

A Co-learning Partnership in Teaching Development: Practicality and Limitations

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The context of this study was development of teaching leading to development of students' conceptual understanding in secondary school mathematics classrooms in Pakistan. The aim of this study was to explore teachers' learning in their classrooms as they participated in a co-learning partnership (Wagner, 1993; Jaworski, 2000) with a teacher educator. Collaborative work with the teachers focused on supporting the teachers in developing their teaching while investigating both the teachers and the teacher-educator's learning. The teacher participants taught secondary school mathematics and had resumed teaching in their schools after attending a 'Visiting Teacher' mathematics education programme at a university in Pakistan. Data was collected through maintaining field notes from the classroom observations, audio-recording interviews in pre and post-observation meetings and written comments in reflective journals. The analysis uncovered issues of practicality and limitations of a co-learning partnership in teacher development in the real classroom context.

This study shows that responsibility of a teacher educator to teachers' developing teaching cannot be ignored in a context where teachers have never been encouraged to question or analyse their own or others' actions within their school. In addition, teachers have limited knowledge and understanding of mathematics relating to new practice, and might not be aware of their own mathematical misconceptions. Therefore, nature of collaborative partnership cannot be achieved by the singular influence of any ideology or the theoretical assumptions of collaborative work. It is utterly dependent on the needs of the teachers and the reality of their context. Developing an attitude in which teachers see and experience questioning as learning should be integrated with the provision of adequate interventions.

This study suggests conceptually, that a commitment to learning establishes a teacher educator as a learner along with the teachers. The teachers' commitment to learning activated their understanding of change incorporation in the practical reality of school. The teacher educator revisited her theoretical principles of collaborative partnership within the school's reality in order to support teachers struggling with issues that impede change. The differences in knowledge and understanding were not viewed as teachers' deficits or a teacher educator's superiority but were appreciated as resources of co-learning. However, issues relating to differences in knowledge and understanding between partners, and the constraints of school encouraged the teacher educator to take a leading role in the teachers' learning.

References

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