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Novice Teachers' Professional Development on Effective Classroom Management: Experiences from the Inner-school Teaching Research Group of China

Jingchen LU
Faculty of Education, CUHK., Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Background

To novice teachers, classroom management（Doyle, 1986) is a significant problem during their early years of teaching(Jones, 2005). And many beginning teachers state they are unprepared for the realities of working with behavior demands presented by their students.Classroom management is the most common concern expressed by beginning teachers(Jones, 2006：887). It is truly a longest "phase of survival"(Huberman, 2005) for most of the novice teachers. There are some commonly used forms of teacher education (Guskey, 2000:22-9), such as training, study group, mentoring, et al., but as Jones argued, "inservice teachers are searching for collegial support an relish the opportunities to examine their own methods and provide ideas and support their fellow teachers." The teachers needs "a safe, supportive learning community and a focus on problem solving"(Jones, 2005: 902).

Many researchers prefer to provide ready-made strategies to classroom teachers, and lots of teachers with different teaching experiences turn to research reports and handbook of practical strategies as encountering problems in own classroom management in stead of searching support from their colleagues.

It is noteworthy that in China there is a teacher professional development support organization, known as "the Inner-school Teaching Research Group"(ISTRG). In such groups, teachers organized by school subject work together to discuss the problem of their own classroom teaching and try to find the keys for solving them. Coming to founded in the late 1950s , this group mentoring system is still dynamic nowadays, its main function is to teachers, grouped according to subject, on a regular basis to carry out teaching and research activities and to jointly find solutions to colleagues' classroom management problems, while sharing and effective work experience. But will the ISTRG benefit the novice teachers on their classroom management problems?

Research Questions

1.   Are novice teachers able to gain continuous support from the Inner-school Teaching Research Group(ISTRG)？

2.   What are the main approaches the ISTRG applied to improve novice teachers' capacities on classroom management?

According to relevant theories and empirical researches, how to improve the ISTRG as a better facilitator for novice teachers in their classroom management?

Methods

We used historical-comparative method (Punch, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) to analyze the development of the Teaching Research System of China. And case study（Yin, 2003） as a main approach, six novice teachers(with 1-2 years act as teachers) were invited to join this study, they are from 6 educatioanl settings, including preschools, primary and middle schools, one for each, from Shanghai, China.

Data were collected from field notes of the six novice teachers' lessons once for a week. And video-stimulated recall interviews were implemented after every lesson with audio recodings. Data were

collected using interviews with mentors of the novice teachers, the middle class managers and principals of them, and data from non-participant observation on their lessons and engagement during the ISTRG are used for triangulation.

As to data analysis, we first transcripted the recordings of interviews, and triangulate videos and recordings of the lessons, group discussion and their colleagues. We analyzed the six novice teachers' lesson plans, teaching ideas after lessons, and the approaches they adoped in classroom management.

Frame

1. The theory of community of practice(Lave & Wenger, 1991).

2. The theory of modes of classroom-based teacher development(CBTD)(Thiessen, 1992).

3. The theory of teacher professional knowledge, especially the general pedagogy knowledge(GPK) (Shulman, 1986; 1987 ;Grossman, 1989 ; 1990) and the theory on teacher practical knowledge(TPK) (Fenstermacher, 1994).

4. The theory of teacher professional development stages(Day, 1999).

5. The theory of action education(Gu, 2007).

Research findings

The preliminary study conclusions are,

1. As an important part of a long-term government-backed education system, the Inner-school Teaching Research Group(ISTRG) has its own unique ways to support novice teachers' professional development on classroom management; 2. As a solid organization, the ISTRG work as a continous facilitator for novice teachers' development on classroom management , and works effectively under the guidance from extro-researchers and inner-school colleagues.Novice teachers are able to directly improve their management strategies and skills through the collaborations from members of the Group.

Finally, some further thinking and advices are given to the development of the Inner-school Teaching Research group with the perspective of curriculum changing in China nowadays.

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