Claiming teacher voice through personal narratives: Exploring teacher and student
agency for learning in classrooms

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Abstract

As demands increase for classroom teachers, they must not only meet and maintain
expected ministry and board-wide standards, but also find a place for their own voices and their
pedagogical visions and ideals. This study demonstrates that lived experiences and individual
narratives play a crucial part in shaping teacher and student identities. Subsequently, this self
identification within educational settings informs personally relevant experiences for teachers
and students within various curriculum areas. As teachers find a place for their narratives within
the pedagogical realm, they will gain a greater sense of agency to carry out their practice with
greater significance. Similarly, as students’ learning is shaped by the merit of their own
experiences and interests, there will be greater investment in their learning both within the school
community and beyond. Ultimately, when teachers and students recognize that they have choice
in shaping their experiences within the education system, they feel valued and an increased sense
of empowerment to commit their efforts in establishing and/or contributing to unique learning
communities.