Reflection as the driving force of teacher learning and development

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Constructing student teacher’s habitus of teaching through reflection activities

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Pierre Bourdieu and his well-established concept of habitus can be applied seamlessly into the field of teacher education during student teachers’ practicum and clinical work. When transitioning from their student identity to a newly established teacher identity, teacher candidates often base their teaching practices and instructional styles off of their prior personal educational experiences while acting out of their intuitions and habits of mind, which is defined as habitus by Bourdieu. This study attempts to utilize a practice-based master program at a well-known university in China as a resource and interview their student teachers who will start their series of field experiences, including class observations, micro-teaching, and assisting their mentor teacher’s instructions. Currently, although the program leaves room for students to reflect, however, students’ reflective activities vary from case to case due to their different relationships with their mentor teacher and university supervisor. This study attempts to synchronize each student teacher’s experiences and assess how student teacher’s habitus of teaching may be changed or maintained after reflective activities. This study is significant since it not only examines the underlying mechanism of how reflection can help student teachers develop instructional skills, but also works as a practical tool or method for enhancing student teacher’s core competences. Proposed research methods include extensive interviews, analyzing micro-teaching videos, reflection diaries, and narrative studies.

Keywords: reflection, student teachers, habitus
How do we encourage prospective teacher to improve the skill for writing a reflective journal effectively?

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This study examined the effect of the type of activity using journal entry on the reflection with journal writing in a teacher-training course in Japan. Previous studies have indicated that reflection is necessary to develop expertise as a teacher and is promoted by writing a reflective journal, whilst prospective teachers have difficulty with writing it. Considering development of profession of teachers, prospective teachers would be necessary to be trained to write a reflective journal effectively in a teacher-training course.

This study, therefore, introduced an instruction technique for writing a reflective journal effectively in a lesson of a teacher-training course. The technique was consisted of five phases: 1) watching a five-minute lesson recorded by video camera, 2) writing first version journal on the lesson, 3) doing an activity for fifteen minutes, 4) watching the lesson video again, 5) writing second version journal. In the third phase, the participants—forty-two prospective teachers—did one of three activities: a) rereading the first version journal, b) enhancing the first version journal, c) doing a task irrelevant to a journal. After finishing all components, the participants were asked to report their impressions of the technique.

Results showed the total character count of second version journals were significantly increased, only written by the participants rereading or enhancing the first version journal. The participants also reported that. Although they gain significant quantitative improvement, it seemed that each activity is functionally differentiated. Considering participants’ journal and their self-reports, the participants rereading the first version journal increased the number of future plans in second version journal, whereas participants enhancing the first version journal increased students’ description relative to future plans.

These findings indicated that this technique can encourage a development of reflection with journal writing. In addition to that, the type of activity using journal entry may substantially affect the reflection with journal writing.

Keywords: prospective teacher, teacher-training course, journal
How do theoretical studies and lesson studies work together to improve the reflective practice ability of normal students?

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Object: This article explores the implementation feasibility and the teaching efficiency of the lesson study in the in-course practice session of the preschool education specialty compulsory course--"The Preschool Children Art Education".

Method: In this paper, the participant observation method, video analysis method and interview method are used. The six-person interview data and the three-person focus group interview data are mainly encoded by the grounded theory, the triangle verification is carried out through video analysis and participant observation.

Result: The conclusion is: normal students welcome the lesson study; theoretical studies and lesson studies common shape students' multiple values, enrich and improve their practical knowledge. Specifically, "real-world impact" (referring to the lesson study) includes "interacting with experienced teachers", "on-site teaching" and "On-the-spot research" can promote students' view of children, teaching and research, and help students to understand the characteristics of children's age, improve their teaching behavior, and participate in teaching research. And at the same time the theoretical studies in the course can help students to reflect positively under the impact of reality, including "the scientificity and feasibility of teaching design", "children's freedom and discipline in mass instruction", "painting skills and early childhood innovation", "kindergarten teachers' theoretical ability and practical ability", "the length and rhythm of the arrangement of activities", the reality impact also promotes the student's theory understanding and so on.

Both are important intermediaries for students to understand the theoretical ability, practical ability and research ability of “Kindergarten Teacher”. In particular, the lesson study is an effective experiential intermediary. A good lesson study helps students to become the reflective practitioners.

This paper also focuses on "the difficulties of normal students' lesson studies", "how to make profit from the lesson study of the minority" and "How to choose the practice base".

Originality/Value: This paper provides a case to prove that the implementation of the lesson study in the theoretical course with practical session is feasible and meaningful. The lesson study fits into this kind of course that specifically emphasizes the close integration and mutual promotion of theory and practice. There was no specific research on this before.

Keywords: Lesson study, in-course practice session, values, reflective practitioners, preschool education major