



Restory a Resilience Experience After a Natural Disaster

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Abstract

As an attempt to describe a resilience process after a landslide through narratives, this research study aims at analyzing, interpreting and describing how Chevano tenth graders restory their resilience experience after a natural disaster in their hometown. This inquiry was carried out with students at López Quevedo School in Jericó - Boyacá, Colombia. The information was gathered through students' narratives, students' interviews, and researcher's field notes. Narratives made part of a pedagogical intervention to explore student's ways of coping with tragedy, and they allow students' voices to be expressed. It was revealed that students needed to share their stories to achieve a process of resilience but it was important to give participants the time to start that process. Moreover, they needed to be involved in a

Resumen

Como un intento por describir un proceso de resiliencia después de un deslizamiento de tierra a través de narrativas, este proyecto de investigación tiene como objetivo analizar, interpretar y describir cómo unos estudiantes Chevanos de grado décimo relatan sus experiencias de resiliencia después de un desastre natural ocurrido en sus lugares de origen. Ésta investigación se llevó a cabo con estudiantes del Colegio López Quevedo en Jericó - Boyacá, Colombia. La información fue recogida a través de narrativas, entrevistas y notas de campo. Las narrativas hicieron parte de una intervención pedagógica para explorar las maneras en que los estudiantes hacen frente a una situación adversa, en ese sentido las narrativas permiten que las voces de los estudiantes sean expresadas.

social context they felt they made part of as well as in a routine in which they could set apart the negative thoughts and feelings of sadness from their present experiences.

Key words: Resilience process, disaster-related event, narratives.

A través de éste estudio se reveló que los estudiantes necesitan compartir sus historias para alcanzar un proceso de resiliencia, pero que es importante brindarles el tiempo necesario para empezar el proceso, esto significa que los estudiantes deciden cuándo hacerlo. Adicionalmente, necesitan hacer parte de un contexto social que les brinde un sentido de pertenencia así como de una rutina en la cual los estudiantes Chevanos puedan apartar de sus experiencias actuales los pensamientos negativos y los sentimientos de tristeza.

Palabras clave: Proceso de resiliencia, deslizamiento de tierra, narrativas.

Introduction

Cheva is a town located in a mountainous region at 3200 meters above sea level; this town was affected by a landslide in 2011. Comité Regional para la Prevención y Atención de Desastres (CREPAD) argues that the main causes for this natural disaster were mainly three, its location in a mountainous region, the instability of the ground and the heavy rains of the year.

Due to the fact that my participants were affected by a landslide in Cheva on April 18th, 2011, this study investigates how Chevano tenth graders restory their resilience experience after a natural disaster in their hometown. A group of seven students, three male and four female, who were studying at the public institution López Quevedo in Jericó - Boyacá, Colombia and who belonged to Cheva were engaged to talk about their stories after the hard situation to

analyze the process of resilience they followed after it.

The main motivation for me as a researcher to develop this study was the desire to know the experience some students faced after the natural disaster that happened in their hometowns since some of these students acted in a different way from the students who were not affected by the disaster. This interest awoke after doing a direct observation of those students' attitudes not only in the English classes but also when they were in their breaks or participating in school sports. Information told by participants in relation to their experiences after the landslide suggested that keeping together and having a positive view about what happened in their towns became crucial to overcome the hard situation. This perspective they had made me think about resilience as the social construct of my research.

Theoretical Framework

In this section I intend to discuss the relationship between resilience and restorying past experiences through narrative texts as the main focus of this study. Information is pertinent because it informs us the way people recover from a crisis by telling their stories.

Narratives from a language education perspective

From the perspective of language education, narratives are used in studies of educational experience. Clandinin and Connelly (2013) claim that the notion that narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world explains the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of stories; teachers and learners are in their own and other's stories. In this sense, working with Chevano students listening to their experiences after the natural disaster helped both the students and the researcher to reconstruct their life experiences.

Additionally, telling stories is also a meaningful tool to help in the process of resilience. McLean and colleagues (2007) assert that telling negative stories is deemed a more powerful catalyst for creating positive perceptions of self. It means that reflecting on the detail of a disruptive life event helps shape self-identity much more effectively than a positive story, which more commonly serves to educate. Studying participants' resilience process helps us to understand how those adverse situations contribute for them to become stronger than they were before and face bad situations with a serene attitude and looking at all the perspectives they can use to overcome crisis.

Resilience

Resilience is seen by different authors as a return time to a stable state following a perturbation. Henderson and Milstein (1996) argue that the idea of resilience refers to the fact that people can bounce back from negative life experiences and often become even stronger in the process of overcoming them (p.3). There are several factors that have an impact on the resilience or vulnerability of the person who faces adversity. According to Kotliarenco (1997) a risk factor is a situation or circumstance that decreases the person's ability to be resilient and increases vulnerability. In addition, a protective factor is a situation or circumstance, skill or characteristic that acts as a means for the individual to be resilient. It increases resilience and decreases vulnerability.

Voice

Several educational researchers refer to the voice as the research participants' voice. However, more scholars (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002; Gudmundsdottir, 2001) within the narrative approach use the term voices rather than voice because they recognize that the narratives are in part personal stories shaped by the knowledge, experiences, values and feelings of the persons who are telling them. At the same time, there are also collective stories that are shaped by the addressees and the cultural, historical and institutional settings in which they occur (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002, 2005). During this study, those collective stories emerged when the researcher and the participants co-constructed their experiences in the place where the facts

happened. This means that the specific place which awakened the participants' stories lodged them as a vivid film in their memories.

The process of claiming voice is, therefore, basically an interaction between the individual's beliefs and experiences and past, present and future external voices. In the study, there came together the voices of each participant. That voice reflects the interaction between intermental and intramental processes (Vygotsky, 1978). The notion of intermental processes refers to the social sphere; it is the fact that the landslide was a meaningful social event which affected the participants' lives. Furthermore, the notion of intramental processes refers to the inner psychological sphere. In this way, narratives connect the individual and their social context, and therefore, a multitude of voices are present within an individual's stories. Along the storytelling process, each participant told their story from the view they experienced the adversity (intramental process). However, the version of each participant was different although the natural disaster was the same for all (intermental process).

The importance of narratives in the process of resilience

Referring to the emotional aftershock, narratives play an important role in the process of resilience, Riessman (2000) stresses that "Where storytelling can elucidate personal life events and their meanings, it can also serve to reveal something about both conflicting and shared social understandings" (p.11). Denning (2002) asserts that the power of a story to

bring about change comes not from the story itself but from the reactions that it creates in the minds of the listeners. In this respect, when participants shared their experience after the landslide, they created a sense of catharsis in which they recreated their lives.

Family and school as network support

Social support has been identified as a significant component in resilience, and the maintenance of relationships is a component of social support (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Most children adapt and grow through traumatic experiences with care and support from family, friends and teachers. Parents as well as friends encourage people in adverse situation to express their aftershock emotions to help them to re-build and re-evaluate their experience and look for new alternatives to overcome it.

In relation to the community as well as educative centers contribution, Pianta (2006) asserts that school is seen as a context for child development which implies a dynamic and integrative process. Eccles and Roeser (1999) highlight that when teachers are in contact with vulnerable people they need to keep regular routines and activities as much as possible. In this respect, school systems play a central role due to the fact that in the aftermath of disaster, people in a community often look to the reopening of the school as an important symbol of recovery and normalization (Masten & Obradovic, 2006).

So when working with vulnerable people, as Chevanos were, teachers can use effective coping strategies to foster supportive relationships, and helping children

understand the disaster event. They were encouraging teenagers to talk about disaster-related events, strengthening teenagers' friendship and peer support and emphasizing teenagers' resilience.

Encouraging adolescents to talk about disaster-related events was applied when I built relationships with the participants working with them in Cheva, which was the place where they felt comfortable. Moreover, I used "strengthening adolescents' friendship and peer support" in order to promote children's relationships with peers to cope with difficulties and to help decrease isolation. When I as researcher shared time with the participants, they not only felt confident with themselves but also developed supportive relationships with their teachers and classmates. Besides, another strategy I used was "emphasizing teenager's resilience". It focuses on their competencies in terms of their daily life and at other difficult times. Through narratives, participants felt free to tell their stories. In that way, they were following a process of resilience because they saw the same situation from different perspectives and regarding their future most of the time.

Research Design

This work emphasizes on the educational research; it refers to the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; learners, teachers, and researchers are storytellers and characters in their own and others' stories. Consequently, this project is also framed in the method of narrative inquiry. This one refers to a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and re-storying where the researcher needs

to be aware of constructing a relationship in which participants' as well as researcher's voices are heard. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explain that "qualitative researchers seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning" (p.1). Then, this project fits within this approach because it sought to study the ways humans experience the world.

At the beginning of 2012, I decided to start the action plan. So, I invited participants to be part of my research. First, I had informal talks with them in order to explain the objectives of the investigation as well as its confidentiality. Second, it was necessary to use consent formats that the participants filled in and signed. In these consents, they agreed to participate freely in the inquiry. As a third step, I had to share a long time with them in order to gain their confidence for them to share with me as a researcher their concerns in relation to their experiences with the landslide. Nonetheless, the process of getting confidence was long because I could not press them to tell me any information.

Setting and participants

This project took place in Cheva, the real place where the disaster happened. Also, the study was done in places away from school because participants stated that they preferred to collaborate with the project if we developed it in places familiar to them, their hometown and surroundings.

A group of 10th graders who belonged to Cheva community were chosen for the development of this project. They were selected bearing in mind that all of them were affected by the natural disaster happened in

2011 and they lived similar experiences which affected their lives meaningfully in many social, personal and economic aspects. Although seven students were involved in the project, not all of them were constant in the process because of their personal activities that is why I did not take them as active participants in my investigation. There were five participants two female and three male who were active and constant in the process and they became the participants who provided me with the data for the inquiry. Their ages ranged between 16 and 20 years old. They were studying 10th grade at López Quevedo School. Most of the participants lived in rural areas and belonged to the low social stratum.

Bearing in mind my professional ethics as researcher, I could not reveal the real names of the participants involved in this inquiry. Thus, each member received a nickname according to the initial syllable of their names or how people called them at school. I explored in depth what happened with the chosen participants' process during the writing of narratives. These participants were identified as follows: Romeo, Mandy, Crisavacu, Dufev and Luxmy.

Data collection techniques and instruments

As the aim of this inquiry was to characterize Chevano tenth graders' restorying of their resilience experience after a natural disaster in their hometown, then it was important to know the participant's perceptions, feelings and voices they hold about their lives, their hometowns and the resilience process they faced after the landslide; also, how they made them evident through narratives.

To collect and triangulate data I used different techniques like observation, interviews and oral and written stories. Among the instruments used there were field notes of the shared experiences, transcription of storytelling and transcriptions of interviews.

Story Telling. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) say that many stories are told by participants in a narrative inquiry as they describe their work and explain their actions. Participants used their stories as a way of communicating their assumptions in relation to a fact happened in their hometown. Through narration of life stories as well as storytelling, participants in this research narrated specific moments of their lives related to the landslide itself, the way in which they perceived it, and in some way the process they followed to overcome the situation.

Interviews. Kahn and Cannel (1957, p.49) describe interviewing as "a conversation with a purpose". The aim of interviews was not only to gather data about the life experiences narrated by the participants which are accounts of events that happened before, during and after the landslide but also to verify information participants wrote in their narratives.

Transcription of tape - recordings of visits to places. Bailey (2008) suggests the use of audio tapes as it is possible to go back to research issues long after the actual event. The main objective for transcribing what participants said was to describe its reconfiguration. Then, I used this instrument because it provided me the possibility to have the actual words generated after each

visit to the places where the landslide occurred and I was able to check the actual content of the visits even long after they had taken place.

Field notes. Clandinin & Connelly (1995) state that “Field records collected through participant observation in a shared practical setting are one of the primary tools of narrative inquiry work” (p.5). I employed this instrument in a continuous way in order to register textual words and expressions about the participants’ process of resilience. In that sense, the researcher’s notes are an active recording of her construction of events (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). The notes are an active reconstruction of the events and those events are recorded with the researcher’s interpretation.

Intervention

This research study had a procedure that was applied as a strategy to encourage participants to narrate their stories in relation to a natural disaster that happened in 2011 with the aim to understand the process they faced to overcome that situation. I decided to work with the model proposed by Clandinin & Connelly (1988), they consider two basic developmental phases of narrative research: Beginning the Story and Living the Story.

Before explaining each one of the stages and phases I want to make reference to the environment created to carry out the different phases and stages of the research. Smith (2001) argues that environment goes beyond a physical part, it is understood as the spatial relationships which can indicate types of functions, interactions, or inhabitants and it may also provide

backgrounds, props or memories. When the research started, I realized they considered the physical place as more than a simple piece of land. I understood that by studying people’s stories, we may come to understand the place of our projects in the way people interpret and know the world (Smith, 2001).

Phase 1: Beginning the story

The first step for starting the process is that the researcher listens to the participants’ stories; the researcher needs to be aware of constructing a relationship in which participants’ and researchers’ voices are heard. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988).

Stage 1 - Sensitizing. The purpose in this stage was to familiarize participants with the use of narratives, also, to awaken participants’ interests in telling their stories. To carry out this stage, we agreed on the use of Spanish in order to better understand the concerns they provided along the process.

Stage 2 - Mapping the territory. The researcher as well as the participants took long walks by the places affected by the landslide. For developing that stage it was necessary for the participants to trust the researcher and to feel confident enough to tell the stories of those places they remembered. In those long walks, participants told me how they remembered those places, and they described them.

Phase 2: Living the story (Work on coping strategies)

The second relevant step refers to Living the story. This step becomes more complex

because people involved in it become part of the process and narratives of the participants and the researcher become, in part, a shared narrative construction and reconstruction throughout the inquiry. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988).

Stage 3 - Encouraging teenagers to talk about disaster-related events: Teenagers needed an opportunity to discuss their experiences in a safe, accepting environment. During those meetings, students let me know their personal concerns about the natural disaster that happened in their hometown.

Stage 4 - Strengthening teenagers' friendship and peer support: It is about teenagers' relationships with peers and teachers in order to cope with difficulties as well as to help decrease isolation. Participants kept a relationship among themselves that became stronger after the natural disaster. Playing the "believing game" participants felt confident to write or tell freely if they had experienced changes in relation to their daily, social or even academic lives after the landslide. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) describe the sense of collaboration as the "believing game". It is a way of knowing that involves a process of self-insertion in the other's story as a way of coming to know it and as a way of giving voice to the other. Then, both the participant and the researcher were involved in the project as main actors of it.

Stage 5 - Emphasizing teenagers' resilience: In the process of resilience the use of narratives was essential for healing themselves because they could express

their thoughts and emotions emerging from the experience they lived with the landslide.

Data Analysis

For interpreting the findings that resulted from the process I carried out when I analyzed the information gathered I decided to use narrative analysis because of two aspects; first, it focuses more directly on the dynamic of the interpretation process (Ezzy, 2002), second, narrative analysis begins from the standpoint of the storyteller. Moreover, narrative analysis contextualizes not only the sense-making process by focusing on the person, but also studies the world through the eyes of one storyteller and applies a theory of time.

Procedures for the data analysis

To develop the data analysis process, I took into consideration Riessman (2007). He sets the content analysis as a way to do that process. It focuses on the events and experiences described in the narrative in order to present a holistic picture of the participants' experiences after suffering a natural disaster. Having the research question always in mind, I searched for ways to organize data. In this sense, I agree with Shope (2006) who states that "When you are preparing for a journey, you own the journey. Once you've started the journey, the journey owns you" (p.165). This means that I (researcher) was investigating meanings of experiences about Chevano participants but, at the same time, the research process itself was a series of experiences because the researcher and the participants shared their experiences to build a new one.

To analyze and validate data I used three instruments storytelling, interviews and field notes. In the first place, the transcripts of storytelling and interviews. They revealed the idea of overcoming bad situations and preparing themselves to have a process of resilience in order to face their present and future. In the second place, the analysis of field notes. They helped me to corroborate information in participants' written production or said in the interviews. The transcriptions of interviews as well as the field notes helped me to validate data.

After the validation was completed, I continued the content analysis with reading through each theme separately and coding further for subthemes and categories that emerged. After reading each file for several times, I realized that there were some elements narrowly interconnected which allowed me to associate meaningful patterns for reducing information to label categories and create topic groups. This is when the topic codes, as defined by Richards (2005) were converted to analytical codes that portray meanings in context and express new ideas. To do the triangulation part of the process, I made a contrast among narratives, interviews and field notes to establish common patterns concerning the process of resilience and finding. Some names that helped me to focus the categories of the research were: "Looking myself in the mirror and daring myself".

Category 1: Looking at myself in the mirror

The present category aims at explaining the relationship among the experiences participants lived during and after the

landslide and their process of writing narratives to reflect about those hard experiences. For this reason, this category includes two main themes. They were the journey of a hard experience and my house beyond a simple territory. I decided to group those themes in this category because all of them are similar to the extent participants reflect upon themselves facing this adverse situation. The first topic is connected to the specific vivid moments and consequences left and the way they seem to bounce back from those shocking moments. The second one has to do with the meaning of their home beyond a simple structural place.

According to the analysis of data gathered from narratives, interviews and field notes. I could notice that from the beginning of the process participants expressed they wanted to be part of the project; however, they suggested they wanted the project to be developed in their hometown. They argued that in Cheva, they felt the support that the family could give them. Moreover, they said it was easier for them to express when they are in places where the hard situation happened.

The following excerpt shows that participants considered my work as important but they thought it was going to go well because it was developed in the place where the disaster happened: *"Teacher, este trabajo va a salir bien porque vamos a contar nuestras historias en el lugar exacto donde pasaron las cosas"*. *Researcher's FN, #1.*

Taking into consideration the notes I took along the walks, I reread them giving sense

to the experience itself. I organized the ideas putting together the participants' as well as the researcher's interpretations. The examples below illustrate how participants perceive their hometown and the attitudes they took when I visited them to start the project. *They are happy because I visited them in their hometowns. At 9:30 the other practitioners arrived with the aim of starting work in my project that has been called "Cheva is 'Cheva' despite the disaster".* Researcher's FN, #2.

Going back to experiences is not easy when those situations had hurt them and participants prefer keeping silence about them. That is one relevant reason, why working on this topic was complex and I had to gain trust in order for participants to share their stories/ experiences. At the beginning it was difficult to obtain information because they saw me as a strange person. I remember one of my participants said: "A veces tratamos de olvidar las cosas que nos hieren pero el miedo vuelve cuando empieza a llover y las imágenes pasan como si estuviera pasando ahora" Researcher's FN, #2.

The excerpt above shows that they had series of images that they cannot take away from their mind despite the time or the new experiences they have had. Due to this fact, I assume they kept memories about that experience that become stronger when it rains and there exists a possibility that another adverse situation happens.

Walking by the different areas made participants remember that day clearly and there are different perspectives they had

about it. When people tell their stories as they experience them, they can explore their reactions to challenging life events and they can discover how they can respond effectively to difficult situations in their lives. The following excerpt evidence the way a participant remembers that day.

El deslizamiento venía muy lentamente, veía como las cosas de algunos vecinos, que otras personas se caían, cómo la tierra se movía y se hacía grietas y como los hijos de esas personas lloraban y también ellos, recuerdo cuando mi casa se cayó, como algunas personas salían corriendo a salvar su vida. Researcher's FN, #3.

In addition, something that seems curious to me was the meaning they had about their houses. When we did the cartography sessions, they were asked about their definition of house. Some of them regarded their houses as more than a structural place. The excerpts below evidence the meaning they give to their houses. A participant asserted: "Mi casa es donde se comparte el aspecto familiar y los valores que vamos desarrollando en el transcurso de la vida." (Taken from N, Romeo, #4)

Another participant wrote: "Mi casa significa donde una persona inicia su educación espiritual, de valores y educativos, es un hogar de donde uno no quiere salir." (Taken from N, Dufev, #4)

Those excerpts revealed that they consider their house not only as the space where they lived but also a place where members of a family built their values.

All in all, the previous description of the participants' experiences about a hard situation became the first category named "Looking at myself in the mirror". For me, a combination of all experiences and the sense participants made of their houses as well as their stories stimulate the curiosity to know how they face the process of resilience through the telling of their stories.

Category 2: Daring myself

The name of this category "Daring myself" emerged from the interpretation I did about the participants' expectations about the future despite the adversity they faced. Starting by participants' perceptions after the landslide, I found that participants felt sad but despite their situations, they thought positively about their new start. A factor that called my attention is the fact that participants strengthened their relationships with their partners as well as their family. The American Psychological Association [APA] (2008) stresses that family support and renewing friendship can help return normalcy to a child's life, providing reassurance and a sense of safety (As cited in La Greca, 2008).

Lo que importa de esta experiencia es que seguimos unidos como familia. (N, Luxmy # 2)

In short, this extract reflects the participant's positive perceptions about the relation with their families. Through narratives they expressed that they felt strong as family because they kept together and now they value more what they have.

In support of this view, one participant told me how important the collaboration of other

people is for him, he included as a relevant point that neighbors help each other in the adversity. "*A raíz de lo que sucedió estamos más preparados para afrontar una situación como ésta y estamos siempre dispuestos a colaborar cuando sea necesario*" (Taken from N, Crisavacu, # 6)

Apart from family support, I could notice there was peer support when they were asked to write their stories. Before they started writing, they discussed or told their experiences to each other in order to awaken their ideas. After that, they looked for different places to start writing. The idea that participants supported each other helped me to consider "Family and peer support" as a main topic to correlate ideas. I confirmed that the landslide helped them to discover their potential capacities to keep together and help each other when necessary. Furthermore, they understood the value of keeping a family.

Along the process, I expanded my data and I revised the interviews to validate them. The interviews helped me to corroborate data. Participants deepened their answers in the interviews and I could clarify doubts in relation to the participants' experience. Some extracts show the feelings they had when we mapped each affected area:

Al recorrer cada lugar se siente un sentimiento de tristeza y de nostalgia de darme cuenta que ya no queda nada de lo que era antes. Sin embargo, pues toca continuar y estar más preparado por si algo así vuelve a ocurrir. (Q1, Crisavacu # 3)

Las cosas pasan por algo y es una prueba de Dios para que nos demos cuenta que las cosas materiales no son tan importantes

como la vida de uno. (QI, Dufev # 3)
Esta situación te enseña que no debes estar apegado a las cosas materiales ya que nada dura para siempre y es una buena oportunidad que te exige seguir adelante con más fuerza para valorar lo que tienes. (QI, Crisavacu # 4)

In the examples above I noticed a tone of nostalgia, but at the same time hope at the end of the path. In addition, some participants commented that life is more important than material things and they always show a positive thought when they talked about the future. Those examples made me think that my participants became stronger after the natural disaster happened. Those positive words let me reflect about another important topic which emerged from the project: "Become stronger to hatch my life experience".

Luthar (2006) says that "resilience is an atypical process in that positive adaptation is manifested in life circumstances that usually lead to maladjustment" (p.739). Participants showed they faced that adaptation in different ways. A participant mentioned in an interview "Al principio, como mi mamá estaba afuera sentimos angustia de encontrarnos y saber que estábamos todos. Sin embargo uno quiere hacer tantas cosas y salir rápido que el tiempo se hace más lento" (Taken from QI, Dufev, #2)

Those examples illustrated that there was a feeling of distress and, at the same time, anxiety to protect themselves. Dufev was worried about his family; his priority was centered on all the members of the family being together.

When I wrote some field notes, there were some aspects related to the resilience process:

"It is almost 2:00 p.m. and we were having a long walk, and a participant walked towards me and hugged me. I said nothing but he smiled at me and told me that I was part of his life and that he was grateful with me for sharing their experiences with them" Researcher's FN, #3.

The above example demonstrated that sharing time with the participants contributed in the process of resilience in the way that people involved in it became part of the process, and started sharing a narrative construction and reconstruction throughout the inquiry. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988).

However, since the beginning participants finished each sentence with a positive thought. "*Gracias a Dios nadie murió y acá todos ayudan y más en las situaciones difíciles*" Researcher's FN, #3.

When participants were asked to describe the perspective they had of the situation, some participants reported: "*Sí, fue duro perderlo todo en un momento. Bueno, pero la vida sigue y toca seguir luchando día a día*". (Taken from N, Romeo, #2)

Dufev said : "*Las cosas pasan por algo y que es una prueba de Dios para que nos demos cuenta que las cosas materiales no son tan importantes como la vida de uno. Además ahora toca es salir adelante*". (Taken from N, Dufev, #2)

Crisavacu wrote: "*no debes estar apegado a las cosas materiales ya que nada dura*

para siempre y es una buena oportunidad que te exige seguir adelante con más fuerza para valorar lo que tienes". (Taken from N, Crisavacu, #2)

According to the previous participants' answers, I inferred that Romeo, Dufev and Crisavacu have a specific perspective about their lives. Romeo argued that the situation was hard but in spite of it, life continues and he has to follow surviving. Dufev believes that there was some reason for the situation to happen, also, he claims that people have to value life because it is the most important. Additionally, Crisavacu agrees with Dufev in the sense that material things are not more important than life itself. Through those quotations it is clear that participants have an inner force to continue living and surviving.

Conclusions

This study was interesting because I yielded information I did not expect to find. For this reason, this study can be a tool for other researchers who may be interested in social issues that arise from reflection about students' social experiences. As participants have different perspectives to live hard experiences, applying narrative methods seems a natural progression because narrative may capture the social understandings and implicit knowledge of participants' lives.

It was evidenced that sharing time and experiences with participants strengthens relationships. Additionally, sharing time with them allows teachers, to know at least in the surface, students' perceptions about their personal experiences. Furthermore,

teachers are ready to deal with those students who face difficult situations. Thus capturing these stories and analyzing them may lead to a better insight into the complexity of human's lives.

Similarly to Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 19), I believe that an "educational experience should be studied narratively" and I feel that prompting for narratives in life history interviews with students can add important layers to understanding their experiences, their motivations, feelings and plans and it facilitates the exploration of the interplay between structure and agency as embedded in students' narratives. Through these narratives we can also gain a glimpse of how students' experience as a phase of life is socially constructed and we can describe their practices while preserving their voices.

Limitations

One of the limitations I found developing this study was in relation to time. I shared time with them, but working on social topics requires a lot of time (5 - 6 months) where participants and researcher share time together to achieve an objective. Nevertheless, I shared a lot of time observing population and sharing the different experiences with them but I needed more time for getting more solid data.

Another limitation was in relation to trust. As this is a social topic related to a natural disaster, most of the times vulnerable people prefer not to talk about that personal situation to other people. That is why the researcher needs to develop certain capacities to obtain information from vulnerable people. Thus, the researcher has

to play “The believing game” in order to co – construct their stories. It is important that teachers become familiar with coping strategies in order to help their students without hurting them.

When developing this type of work, a researcher needs to take into account that it takes time and s/he needs to be patient and wise when collecting information. Also it is important that the researcher sets a relevant topic not only for participants but also for researchers. It means that both participants and researchers need to have an open mind to absorb the small details that enrich the investigation.

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