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Developing Supervision: A Study on Improvement Pre-Services Teachers Teaching by Using elements of Lesson Study in Saudi Context

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ABSTRACT

MY study aims to contribute to the development of the supervision system by implementing a suggested model as an attempt to solve some problems in the pre-service practicum course in Almajmaah University; passivity of student teachers (STs) and the isolation between the university staff and teachers in schools. Therefore, the model focuses on two main points: A - Supporting the positivity of STs toward their learning by enhancing their reflection on their own teaching via using lesson study. B - Engaging the teachers in the schools (TIS) in cooperative work with the supervisor that benefits STs. Mythology: cooperative work with the supervisor that benefits STs. A case study of participatory action research conducted within a qualitative research paradigm, with data collected from multiple sources: individual and focus group interviews with several STs, TIS and supervisors; the researcher's diary; and reflective journals from the STs.

Keywords: Teacher education, reflective practice, students teachers

Aim of the Study

My study aims to contribute to the development of the supervision system by implementing a suggested model as an attempt to solve some problems in the pre-service practicum course in Almajmaah University; passivity of student teachers (STs) and the isolation between the university staff and teachers in schools. Therefore, the model focuses on two main points:

- i. Supporting the positivity of STs toward their learning by enhancing their reflection on their own teaching via using lesson study.
- ii. Engaging the teachers in the schools (TIS) in cooperative work with the supervisor that benefits STs.

Research Questions

1. What are the participants' views about the current system of supervision?
2. How do STs, TIS and the supervisor perceive a reflective practicum course?
 - a- How do the STs respond to each of these reflective practices?
 - b- How do TIS respond to each of these reflective practices?
 - c- How does the supervisor respond to each of these reflective practices?
 - d- How do the different reflective practices (written, oral) interact with each other?
 - e- How does reflective activity change over time?
3. What are the main challenges involved in implementing a proposed model of supervision?
4. What advantages might a proposed system of supervision offer?

5. How can the potential of an implemented system of supervision be objectively evaluated?

Mythology

A case study of participatory action research conducted within a qualitative research paradigm, with data collected from multiple sources: individual and focus group interviews with several STs, TIS and supervisors; the researcher's diary; and reflective journals from the STs.

Participants

The participants in this study consist of three categories: 6 STs, 2 TIS and 7 supervisors and me as a participant/researcher. The STs were in the final year of their Bachelor's programme of teaching Arabic literature in Almajmaah University's educational college.

The model of Action Research

This study adopted the three recycled phases of action research, which are: planning, implementation and evaluation. First, the participants plan for research and problem-solving; then they implement the plan and measure results; finally, they discuss, criticise and evaluate the results of their actions.

The procedure for the study:

The orientation stage: The orientation programme conducted in the university camps and in one of the selected public schools in Almajmaah educational directorate. The researcher explained to STs the structure, aims and procedures of this course, for example the content and implications of the reflective teaching model. She provided them with the tools for their reflection, including the observation check list and reflective writing guidelines; she also illustrated how to use these tools and become critical observers; she will outline their responsibilities during the class. The STs were given a notebook containing selected readings on reflective practice to guide them in their task.

The observation stage: In the first week the STs observed the in-service teachers in their regular classroom on four different occasions, attempting to be active observers by filling in the observation checklist about what they observe and how they feel about it.

The teaching stage: Three of the STs taught three full lessons each in a training day (one day each week), in a real classroom, based on the timetable for teaching (updated every week) received from the teachers in the school; the title of the lessons were given to the STs a week in advance in school for sufficient preparation time. The STs can ask for any support they need from the supervisor at the university, or the teachers in school. In the classroom, her teaching be observed by other STs, the supervisor and, some time, in-service teacher/s.

Post-teaching stage: Two reflective processes - dialogue and writing - followed the observed teaching, both being what Stillman and Anderson (2011, p. 30) refer to as "tools (not goals) and guides (not rules)".

Finding and Discussion

The findings demonstrate that STs reflective practices changed over time and divides the responses into early and later stages. From the initial "reality shock" period, during which STs levels of reflection were low, responses developed as a result of reflective activities undertaken, such that STs became better able to give and receive criticism and to focus on ways to improve their teaching and student engagement and understanding.

My study indicates that participation in the reflective course benefited the STs, providing them with opportunities to address the mismatch between their expectations about teaching and its reality, providing new insights and challenging restrictive cultural attitudes to the learning process. It enabled STs to work as a group, to learn from one another and to develop as teachers through individual reflection, practice, observation and discussion. Through stimulating reflection with questions, rather than with direct answers, I was able to encourage new insights, as indicated by the interviews, which support the case for reflective practice. STs were able to build on their teaching repertoires by observing one another, and reflection opened their minds to non-traditional strategies, helped them to examine preconceptions, reconcile inconsistencies and to engage in professional growth. Moreover, reflective practice activities, allowed variations in the “human capital” and educational knowledge within the group to be reduced through collaboration, which gave every group member access to the others’ capital. STs, through this “social capital” improve their teaching through interaction with one another.

However, although The STs on the reflective practice course, gained a great deal but they faced a number of challenges, related to tow main sections. First, the Saudi culture of learning and other to the Saudi educational system. The religious and social view of women has left them weak in the very skills needed for successful reflective practice. Furthermore, the centralised decision making of the Ministry of Education and its control of teaching materials, distances teachers from decision making, restricts teacher creativity and imposes a curriculum which is too inflexible for teachers to modify. Thus new ideas such as reflective practice are difficult to apply. Moreover, outdated teaching methods, such as rote learning and memorising facts mean that many STs have not previously experienced learning through interaction. The dominance of such old-fashioned methods is a major challenge to reflective practice. In addition, there is a shortage of well-qualified teachers and TISs suffer both from a lack of educational knowledge and a failure to update their teaching methods.

Also, the study reveals that the TISs have a lacked reflective knowledge and displayed low levels of reflection in the post teaching discussions. Thus, they might hinder rather than help STs own reflective practice.

Conclusion

The study concluded that reflection on teaching education should be introduced in teachers education programmers before practicum and Update the educational knowledge and teaching method for both TISs as well as supervisors by running compulsory ongoing teaching training courses. Also, the curriculum developers and supervisors should be more aware of cultural influences, not as an impediment, but rather in the way that seeing themselves as agents of change. In this respect, Clarke and Oktay proposed that culture “could be usefully understood as a never-finished site of competing historical and social discourses rather than as a received set of beliefs and values” (Clarke and Oktay, 2006, p.120)Alenizi.