

Developing Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Writing Instruction through Lesson Study

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This study is currently in progress as of 2/29/08. I have included here excerpts from my research proposal if it may interest the reader.

ABSTRACT:

Research on lesson study, particularly in Math and Science, has shown that inquiry, reflection, and collaboration in a deep, complex structure, have proven to contribute to the knowledge base of teachers. Few studies have shown how teachers in k-12 classrooms develop pedagogical content knowledge in writing instruction. This research is a three month inquiry made up of four Area 3 Writing Project teacher consultants and a participant- researcher from the Graduate School of Education at UC Davis. The study is centered on the following question:

How does a lesson study, focused on writing instruction and social justice affect the formation of a writing teacher's culturally relevant, pedagogical content knowledge?

This study is a concise ethnographic description of what happens as writing teachers develop pedagogical content knowledge in with a focus on Response to Literature during one lesson study cycle.

PROPOSED PAPER:

There is a growing body of research on teacher education aimed at uncovering the ways in which teachers develop the knowledge and skills necessary to become effective. Absent from much of the research are studies (conducted) in order to understand how different forms of pedagogy result in different kinds of outcomes (AERA, 2005). Integral to knowledge growth are ways in which teachers develop pedagogical content knowledge, "that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners" (Shulman, 1987).

Thus, there is a need for research that describes how pedagogical content knowledge is developed as it relates to the teaching of writing and how this pedagogy manifests in culturally diverse urban classrooms. Further, there is a stated need to study how this knowledge base for writing instruction contributes to student achievement in writing particularly for students of color, language minorities, and urban students living in poverty.

It has been argued for some time now that teaching needs to be professionalized, that teachers do not have a way to harvest their collective experiences, share common concerns, and systematically integrate and refine their knowledge (Chokshi & Fernandez, 2002). Traditionally teachers have not been in control of their own professional development. Professional development is often focused around a textbook adoption, managing a current curriculum, or about teaching practices, where too often a consultant is brought in to teach about ways to make gains in student achievement. The persistent achievement gap between students of color and their white middle class counterparts suggests that these professional development approaches need to be reexamined.

Lesson study, also known as a research lesson, is a Japanese approach to instructional improvement which revolves around teacher collaboration. Teachers plan and design a lesson together focusing on a specific area of content. They observe one member of the group teach the lesson and then debrief the “public teaching”, revise the lesson and often repeat the process (Fernandez, 2002). Little research has been done on the particular ways in which teachers develop culturally relevant pedagogical content knowledge when engaging in lesson study. Also limited in the lesson study literature is a focus on writing instruction as a research theme. Additionally, there is a lack of research available that reveals how teachers develop a knowledge base for teaching writing as well as literature that describes what the knowledge base for teaching writing includes.

This research proposal addresses the above stated needs and problems by studying how they are interrelated and how they can be addressed in the context of a teacher collaborative learning community involved in lesson study.

The researcher will take a grounded theory approach to data analysis by using the “Content analysis and analytic induction method” as well as the “Constant comparative method” (Merriam, 1998), to identify patterns and themes that emerge from these data. Raw data will be coded from transcriptions, videotapes and field notes as well as student artifacts by constructing categories that capture relevant characteristics of all of the contents of the documents (Merriam, 1998). Particular attention will be paid to the language participants use when connecting current pedagogy to either their

lesson study or their students' achievement. Exit interviews and surveys will triangulate data from the data set acquired throughout the year.

Outcomes should reveal ways in which the lesson study process of collaborative inquiry in the context of middle school and intermediate elementary language arts classrooms contributes to the development of pedagogical content knowledge in writing instruction.