

Building a Culture of Collaboration and Listening Pedagogy in Classrooms through Lesson Study for Learning Community (LSLC): An Exploratory Study in a Primary School in Singapore

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KEY IMPLICATIONS

- Teachers can begin to develop a more nuanced understanding of listening through their participation in Lesson Study for Learning Community (LSLC).
- Teachers can begin to progress through three qualitatively different levels of understanding (procedural, relational and co-constructural) about collaborative learning through LSLC.
- Students can have more opportunities to learn in a culture of care in their classrooms through LSLC.

BACKGROUND

This study explored the implementation of developing a culture of collaboration and listening pedagogy in classrooms through LSLC. LSLC builds on adaptations of Japanese Lesson Study to bring about a mind-set change in how teachers view teaching and learning in the classrooms (Sato, 2019). It is a call to move teachers and school leaders beyond the procedural aspects of lesson planning and classroom observation to deepen curriculum deliberation and dialogue over not-so-simple student issues to bring about deeper student

learning. Two key features of LSLC are of significance to Singapore schools. First, LSLC focuses on developing schools and classrooms as learning communities through collaboration to promote both social and cognitive outcomes. Second, this community building is supported by a complementary development of listening pedagogy in classrooms. Listening is a basis for dialogue between teachers and students and among students (Sato, 2019).

FOCUS OF STUDY

This study was an attempt to support teachers in implementing listening pedagogy and collaborative learning through LSLC where they planned, enacted, and observed lessons in partnership with NIE faculty, cognizant of the challenges involved in bringing about changes in teachers' teaching stance and classroom practice.

KEY FINDINGS

Our project teachers have developed more nuanced but deeper understandings of listening pedagogy and collaborative learning, which has resulted in positive changes in their classroom practices and classroom learning climates through their participation in LSLC. However, the

constraints of time and syllabus coverage still looms large as a challenge for the teachers in their efforts to implement listening pedagogy and collaborative learning in their classrooms.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

This exploratory project provided a beginning of a larger vision of schools and classrooms as learning communities where students learn with others in a culture of support and care. LSLC is in its philosophy of a whole school reform effort to bring about a culture of listening and care in classrooms is most needed during these turbulent times of COVID-19 (Tsukui & Murase, 2019). Lesson study should remain as a vital support mechanism for teachers to make changes in their teaching and learning stances and deepen their capacities. More research is needed to investigate how LSLC can be adapted and scaled up for other schools.

PARTICIPANTS

Two English and Math lesson study teams who taught P3 and P4 students participated in the study over a period of two years. These teams were facilitated by the Heads of Departments (HOD) for English Language and Mathematics respectively and supported by research team members who played the role of “knowledgeable others”. A sample of seven teachers who taught open research lessons as well as the two HODs were interviewed for the study. In addition, three teachers, one from the Math and two from the English team were observed for one week during each year of the project to explore how they implemented listening pedagogy and collaborative learning

into everyday practice. Student focus-group discussions (FGDs) were held with four P4 classes in Year 1 and five P3 and P4 classes each in Year 2. A sample of six students (2 high-progress, 2 mid-progress and 2 low-progress) were selected from each class. Thus, a total of 84 students participated in the FGDs.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Multiple data collection methods such as in-depth individual teacher interviews to probe teachers’ understanding of listening pedagogy and collaborative learning; classroom observations to explore teachers’ enactment and changes in practice; and FGDs with students to explore classroom climate and their motivation to learn, were used as sources of data. All transcribed data and lesson observation notes were entered into N-Vivo 12 software for organizing, analysing, and triangulating data. The data were coded using a coding scheme developed by the team. The qualitative data were analysed in the interpretative tradition as we looked for emerging themes in response to the research questions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013).

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