Exploring the professional learning of novice teachers

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Introduction

- Challenges for reform-based PD (Beck etal, 2002; Oshima et al., 2006; Hill & Ball, 2004)

- Especially for beginning teachers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004)

Qualities of Effective PD

- Collaborative environment (Rogers etal., 2007)

- Classroom contexts of the teachers (Cobb etal, 2003; Dall'alba & Sandberg, 2006)

- Sustained support over time (Desimone etal, 2002)

- Time for professional reflection within the program (LaChance & Confrey, 2003).

Lesson Study

- Reflects effective qualities (Taylor etal., 2007; West & Curcio, 2004)
  - network of teachers
  - Co-develop, implement and reflect on lessons
- Effective in NA (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Putnam & Borko, 2000)

Socialization of Novice Teachers

- Occupational and professional socialization (Curtner-Smith etal., 2008)
- Navigating political culture (Goodwin, 2008)
  – Interaction -> compromise ->socialization
- Structural and organisational factors -> 'learning culture' (Flores, 2001)

Methods

- 6 lesson study cycles with 4 teachers
- Case study of a grade 8 teacher (Susan)
- Collaborative Narrative Inquiry
  - Experience/identity
  - Inviting teachers to work with themes
- Field & meeting notes; Transcripts
- Thematically purposeful and longitudinal narrative (Schulz, 1996)

Story 1

- Susan: "It was important to me to find a problem solving activity that will be accessible no matter what level they're at"

- Susan: [When asked what was most important for her for planning/implementing this problem] "When I'm teaching I need to have an understanding of where some of the problems are going to be so that I can anticipate them and give help without giving answers. So that will be my challenge."

- Unlike experienced teacher in group: "I like the engagement hook because there's always math problems but how do you engage the learner to be interested in the problem and not just "Oh gosh, another math problem.""

Interpretation 1

- Susan's reform-based concerns:
  - Anticipation
  - Rich tasks
- These emerge from past student practicum and facility with math
- Susan has positioned herself as different from the experienced teacher, who focuses on student motivation

Story 2

- Susan: "My whole math program is a hodgepodge." "I am continually putting out fires." "Will they be ready for grade 9, in high school." Counter to experienced teacher who takes care of the basics first and smoothly manages his class most of the time.

- Susan: "So, it's this balance between what I want them to explore for themselves, but at the same time I want to be equipping them with the skills that will make this process easier…Now they are at an age where, yes I want them to explore, but they also do need to have a skill, whether they discover it themselves or whether I spoon feed it to them through scaffolding or whatever."

- Susan: "Is it better to do Locker problem at beginning or end of a unit of factors and multiples?"

Interpretation 2

- Trying to balance proscriptive and prescriptive
- Former emerges from past student practicum
- Later emerges from external pressures, which could normalize behaviour

Story 3

- "Yesterday…I felt like it was pandemonium, and Lucy came in and was like "wow…" And I'm like yeah, but they're not talking in French, they are just… She's like, "yeah, but they're excited about their project, and that's going to spill into their talking French." And I realized, that depending on my state of mind, I was able to notice, or not, and that didn't necessarily mean it was happening, or not, but that I was able to notice…I've had to get lost in the chaos of stuff and making sure that person has that thing and that thing and the other thing, rather than making sure that I take the time sometimes to notice that it is actually happening."

- "I just want parts of the task of teaching to become automatic, so that the craziness of teaching is not so exhausting."

- Counter to experienced teacher, who can "fly by the seat of his pants."

Interpretation 3

- Socialization via school classroom norms to tame the chaos
- But this emerges from part of her sense of teaching (the need to "notice")

Conclusions

- Role of veteran teachers in induction (Blakley, 2006)
- Appreciation of meaningful supports (Cherubini, 2007)
- Consultative mentoring & reflective practice -> growth of teacher identity (Walkington, 2005)
- Personal "images" -> make sense of context (Kuzmic, 1994)
- Critical Incidents and Reform-based (Skott, 2001)

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