RESEARCH BRIEF SERIES

Integrating Classroom Discourse for Reflective Practice and Professional Development

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KEY IMPLICATIONS

1. The resource package developed as a result of this study can be used as a model to inform future endeavours to create authentic classroom-based resources to facilitate the professional development not only for in-service training but also for initial teacher preparation programmes at NIE.

2. Feedback obtained from the workshop where the resource package was trialled suggests that there is a strong potential for a corpus-based, data-driven approach to the professional development of teachers in Singapore.

FOCUS OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to design, and develop resources for, a professional development programme that not only draws on authentic classroom data but also meets the specific needs of English Language (EL) teachers in Singapore.

This study focuses on the reflective practice and professional development of English Language teachers in Singapore. It takes a corpus-based, evidence-driven approach in making use of authentic classroom data collected from local classrooms to facilitate teachers' reflective practice and professional growth.

KEY FINDINGS

The findings from the survey showed that the participating teachers across all levels of teaching demonstrated good pedagogical content knowledge and beliefs that are aligned with the principles and practices of EL teaching underpinning the 2010 EL syllabus. Several demographic factors, such as teaching level, experience and discipline specialization, were found to have some correlation with the teachers' knowledge about and beliefs in EL teaching and learning. Using the survey findings as a point of reference, the corpus data were examined to identify, extract and repackage appropriate exemplars to construct a resource package to support in-service teachers' professional development. This package was trialled on a group of teachers in a workshop to test its efficacy and viability.

Through this workshop, it was found that this mode of professional development afforded a refreshing and illuminating perspective to the teachers. It opened their eyes to the wide variety of authentic classroom practices in the local context and gave them the opportunity to reflect on their own practices, thereby deepening their understanding of the principles and practices of EL teaching and learning as they are applied to the Singapore context.

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SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

Implications for Practice

This study has succeeded in providing a glimpse into the pedagogical knowledge base and belief system that underpin the classroom practices of EL teachers in Singapore. More importantly, it has demonstrated the efficacy and appeal of using a corpus-based approach to the professional development of EL teachers, which might open up new pathways in the future of teacher education in Singapore.

PARTICIPANTS

450 EL teachers.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted a mixed-method research design. A questionnaire survey on teachers' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs was administered on about 450 EL teachers. The survey was aimed at identifying possible gaps in the teachers' knowledge/belief system in the areas of epistemology (what constitutes knowledge in the subject of EL), pedagogy (how EL should be taught), and discourse (what kind of language should be used in an EL classroom). Qualitative classroom discourse data were then drawn from the Singapore Corpus of Research in Education (SCoRE) database to identify, extract and repackage suitable exemplars of classroom practice in the form of lesson transcripts and audio recordings. These exemplars contributed to the development of a set of materials for teachers to develop their critical reflective practice. These materials were subsequently trialled in a workshop and feedback from participants was gathered to revise and refine the materials.

How to cite this publication

Teo, P. (2017). *Integrating Classroom Discourse for Reflective Practice and Professional Development.* (NIE Research Brief Series No. 16-006). Singapore: National Institute of Education.

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