

BELIEFS CRISIS DURING THE PANDEMIC: VOICES FROM MATHEMATICS TEACHERS IN ITALY AND HONG KONG

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In this contribution we report part of a wider study concerning teachers' beliefs on mathematics teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following Phillip (2007), we see beliefs as “lenses that affect one’s view of some aspect of the world or as dispositions toward action” (p. 259). An interesting trend of research concerns belief change. Liljedahl (2010) argues that change may happen in a rapid and profound way when an existing belief starts to be questioned or even rejected by the teacher, typically during or after an experience of professional development. Freeman (1989) argues that change does not necessarily mean a change in practice, rather a change in awareness. Our working hypothesis is that the “forced” shift to distance teaching, an experience far stronger than a professional development course, may have fostered a teacher change, especially in terms of awareness. We introduce the concept of “belief crisis”, conceptualized as a questioning of existing beliefs and practice. The present study is aimed at presenting and discussing instances of “belief crisis” through the voices of the teachers.

The larger study was conducted in two regions, Italy and Hong Kong, that were early and deeply touched by the pandemic. In these two regions, all teachers have expressed distance teaching for several months. The study was organized in two steps: a first online questionnaire (administered to 193 teachers, from grade 1 to grade 13) and a subsequent semi-structured interview, performed on a convenient sample of teachers (29 teachers). For this contribution we confine ourselves to the analysis and comparison of the exemplary “voices” of two teachers, Marilu (from Italy) and Anita (from Hong Kong). For both teachers the strong experience was the starting point for a reflection on what is really “non-negotiable” in their teaching. Both teachers recognized also that the distance teaching experience will influence their future teaching since they had the opportunity to try and succeed in some teaching methods that they would like to keep also in present teaching. Here we see the first hints of teacher change, as a result of the documented belief crisis.

References

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