

THE STORIES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS WHO HOLD DOCTORATES:  
A NARRATIVE STUDY

Abstract

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The purpose of this qualitative, narrative study was to examine the stories of public elementary school teachers who hold doctorates and to discover what these stories tell about their understanding of education within the context of public schools. Specifically, investigation centered on reasons teachers in this group pursued doctorates. This study also examined the ways in which they describe their role as educators within the public school system; the ways in which they view their relationships with public school colleagues; and the ways in which the doctoral experience has influenced their beliefs about teaching, public schooling, and education. Participants included seven California elementary public school teachers who took part in two tape recorded interviews and contributed one story from their professional experience and/or a personal reflection on the interview process. Analysis of the data involved restorying the participants' stories, identifying segments of information, labeling the segments with

codes that describe their meaning, grouping the codes into themes, and identifying examples from the data that supported the themes. Six themes emerged from the collected data: *learning, connection and collaboration, conflict, leadership, satisfaction, and respect*. The participants described their various learning experiences, how they connect and collaborate with others, the ways in which they experience conflict, the contexts in which they exhibit leadership skills, the circumstances that have brought about personal satisfaction, and the ways in which they have observed and experienced respect. Results revealed that the teachers pursued a doctorate in order to broaden their knowledge base and educational experience and that the doctoral experience has given them a broader perspective of education. They have assumed a leadership role within the public school system, and although they acknowledged that they have a different viewpoint of education and schooling than their colleagues, they see those with whom they work as valuable members of the school community. Implications from the results focused on the importance of change within the learning process and the responsibility of leadership that comes with advanced knowledge and experience.