



Teacher Learning within the Process of Lesson Study

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Abstract

The focus of this presentation emanates from the research collaboration between a school teacher and a lesson study leader. In this study, a primary school Art teacher worked closely with the lesson study leader as a personal and professional learning process. Lesson study is an ongoing professional learning approach widely used in Japan and often attributed as an important tool for the improvement of teaching (Huang, Takahashi & da Ponte, 2019). In a lesson study teachers work together to identify goals for student learning and, consequently, engage in ongoing cycles to plan, teach, observe and evaluate the lesson. The Art lesson study was planned for a group of 12 boys in Grade 4 (aged 8 years) and focused on pupils' understanding of the concepts of foreground, middle ground and background and their application in an art work. An important aspect of teacher learning is the opportunities that arise for teachers to ponder pedagogical challenges and their potential solutions through an ongoing process of negotiation, reflection, knowledge sharing and knowledge development. From a socio-constructivist perspective, the lesson study leader and an Art education expert acted as knowledgeable others (see Vygotsky, 1978) to challenge the teacher's knowledge, beliefs and practices in the process of lesson planning and design. This collaboration, involving weekly face-to-face meetings and daily online communications over a period of seven weeks, resulted in ongoing conflicts for the teacher. In her attempt to resolve these conflicts, the teacher kept a reflective journal in which she wrote down lengthy accounts of the discussions with knowledgeable others, her own struggles and ways of resolving these. Data from the reflective journal were analysed using thematic analysis (see Braun & Clarke, 2006) and triangulated with the different lesson plan versions and resources produced along the process. Data show that discussions resulted in cognitive conflicts, dissatisfactions and a need for the teacher to reconsider her existing lesson planning practices. There were instances where the teacher understood only the shallow or 'superficial similarities' (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002) between her existing ('old') lesson planning practices and lesson study. The lesson study process enabled the surfacing of the teacher's existing lesson planning practices to move away from her 'comfort zone' and consider alternative ways. In this presentation, we show how the lesson planning process produced substantial rethinking and attending to tensions involving self and practice. These tensions resulted in turning points that served to generate conceptual learning as the teacher explored alternatives. We discuss how these cognitive conflicts and tensions acted as catalysts that stimulated her processes of learning in and from practice.

Keywords: Cognitive conflicts; collaboration; knowledgeable others; lesson study; teacher learning; tensions.

References:

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