized assessment is only as fair as the choice of assessment for a given student population. Evaluating a teacher's classroom practices as a silent observer in the class with vast background knowledge on 'what works' for a given population is only relevant against the backdrop of that teacher's professional learning opportunities as supported by her school. In other words, this study has revealed that much of what may be viewed as needing improvement in terms of classroom

practices is starkly affected by the institutional 'macro' structures within which the teacher is working.

I believe that three critical next steps should take place for this particular study. First, I believe that on-going, sustained work with participating teachers should continue in the context of the the schools in this study to set into motion the expansive learning cycles that will promote professional learning for all teachers in this context and perhaps serve as a model for professional learning in other schools in the areas. Secondly, I think a third generation activity theoretical approach (Engeström, 1999), which accounts for the larger quaternary contradictions between neighboring and interacting activity systems could shed much light on the tensions uncovered in this dissertation. For example, a thorough investigation into the activity system of the families of students coming from diverse sociocultural backgrounds as viewed from their point of view could open lines of communication in terms of what challenges they face to be involved to collaborate with teachers. Improved communication and understanding between the two activity systems could lead to a reconceptualization of parental involvement in decisionmaking that directly impacts their practice through a targeted instruction to address students needs. Third, a teacher-driven action research study to explore their classroom from the perspective of learners through activity theory could be ground breaking in terms of its capacity to give voice to the learners, convey 'what works' from their point of view and tap into their educational and vocational expectations and goals.

Conclusion

This study set out to observe teachers in the classroom to make sense of the thinking and doing that informs instructional practices for work with students coming from diverse sociocultural background in the middle school classroom. The direction this study took was unanticipated, but ultimately, I believe it took the direction it was meant to. Activity theory as an analytical tool in this study allowed me to peel back the layers of the activity systems that the partcipants navigate on a regular basis as teachers. The undeniable impact of several

factors on their activity systems have allowed us to identify key tensions that are essentially inhibiting their forward momentum, impeding their professional growth and undeniably affecting their students' learning. In light of these findings, I was able to begin to create a guidelines of best practices for the teachers. In doing so, we have set in motion the expansive cycles of transformation that will hopefully have significant, positive and sustained effects on immediate teaching contexts (the classrooms), but more importantly on the larger structures within which their activity systems are situated. If these transformations take place, then there is a potential for great professional learning and growth for all participating teachers, thereby directly impacting their students in important ways.

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Professional learning communities or communities of practice embody the key ingredients for teacher learning that promote reflection, increase motivation, provide a sense of belonging, and deliver opportunities to theorize practice. In cases where schools are not providing ample occasions for professional growth due to issues of funding, capacity, scheduling or lack of mutual understanding, teachers should proactively seek out such opportunities. Teachers can access resources that will give them the power and knowledge to organize communities of practice in their programs or at the very least, to join a community of practice with teachers around their region. These resources include professional organizations, on-line learning forums, and local teacher educators and researchers.

Professional organizations such as Centro di Studi Interculturali at the University of Verona or the CEP in Granada provide extensive support and guidance to teachers and promote the interaction between practice and theory. These organizations often have on-line publications of research in the field as well as toolkits for organizing workshops, study circles, lesson study, and implementing effective instruction (Burt, et al., 2008).

There are some on-line communities of practice where practitioners can come together to discuss issues related to their teaching contexts and expand upon their knowledge base. One such resource is:

http://www.teacherstalk.co.uk/forum/ and http://forums.atozteacherstuff.com/index.php, practitioners can partake in on-line courses and study circles targeting the needs of teachers dealing with diversity in the classroom.. Topics addressed through the teacher talk forum have included resources for struggling readers and dislexics, free classroom apps for collaborative learning, positive mindfulness program (e.g. self-awareness, self-compassion, positive emotions). The website lists the following benefits to joining:

- access to free high quality professional development through learning activities, such as online courses, training events, and study circles;

- opportunities to collaborate with professionals in your field

- through a community of practice;

- ongoing communication with subject matter experts in the field; and

- access to the latest research and materials that support teaching students from diverse sociocultural backgrounds.

Another valuable resource is the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe. This page offers self-study materials for teachers and other educational stakeholders. There are four modules: a discovery module; a module concerning the relationship between pluralistic approaches and language education policy; two modules presenting specific uses of FREPA in the classroom. These modules can also be used by teacher trainers in their preparation of training sessions.

The database CARAP-FREPA – Online teaching materials offers teaching activities which fall within the scope of pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures. The purpose of the collection of materials, which include input in different languages, is to facilitate access to classroom activities which will help learners master the knowledge, skills and attitudes which the framework lists as resources and which can be developed by pluralistic approaches. All the materials proposed refer explicitly to descriptors of resources as they can be found in the framework.

The Resource Center for Attention to Cutural Diversity in education/Centrode recursos para la atencion a la diversidaden education (CREADE) is a center created by the Spanish Ministry of Education through CIDE. It offers resources to support teachers and encourages research and innivation in intercultural education.

The Intercultural Workshop Portal is a project run by the Federation of Teachers (FETE-UGT) with the participantion and funding by the Directorate Generla for Immigrant Integration of the Spanish Ministry of Labor and Immigration, the European Fund for Integration (EFI), and the European Union and the Institute for Teacher Training, Research and Innovation (IFFIE) of the Spanish Ministry. It is available in various languages and has a forum in which users can interact and share experiences. It containts a digital library and a section with teaching tools to helpteachers in their work in the classroom.

Network of Intercultural Schools created to promote and support intercultural programs and actions. Also it aims to evidence successful practices being put in place in schools to respond to cultural diversity.

INTER, a group associated with the National University of Distance Education (UNED) constituted by of researchers and educators.The group carries ut research, training and cooperation activities with other institutions.

HUM-665, of the University of Almeria. This group conducts research, evaluation of intercultural education, and forums and annual conferences.

EduAlter is a web portal that offers books, games, videos and didatic materials on education for peace, development and interculturality, cultural awareness, discrimination and racism, migration, working with families, language learning among others.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. Biographical data

1. age, gender, professional role

2. years teaching/ years teaching at the current school

3. professional experiences dealing with socio-cultural diversity

4. any professional experiences abroad

5. Any training on intercultural education/ teaching to students from diverse socio-cultural background/ second language acquisition or multilingual environment

6. professional qualifications

7. linguistic competences

B. knowledge and understanding

1. how has teaching changed in the last years?

2. what resources or difficulties do you recognize?

3. how has the national and school policy responded to the changes?

4. how have the changes improved the education system and how have they affected it negatively?

5. what are the most meaningful success and/or failure stories in your teaching practice?

6. which were the causes for success and/or failure?

7. what approaches or methodology was used to address it?

C. Communication and relationships

1. do the changes require the need of new professional roles at school?

2. have the changes influenced the relationship dynamics between members of the school community?

3. do the changes require new students/ new collegues

4. how do you establish communication channels with parents from the different socio-cultural backgrounds?

5. Are there any collegues with diverse socio-cultural background?

6. how do you establish communication channels with other collegues?

7. what factors favor or obstacle communication and relationships with other members of the school Community (pupils, parents, other colleagues)?

8. how do you participate in curriculum policy or program teams?

9. do you have any partnerships from the school community to create learning experiences?-

10. what professional competences do you believe are needed to face the changes?-

11. what strategies has the school adopted to address the challenges of the changes?

D. Management and teaching

1. what competences do you consider necessary to provide equal opportunities to students with special needs? And students with disabilities?

2. what strategies do you use to address different learning styles in your lessons?

3. What strategies do you use to facilate access to the curriculum to students with specific learning disabilities? To students with diverse linguistic background?

4. what approaches do you use to address different issues related to gender? Sexual orientation? Different Religious background?

5. how do you incorporate students culture of origin in the curriculum?

6. do you feel you have the necessary competences to deal with all aspects of diversity present at your school? do your collegues? does the school?

7. where do you search for resources for teaching?

8. what criteria do you use to decide whether the didactic materials respond to diversity or not?

9. do you plan or collaborate in planning with other collegues?

10. What approaches do you use to design culturally sensitive assessment?

11. what continuing professional development activities would you like to do to improve your teaching practice?

GRIGLIA DI INTERVISTA

A. Dati biografici

1. età, sesso, ruolo professionale

2. anni d'insegnamento/ anni d'insegnamento presso l'attuale scuola

3. età, sesso, ruolo professionale

4. sperienze professionali occupandosi di diversità socio culturali

5. esperienze professionali all'estero

6. Quali formazioni in educazione interculturale / nell'insegnamento a studenti provenienti da ambienti socio culturali diversi (con origini socio culturali diverse)/ nell'acquisizione della seconda lingua o in contesti multilingue

7. Qualifiche professionali

8. competenze linguistiche

B. Conoscenze e comprensione

1. in che modo è cambiato l'insegnamento negli ultimi anni?

2. quali risorse o difficoltà ha rilevato?

3. come il sistema nazionale e le politiche/norme scolastiche hanno risposto ai cambiamenti?

4. in che modo i cambiamenti hanno migliorato il sistema scolastico e in che modo invece ne ha risentito negativamente?

5. quale è la più significativa storia di successo e/o di sconfitta nella sua pratica dell'insegnamento?

6. quali sono state le cause del successo o della sconfitta?

7. quali approcci o metodologie furono usate per affrontarla?

C. Comunicazione e relazioni

1. I cambiamenti hanno avuto bisogno di nuovi ruoli professionali nella scuola?

2. hanno I cambiamenti influenzato le dinamiche relazionali tra i membri della comunità scolastica?

3. cambiamenti richiedono nuovi studenti/ nuovi colleghi?

4.come stabilisce dei canali comunicativi con genitori provenienti da contesti socio culturali diversi (con origini socio culturali diverse)?

5. Ci sono colleghi con origini socio culturali diverse?

6. come stabilisce/instaura canali comunicativi con gli altri colleghi?

7. quali fattori favoriscono o ostacolano la comunicazione e le relazioni con gli altri membri della comunità scolastica (studenti, genitori, altri colleghi)?

8. in che modo partecipa ai criteri curriculari e ai programmi di gruppo?

9. vi sono partenariati nella comunità scolastica per creare esperienze di apprendimento?

10. quali competenze professionali sono necessarie secondo lei per affrontare i cambiamenti?

11. quali strategie ha messo in atto la scuola per affrontare le sfide relative ai cambiamenti?

D. Gestione e insegnamento

1. Per lei quali competenze sono necessarie per fornire uguali opportunità agli studenti con bisogni speciali? E a studenti con disabilità?

2. Nelle sue lezioni quali strategie userebbe per affrontare le differenze di stile di apprendimento?

3. Quali strategie userebbe per facilitare l'accesso ad un curriculo a uno studente con specifiche disabilità di apprendimento? E a studenti con origini linguistiche diverse?

4. Quali approcci usa per affrontare problematiche relative al genere? Orientamento sessuale? Origini religiose diverse?

5. Come inserisce l'origine culturale degli studenti nel curricula?

6. Sente di avere le necessarie competenze per affrontare tutti gli aspetti della diversità presenti nella sua scuola? Le hanno i suoi colleghi? Le ha la scuola?

7. dove trova il materiale per l'insegnamento?

8. Quali criteri usa per decidere se i materiali didattici rispondono/tener conto alla diversità oppure no?

9.   Lei pianifica o collabora alla pianificazione con gli altri colleghi?

10. Quali approcci usa per progettare una valutazione culturalmente sensibile?

11. Che tipo di attività di sviluppo professionale le piacerebbe seguire per migliorare la sua pratica d'insegnamento?

GUIÓN DE ENTREVISTA

A. Biografía

1. Edad, sexo, rol profesional

2. Enseñanza años/años de enseñanza en la escuela actual

3. experiencia profesional con diversidad sociocultural

4. experiencias profesionales en el extranjero

5. ¿Qué capacitación en la enseñanza/aprendizaje intercutural a estudiantes de diferentes entornos socioculturales (con diferentes orígenes socioculturales)/adquisición de la segunda lengua o en entornos multilingües posee?

6. Calificaciones académicas

7. Competencias lingüisticas

B. Conocimiento y Comprensión

1. ¿Cómo ha cambiado a ensenanza en los ultimos anos?

2. ¿Qué recursos o dificultades has encontrado?

3. ¿Cómo han respondido a los cambios el sistema educativo y las políticas nacionales/las reglas de la escuela?

4. ¿En qué forma los cambios han mejorado el sistema escolar, y en qué forma se vió afectado negativamente?

5. ¿Cuál es a historia de éxito más significativa y/o la derrota en su práctica de la enseñanza?

6. ¿Cuáles fueron las causas del éxito y/o la derrota?

7. ¿Cuáles enfoques o metodologías fueron utilizados para hacerle frente?

C. Comunicación y relaciones interpersonales

1. Con los cambios, ¿fueron necesarios nuevos roles profesionales en la escuela?

2. ¿Los cambios han afectado la dinámica de las relaciones entre los miembros de la comunidad escolar?

3. ¿Cómo estableces canales de comunicación con los padres de diferentes contextos socioculturales (con diferentes origenes socio-culturales)?

4. ¿Hay compañeros colegas con diferentes orígenes socio-cultural?

5. ¿Cómo estableces canales de comunicación con otros colegas?

6. ¿Cuáles factores ayudan o dificultan la comunicación con otros miembros de la comunidad escolar (alumnos, padres, colegas)?

7. ¿En qué manera participas en los criterios curriculares y la programación en grupo?

8. ¿Exiten asociaciones en la comunidad escolar para crear experiencias de aprendizaje?

9. En su opinión, ¿qué habilidades son necesarias para hacerle frente a los cambios?

10. ¿Qué estrategias pone en marcha la escuela para hacer frente a los desafios relacionados con los cambios?

D. Gestión y enseñanza

1. Para usted, ¿qué habilidades son necesarias para garantizar la igualdad de oportunidades para los estudiantes con necesidades especiales? Y para los estudiantes con discapacidades?

2. En sus lecciones, ¿que estrategias usarias para abordar el tema de las diferencias en el estilo de aprendizaje?

3. ¿Qué estrategias utilizarias para facilitar el acceso al plan de estudios para un estudiante con discapacidad específica de aprendizaje? ¿Y los estudiantes con diferentes origenes linguisticos?

4. ¿Qué enfoques has utilizado para hacer frente a las cuestiones de género? Orientación sexual? Diferentes orígenes religiosos?

5. ¿Cómo introduces el origen cultural de los estudiantes en la programación de las lecciones?

6. ¿Consideras que tienes las habiliades necesarias para hacer frente a todos los aspectos de la diversidad presente en su escuela? sus colegas? Y otros miembros de la comunidad educativa?

7. ¿Adónde buscas el material para la enseñanza?

8. ¿Cuáles son los criterios utilizados para decidir si los materiales de aprendizaje tienen en cuenta la diversidad o no?

9. ¿Usted planea o coopera en la planificación con otros colegas?

10. ¿Qué enfoques utilizas para diseñar una evaluación culturalmente sensible?

Interview Questions for professional Development Leaders (Spain)

1. Does the CEP (Centro del profesorado) conducts any type of assessment to identify the needs of professional development? If so, which?

2. What resources besides professional development trainings are offered by the CEP?

3. How are teachers supported to transfer the theoretical knowledge into practice?

4. Are professional development trainings mandatory for teachers?

5. Who finances the professional development trainings?

6. When are trainings offered? In summer? Weekends? After school? During school hours?

7. Is the professional development offered to teachers sustained over time?

8. What is the format of most professional development opportunities? Is it theoretical? Is it practical?

9. How does CEP evaluate effectiveness of their services?

10. Do the teachers evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the professional development offered?

11. Most teachers prefer to learn to use strategies that other teachers have already used effectively, who provides professional development training to the teachers in your region?

12. Does the CEP have any sort of learning communities where teachers can share the current practices?

APPENDIX 5 (SPANISH VERSION)

Guión de entrevista para los asesores del CEP (España)

1. ¿Realiza el CEP algún tipo de evaluación para identificar las necesidades de formación profesional de los profesores? Si es así, ¿cuál es?

2. ¿Qué recursos, además de capacitaciones de formación profesional son ofrecidos por el CEP?

3. ¿Cómo apoya el CEP los profesores a transferir los conocimientos teóricos a la práctica?

4. ¿Las actividades de formación profesional son obligatorias para los docentes?

7. ¿Cuándo se les ofrece? ¿En el verano, los fines de semana, después de las lecciones o durante la jornada escolar?

8. ¿La oferta de capacitación profesional para los profesores sostenible en el tiempo?

9. ¿Cuál es el formato de la mayoría de las actividades de formación profesional? ¿Es teórico? ¿Es práctico?

10. ¿Cómo el CEP evalúa la eficacia de sus servicios?

11. ¿Los maestros evalúan la calidad y la eficacia del desarrollo profesional que se les ofrece?

5. La mayoría de los maestros prefieren aprender a utilizar estrategias que otros docentes ya han utilizado con eficacia, ¿quiénes proporcionan son las personas que imparten la formación para el desarrollo profesional para los profesores en su región?

12. ¿Tiene la CEP algún tipo de comunidades profesionales de aprendizaje donde los profesores pueden compartir los enfoques, los métodos y los enfoques que utilizar para planificar sus lecciones?

APPENDIX 5 (ITALIAN VERSION)

Griglia d'intervista per i dirigenti scolastici

1. Quall'è il livello scolastico (scuola primaria, secondaria di primo grado, secondaria di secondo grado) dove si evidenzia un maggior abbandono scolastico degli alunni dell'Istituto?

2. Secondo Lei, quali sono i principali motivi dell' abbandono scolastico?

3. Che risorse prevede l'istituto comprensivo per i docenti?

4. Esiste una procedura sistematica per la valutazione delle competenze dei docenti dell'Istituto? se esiste, con che frequenza vengo valutate le pratiche dei docenti?

5. Che competenze Lei considera deve avere un docente per potere trattare la diversita' già presente dentro l'aule del suo Istituto?

6. Con il fine di migliorare il sistema educativo in generale, come può l'Istituto concedere un permesso per facilitare, l'ingresso dei ricercatori stessi, all'interno delle aule durante la giornata scolastica per svolgere indagine educative?

APPENDIX 6

Fieldnotes Form (Focus areas of observation)

1. Demonstrates knowledge of the range of teaching approaches for responding to diversity
2. Demonstrates knowledge of instructional methods for responding to diversity
3. Demonstrates knowledge of didactic materials for responding to diversity
4. Evidences skills of inquiry into socio-cultural issues

5. Initiates and sustains positive communication with pupils from different socio-cultural backgrounds
6. Initiates and sustains positive communication with parents from different socio-cultural backgrounds
7. Initiates and sustains positive communication with collegues from different socio-cultural backgrounds
8. Recognizes and responds to the communicative and cultural aspects of anguage (s) used in school

9. Creates open-mindedness and respect in the school community
10. Motivates and stimulates all pupils to engage in learning individualy
11. Motivates and stimulates all pupils to engage in learning in cooperation with others
12. Deals with conflicts and violence to prevent marginalization and school failure
13. Addresses socio-cultural diversity in curriculum and instructional development
14. Establishes a participatory, inclusive and safe learning environment

15. Selects and modifies teaching methods for the learning needs of the pupils
16. Encourages students to use their first language in the classroom and/or read books in their first language
17. Critically evaluates diversity within teaching materials, eg. Textbooks, videos, media
18. Uses a variety of approaches to culturally sensitive teaching
19. Uses a variety of approaches to culturally sensitive assessment

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