Teachers' Professional Development: Scaffolding Revisited

ELIS Seminar
Singapore
March 2013

Amy B.M. Tsui
The University of Hong Kong

Guiding Principle for Teaching

Appropriate scaffolding is crucial to effective learning.

Teach without dragging (your students) by the nose.
Demand high level of performance (from your students) without discouragement.
Open the door without taking (your students) to the destination. (*Xueji*, translated by Gao, 2005, p. 2)[4]

道而弗牽，強而弗抑，開而弗達

2

Scaffolding:
Peer Learning and Expert Guidance

- Peer learning: stimulates discussion, promotes collaboration, enhances solidarity amongst teachers.

- Peer learning tends to succeed in schools where there is participation from backbone teachers, expert teachers, or external specialists.

- Peer learning without guidance is "cooking radish with radish". [*luobo shao luobo*] [蘿蔔燒蘿蔔]

Teachers' PD Model in China

The Apprenticeship Model
- "the old guiding the young" (*lao dai qing*) [**老帶青**]

The Virtuoso Model
- In collective lesson planning, teachers identify three things in the topic to be taught:
- the knowledge point (*zhishi dian*) [知識點], the key point (*zhong dian*) [重點] and the difficult point (*nan dian*) [難點].
- Lesson carefully planned and choreographed under guidance of mentor teacher
- Revised and rehearsed as in a performance

Survey findings on TD activities in Qingpu District in Shanghai (N=311 Ts)

Most helpful form of learning:

- 70% indicated (1) classroom teaching guided by experts and experienced teachers and (2) guidance from experienced colleagues on teaching materials and teaching methods.

- 20% indicated discussion amongst peers.

- 50% indicated lesson preparation with master teachers and specialists followed by lesson observation and post observation conference on how to improve lesson observed.

Survey findings on TD activities in Qingpu District in Shanghai (N=311 Ts)

- 25% indicated observing lessons taught by master teachers and participating in post-observation conferencing and relating to their own classroom realities.

- 0.7% indicated lesson observation and post-observation conferences amongst peers as most helpful. (Gu, 2003, pp. 428-429)

Observations

1. Teachers learn best when they are engaged in doing (learning by doing).
2. Teachers learn best when they participate in discussions of actual classroom teaching and are able to relate the discussion to their own experiences.
3. Teachers learn best when the discussion is supported by more capable members of the community of practice.
4. One of the guiding principles for teacher learning: "peer learning also requires expert guidance".

Appropriate Scaffolding in Lesson Study

Participants: 2 mentor teachers (MT), 2 student teachers (ST), 2 university tutors (UT)

Duration: Two cycles in 4 weeks, teaching Chinese lessons

1st cycle:

- 2 collective lesson planning conferences -> detailed lesson planning (MT-ST pairing) -> lesson taught by one ST+ lesson observation -> post-lesson conferencing + suggestions for improvement -> revised lesson plan and teaching materials -> lesson retaught by the other ST followed by post-lesson conferencing,

- Outcome: STs: stressful and unrewarding, subjected to severe and unfair criticisms, no time and space to reflect on suggestions for improvement and no ownership of the lesson.

2nd cycle:

- STs prepared the lesson on their own and consulted MT only when necessary.

- Outcome: pedagogy and student response improved substantially. STs and MTs: rich learning experience

Lesson Study Post-observation Conferencing

	1st cycle				2nd cycle				
	1st conferencing		2nd conferencing		3rd conferencing		4th conferencing		
EFP	26	21.1%	13	10.7%	28	23.5%	22	21.6%	
EFN	26	**21.1%**	46	**48%**	10	**8.4%**	17	**16.7%**	
SEP	2	1.6%	0	0%	5	**4.2%**	4	**3.9%**	
SEN	7	**5.7%**	5	**4.1%**	15	**12.6%**	7	**6.9%**	
SExp	3	2.5%	18	14.9%	4	3.4%	11	10.8%	
LFp	35	28.5%	24	19.8%	34	28.6%	29	28.4%	
LFc	24	19.5%	15	12.4%	23	19.3%	12	11.8%	
Total	123	100.1%	121	99.9%	119	100%	102	100.1%	

Conceptions of Teacher Learning

- Teacher learning as the acquisition of knowledge and skills

- Teacher learning as *becoming* a competent member of a community of practice

- Teacher learning as developing a professional identity

- Teacher learning as fundamentally social

10

Learning in Social Participation

- Why has lesson study become so popular amongst teachers?
- Why do teachers like lesson study, co-teaching and mentoring?

- Becoming a member of a CoP: legitimate peripheral participation
  - Learning in social participation – learning ways of acting, ways of knowing and ways of being as a competent member of a community of practice
  - Critical to learning:
    - Legitimate access to practice
    - Legitimate participation in practice
    - Legitimation of peripherality of participation

Learning in Social Participation

- We emphasize bottom-up processes and ownership when we want to introduce change in schools. Why?

- Teacher learning is developing a professional identity
  - Identity formation is not only relational but also experiential
  - Experiential: engagement in negotiation of **meanings that matter in the CoP**
  - Negotiability of meaning and ownership of meaning

  - Recognition of competence **valued by the community** is an important source of identity formation

Learning in Social Participation

- When a practice is going through a process of change, existing competence is put into question.

- The distinction between expert and novice becomes somewhat blurred.

- What constitutes competence has to be renegotiated by community members.

References

- Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tsui, A. B. M. & Wong, J. L. N. (2009). In Search of a Third Space: Teacher Development in Mainland China. In C. K. K. Chan & N. Rao (Eds.), *Revisiting the Chinese Learner: Changing Contexts, Changing Education* (pp. 281-311). Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre/Springer Academic Publishers.
- Tsui, A. B. M., Edwards, G. & Lopez-Real, F. (2009). *Learning in School-University Partnership: Sociocultural Perspectives*. New York & London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 200pp. (with contribution from Kwan, T., Law, D., Stimpson, P., Tang, R., and Wong, A.).
- Tsui, A. B. M. (2007). The Complexities of Identity Formation: A Narrative Inquiry of an EFL Teacher. *TESOL Quarterly, 41*(4), 657-680.
- Tsui, A. B. M. & Law, D. Y. K. (2007). Learning as Boundary-crossing in School University Partnership. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*(8), 1289-1301.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.