Professional Expertise, Continuing Professional Development and Lesson Study

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to answer the questions on attributes of schoolteachers as professionals by exploring their professional expertise and to illustrate how it is created, developed, enhanced and improved. Some specific sets of professional expertise of schoolteachers have been identified as being in common with medical doctors. Especially case-based knowledge is crucial to achieve the goal of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). One of the feasible and appropriate approaches for schoolteachers to acquire professional expertise would lie in Lesson Study, which originates in Japan and has a long history in Japanese schools as the most common CPD method. It specifically aims to prioritise learning by pupils in the classroom, to take a qualitative approach and to exchange varieties of views of the facts occurring in the classroom in order to obtain multiple perspectives from different angles. Therefore, it can be concluded that Lesson Study holds the key to succeed in the way forward of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), Teacher Education (TE) and CPD: It would become a solid future model of ITE and TE, which surely would be able to produce, in Indonesia as well, schoolteachers with professional expertise.

Keywords: Continuing Professional Development (CPD); Professional Expertise; Schoolteachers; Cases; Lesson Study.

1. Introduction

Are schoolteachers regarded as professionals? If so, what are their distinguished features? These are the fundamental questions that this paper aims to illustrate how it is created, developed, enhanced and improved.

Roughly speaking, the general tendency of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and the Education of Medical Doctors (EMD) in some countries such as Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States is fairly similar in that the model/style of ITE and the EMD is rather akin to each other: Both the practicum or placement for ITE and the EMD is often provided in affiliated or closely liaised institutions such as primary or secondary schools attached to the universities or university hospitals (which are called, in some countries, “teaching hospitals”). In addition, trainee students have some-week long practicum or placement there. In Japan, as the most typical and common approach to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for schoolteachers with more than a 100-year history, Lesson Study exists. One of the typical methods of Lesson Study which is widely recognised in Japan and is based on “A case conference among medics in hospitals” (1) was proposed in the 1980s by Tadahiko Inagaki, past emeritus professor at the University of Tokyo (2). On the other hand, in the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister at that time stated in the foreword of The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010 as follows: This White Paper goes much further in raising standards and giving outstanding schools a much greater role in teacher training in the same way that our best hospitals train new doctors and nurses (3). Not only in Japan but also in the United Kingdom, the model/style of ITE tends to follow with that of the EMD.

Historically and generally speaking, the practice of ITE or Teacher Education (TE) is based on the model/style of the EMD, or it is applied to the practice of ITE or TE in some countries because of the necessity to raise the standard of ITE and TE and to produce well-established professionals like medical doctors.
More importantly, it has been rather recently revealed that the features of professional expertise of medical doctors and schoolteachers have something in common (4). Therefore, in the next section, the features related to the professional expertise of schoolteachers are considered.

2. Professional expertise of schoolteachers

From the previous literary works, the five features are extracted as the commonly shared professional expertise of schoolteachers and medical doctors:

a) Reflective practice is prioritised, which means that enhancing reflexivity is included in the attainment targets of ITE and the EMD (5).

b) Problem-solving confronting complexity and uncertainty is the frontline issue for schoolteachers (6) and medical doctors (7).

c) Case-based knowledge is the core element.

d) They have more tacit knowledge.

e) Networking the gains from previous cases/experiences with the present conditions and situations is critical.

As is easily seen, more than just professional knowledge and skills in their fields consists of the features of these professions. Hence, in arranging and organising CPD for schoolteachers, these features should be given proper attention. Otherwise, CPD for schoolteachers is neither effective nor efficient as professional education. Among these features, case plays a vital role for creating their professional expertise (8). Therefore, in the following section, case-based CPD for schoolteachers is scrutinised.

3. Case-based Continuing Professional Development—Lesson Study

3.1. The importance of case

Shön refers to case study as placed at the core of professional education (9). The followings are some quotes from fairly recent works in terms of justifying the importance of case study in professional education:

a) In the real world, the solution to the complex problems cannot be found in the textbooks, nor will everyone agree on the “right answers” to difficult questions.

b) The case method prepares learners for a world that demands critical thinking skills and the ability to create convincing arguments (10).

c) The knowledge base of teachers and doctors is acquired and formed through the process of problem-solving and experiencing various cases; hence, case analysis and reflection are pivotal for them to create and enhance their professional expertise (11).

d) Their expertise is situated, context-dependent and derived from tacit knowledge (12).

e) A case study, in terms of teaching and learning, is a method of developing learners’ understanding by enabling them to engage actively with a problem or issue relevant to their studies. It represents an account or scenario which allows the students to apply what they have learned and make sense of it in a realistic context. It may also encourage the student to draw on their own ideas, experience and tacit knowledge (13).

f) Teaching and learning are complex, and there is not one right approach. Reflecting on different approaches to teaching, and reshaping the understanding of past and current experiences, will lead to improvement in teaching practices (14).

As is grasped, case serves as the paramount element for ITE and TE. In other words, case-related education is crucial in ITE and TE. One of the ideal approaches to case-based professional education would be Lesson Study, which has a long tradition of CPD at school in Japan.

3.2. TE and CPD method in Japan

As is suggested in Section I, Lesson Study, which is worldwide recognised as a practice or method of TE or CPD at school, originates in Japan. It is generally defined, being found such as in Wikipedia, as “a teaching improvement process that has origins in Japanese elementary education, where it is a widespread professional development practice”. More precisely, it is defined as (15):

“Lesson Study is a way for teachers to work together to develop their understanding of the teaching and learning process. It is a course of action where teachers work together to plan classroom lessons ‘16’, observe the teaching
and learning experience during the lesson, analyse the content and delivery, and then make changes in the lesson to make it better. At the heart of it is the concept that all students can learn and all teachers can improve”. The following Figure 1 from a primary school in the United Kingdom is compact, interesting and easily understandable of the contrast between what constitutes Lesson Study and what does not (17).

**Figure 1. Lesson Study**

**Lesson Study**

Lesson Study as an approach is a very different way of teachers working in collaboration and observing each other in the classroom.

**Lesson Study is...**

- Developmental for teachers.
- An honest and open process for collaborative planning and reflection.
- Focused on the impact of lessons upon the learning of the students.

**Lesson Study is not...**

- Judgemental of teachers.
- Judging the teacher against closed criteria.
- Focused on teacher delivery of lessons, but instead is focused on lesson planning and its impact on learning.

**Key Principle:**

- "We could..."
- Research based and focused on evidence.
- Problem solving together.
- About collaborative analysis of what leads to successful learning.

- "You should have..."
- About what was thought to be happening?
- Identifying issues for someone else to resolve.
- About one person's formula for successful teaching.

- Critical and unsupportive.
- Generic and theoretical.
- A one-off observation.

**Learning in the classroom and from the classroom is maximised**
Although explanations of Lesson Study from international perspectives should be highly respected, first and foremost, it is necessary to explain the original style of Lesson Study in Japan in order to understand it correctly and securely. Secondly, it is meaningful and valuable to choose and highlight one of the most influential models of Lesson Study in Japan especially because there are varieties of Lesson Study there (18). Therefore, the specific model of Lesson Study by Inagaki which is touched in Section I is to be the main source of consideration.

3.3. A model of Lesson Study in Japan

Inagaki proposed his model, which is called “Case conference of a lesson” or “Clinical study of a lesson”, in the 1980s by applying a case conference/clinical conference in hospitals or in the EMD to design Lesson Study in school-based CPD for TE. He argued, being based on his observations in teaching hospitals or university hospitals, that diagnosis and treatments for patients are collaboratively considered and discussed by exchanging views and judgments on the basis of each clinical case. Therefore, Lesson Study in schools should play the same role that a case conference in hospitals does: Avoiding judging lessons being based on one specific criterion or standard like which a quantitative approach aims to pursue (19).

He proposed three procedures of Lesson Study (20): Procedure 1. Using video-recording/filming, specifically by focusing on pupils for the sake of obtaining deeper understanding of them in a lesson. Procedure 2. While watching the video clip, participants from diverse fields exchange their individual views and ways of thinking and discuss them in a manner that accords each view the same level of respect in order to broaden, enhance and develop their views of a lesson and to obtain multi-dimensional views from different angles. Procedure 3. A couple of teachers conduct their own lessons with the same content and material in order to consider the features of each lesson, varieties of/alternative approaches in each lesson and the meanings/significance of them by comparing each lesson, but not deciding or judging which is better or the best.

These underpinning concepts are widely accepted and have become an ethos of Lesson Study in Japan. Therefore, it can be said that Inagaki’s model of Lesson Study would be the prototypical and the best to create, develop, enhance and improve professional expertise of schoolteachers.

4. Concluding Remarks

First of all, let us return to the questions at the beginning. The answer to these questions would be clear: Yes, they can be regarded as professionals especially because, at least, they share with medical doctors their predominant professional expertise which they deserve, although the models/styles and methods of ITE and TE imitate those of the EMD. Or it can be concluded that ITE and TE is pursuing, by applying the model of the EMD to it, the rise of its standard in order to bring schoolteachers closer to professionals.

Education and CPD programmes which highlight how the expertise of schoolteachers is created, developed, enhanced and improved are mandatory. In such education or CPD programmes, case plays the pivotal role because the professional expertise of schoolteachers derives from case-based knowledge or it is induced by case-based knowledge.

One of the feasible approaches for schoolteachers to acquire professional expertise would lie in Lesson Study, which specifically aims to prioritise learning by pupils in the classroom, to take a qualitative approach and to exchange varieties of views of the facts (actual events) occurring in the classroom in order to obtain multiple perspectives from different angles.

Lesson Study holds the key to succeed in the way forward of ITE, TE and CPD: Lesson Study of the schoolteachers, by the schoolteachers and for the schoolteachers. Abraham Lincoln said: The best way to predict the future is to create it.” Any future models/styles of ITE and TE surely depend on creating the culture and environment of launching and establishing Lesson Study at school..
Notes

(1) Inagaki, pp.42-45.
(2) Akita, pp.49-50. She regards this type of Lesson Study as a method of reflecting on lessons.
(3) Department for Education, p.3.
(4) See Kizuka (2012).
(5) In the United Kingdom the official document by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2016 (p.10) refers to “reflection” by saying: “includes opportunities for experimentation, reflection, feedback”, and also the official document, while the one by the General Medical Council (GMC) in 2018 (p.10) also states it by saying, “a develop a range of coping strategies, such as reflection”.
(6) The best-known work of Donald Shön would be to refer to: The reflective practitioner.
(7) Fleming, p.92.
(8) See Shôn. Kizuka also explained the details of the reasons why case is important in his presentation titled “A consideration of how Lesson Study at schools and Case Conference in hospitals influence each other” in the World Associations of Lesson Studies International Conference in Exeter in 2016.
(9) See Shôn.
(10) Lynn, p.2.
(11) See Kizuka (2012).
(12) Ibid.
(13) Wallace, p.47.
(14) See Leitch, R. et al.
(16) Note that “collaborative lesson planning in Lesson Study” is not mandatory in the original sense of it in Japan. The details are explained and discussed by Kizuka (2017) from the point of view of the transformed concepts of Lesson Study in other countries.
(17) See on the website of Leyburn Primary School in North Yorkshire.
(18) See Kizuka (2017).
(20) Inagaki, p.43.

References

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