TRANSFORMING TEACHER’S PRACTICES THROUGH LESSON STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background

Based on widely-held belief and perception that improving teachers will then improve teaching practices, professional development has become one of the main agendas in educational reforms. Consequently, one of the major issues addressed in educational reforms is the teachers’ quality and this is close related to teacher professional development. To overcome the deficiencies and weaknesses of teachers’ teaching, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has been conducting various in-service programmes and courses with the aim to transform and improve teachers’ teaching knowledge, skills and competency. It is a widely-held perception and belief that this would impact on teachers, and in turn change and enhance their teaching practices.

Methods

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of lesson study on teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge. It also planned to explore the feasibility of lesson study for teacher professional development in the Malaysian education context. This qualitative study explored the implementation of Lesson Study, a kind of teacher-directed approach of Japanese model for transforming teachers’ practice in the Malaysian education context. Transforming teacher’s practice is vital and imperative to enhance teachers’ knowledge in the context of teachers’ learning. The enhancement of teachers’ practice would certainly improve their teaching practices in the classroom. Case study design was chosen for this study, however, due to the constraints in time and resources, this study focused only two cases. This was also to allow the researcher to investigate each case deeply. The two cases comprised of 17 teachers serving in two secondary schools and they were nominated by their respective school administrators who gave the consent for the research to be conducted. To gauge the participants’ responses towards the lesson study, they were engaged in authentic lesson study process at their respective schools. Their reflections and change of perceptions were sought through individual interviews and journal writing. The researcher was also involved as participant observer to conceptualise the experiences and perceptions as constructed by the participants in the research context. Using this design, the research questions were answered through in-depth enquiries. This study also employed multiple techniques of data collection: interviews, observations (researcher’s field notes), journal writing (participants’ reflection) and transcripts of the lesson study discussions and teachings. Since the situations and events of the context were critical important in case study research, the researcher maintained field notes to narrate his observations and reflections. There were two stages of data analysis in this study: data analysis during fieldwork and post fieldwork data analysis.

Results

The findings of this study propose that lesson study could be an innovative model of professional development that is effective to enhance teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge through peer collaboration. Prior to the introduction of lesson study, the participating teachers were working in isolation as there were no structural activities of professional development in school which they could collaborate and work together with one another. Through the data analysis, emerging themes were identified and these include: (a) enhance teachers’ content knowledge, (b) influence on
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teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge, (c) change teachers’ pedagogical knowledge, (d) promote teachers’ reflective practice, (e) develop teachers’ collegial relationship, (f) emphasise active student participation in teaching, (g) encourage the practice of lesson planning, and (h) develop motivation for self-development. To conclude, the lesson study process seems able to motivate teachers to seek self-improvement as it actually creates an opportunity and rooms within the school context to support teachers’ learning. Hence, strong desire and the willingness of the teachers to seek professional development would be a prerequisite because the lesson study is merely providing the opportunity and venue for the teachers which in fact, severely lacking in the Malaysian school context. Lesson study is self-directed and therefore, it would depend much on the teachers’ initiatives to seek changes in their teaching.

KEYWORDS: Lesson Studies, Professional Development, Reflective Practice & Innovative Model

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