Seeing Others, Seeing Themselves

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Presentation Overview

- Background of the Study

- The Study

- Qs & As

Abbreviations

- DOET: Department of Education and Training
- EFL: English as a Foreign Language
- MOET: Ministry of Education and Training
- PET: Primary school English language teachers
- PL: Professional Learning
- PLC: Professional Learning Communities
- T: teacher
- S: student

Background of the Study

▪ Vietnam's Project 2020: teaching EFL as a compulsory English at primary schools from year 3 in 2015 (70%) and in 2019 (100%) (MOET 2008)

Background of the Study

- A key factor of a successful language policy: the availability of qualified personnel

  (Kaplan, Baldauf, & Kamwangamalu, 2011)

- Vietnam's challenges:

  - a majority of primary English language teachers (PETs) – not trained to teach at primary schools

  - have low English language proficiency

    (Baldauf et al., 2011; Hayes, 2008; Le & Do, 2012; Moon, 2005, 2009; T. M. H. Nguyen, 2011; T. M. H. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007; Nunan, 2003)

Background of the Study

- Teacher professional learning (PL) ←→ improvements in teacher's knowledge and teaching practice

  (e.g., Boyle et al., 2005; Garet, et al., 2001).

- Requisite for PETs in Vietnam:

→ being retrained / retraining themselves

→ choosing / providing with appropriate types of PL

Background of the Study

- Common PL in Vietnam: one-off training programs - short training courses or workshops

    (Hanamo, 2008; Le & Nguyen, 2012; Thi Mai Hoa Nguyen, 2011).

- These activities are known as:
    - direct teaching activities (Lieberman, 1995),
    - one-off / one-size-fits-all events (Diaz-Maggioli, 2003), or
    - top-down professional development models (Johnson, 2006)

Background of the Study

Top-down PL activities provide Ts with a **decontextualized** body of knowledge:

- being externally delivered by experts in the transmission approach (Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, & Mckinney, 2007).

- not accounting for the complexities of the interrelationship between teachers, learners and the teaching context (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Kelly, 2006).

- having little input of new knowledge into classroom practices (Johnson, 2006).

Sociocultural Perspective

Sociocultural theory: human learning is defined as a dynamic activity situated in specific contexts (Vygotsky, 1978).

From a sociocultural perspective, teacher PL is defined as:

- 'a form of socialization into the professional thinking and practices of a community' (Richards, 2008, p. 160).

- dynamic social activity that is 'normative and lifelong … built through experiences in multiple social contexts' (Johnson, 2009, p. 10).

Sociocultural Perspective

▪ The boundaries of Pl should **go beyond** 'visible professional development activities' or direct teaching, and be open to other **social contexts** in the school and wider communities

▪ Teachers are **users and creators** of legitimate forms of knowledge – deciding how best to each their particular groups of ss

(Johnson, 2006)

Sociocultural Perspective

- **Teacher identity**:

"stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of **'how to be'**, **'how to act'** and **'how to understand'** their work and their place in society. Importantly, teacher identity is **not** something that is **fixed**, **nor** it is **imposed**; rather it is **negotiated through experience** and the sense that is made of that experience."

(Sachs, 2005, p. 15)

Sociocultural Perspective

Kumaravadivelu (2012)

- Teacher identity or self-image is **fluid, multiple**, and of **expansive** nature

- The process of becoming is **non-linear, unstable** and **continuous and identity construction is complex**

(pp.57-9)

→ Teacher identity: dynamic, fluid or unfixed, complex, personal and contextualized.

Background of the Study

Previous studies on teacher identity:

- Shaped and reshaped while teaching (e.g.: Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Liu & Xu, 2011, 2013; Tsui, 2007)

- Changed and emerged when engaging colloborative PL (e.g.: Thomas S. C Farrell, 2011; Samimy, Kim, Lee, & Kasai, 2011)

- Little research on collaborative PL for Vietnamese teachers (e.g: Le & Nguyen, 2012; Saito & Tsukui, 2008; (; Vo & Nguyen, 2010) and their identity construction (e.g.: D. C. Nguyen, 2016)

The Study

- The Methods

- The PLCs in theory and practice

- Findings and Discussion

- Final remarks and Recommendations

The Study - Methods

- *Research design:* A qualitative case study

- *Research case:* Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for primary school English language teachers (PETs) in Thanh Van (pseudonym), a city in Vietnam

- *Focus:* Features of PLCs in Thanh Van + affordances for PETs' professional learning

- *Participants:* 04 PLCs (A, B, C, and D) as groups, 07 PETs, 3 PLC's leaders (Ms Xuan, Quyen, Thi), the EFL consultant (Mr Kim)

- *Data collection:* two phases, using observations + interviews (audio-recorded + note-taken)

- *Data analysis:* an iterative process of coding qualitative data with tentative categories and emerged themes

The Study –PLCs in theory

PLCs:

'refer to an inclusive and mutually supportive group of people with a collaborative, reflective and growth-oriented approach towards investigating and learning more about their practice in order to improve pupils' learning'.

(Stoll 2011, p.104)

Intertwined characteristics: shared values and vision; distributed leadership; reflective professional inquiry; collaboration; promotion of both group and individual leanring and trusting relationship. (Stoll 2011)

The Study – PLCs in practice

- An activity called "***Sinh hoạt cụm chuyên môn***" (*Participating in professional communities*) for primary school English language teachers (PETs) in Thanh Van, Vietnam since 2008 to meet the teachers' learning demands.

- 06 PLCs: each PLC includes approximately 20 PETs from 7-8 schools and 02 leaders

- Schedule: open to each PLC (one or two meetings per semester; common activities: observation + discussion)

Findings - Discussion

Reflection – a central pillar in teacher education (Freeman 2002) and an effective PL activity (Chien, 2013; T. Farrell, 2008)

PLCs provided PETs with valuable opportunities to see themselves as English language teachers at primary schools by observing the others and reflecting on their teachings.

The Study – Findings

PETs shared their reflections in public by:

- Comparing the demonstration with their own teachings to self-evaluate (C2 Lesson)

- Critically analyzing the possibility of copying a 'perfect' lesson regarding the particularitites of their teaching practice (B2 lesson)

- Reinforcing the image of a successful English lesson (*C3 Lesson)*

Phan Quynh Nhu, PhD, Hue University

Findings - Discussion

- **Comparing the demonstration** - good example of reading lesson - with their own teachings to **self-evaluate**:

*"I like the lesson very much. Yesterday, I taught reading for comprehension lesson to be observed by other teachers. But I find my teaching was much **worse** than the lesson [I observed] today. I like the Lucky Number game for checking students' comprehension best. From that, I can **learn** that it's important to **engage** students more in conducting feedback on a reading activity. The students were **excited** and **active** in giving their answer to each question. ... Also, I think not only in a demonstration lesson, but in everyday teaching, I **had better conduct various activities**, so students get used to them, teachers will have such a successful lesson.'*

(Meeting C2 – 13/11/2013)

Findings - Discussion

- **Analyzing the possibility of copying a 'perfect' lesson** (Reading lesson with New Tieng Anh 4)

*"Observing the lesson, I found that the teacher Hong (demonstration teacher) taught very **effectively**, using only English as her language of instruction .... her students could understand [instruction] and it worked very efficiently. Her steps were smooth and well-linked. Her lesson was exciting and attractive. For the **students in my school** ... to have such a successful lesson, ... imagine ... **quite hard**... My students have **limited vocabulary**, listening skill is not good. Also, I have to move from class to class and have **no projector** and **not enough pictures** to elicit ... so it may be hard for me."*

(Meeting B2 – 04/12/2013)

Findings - Discussion

- **Reinforcing the image of a successful English lesson**

'*… About passing the ball… Ms Anh suggested the students passing the stick, but I think it is **more exciting** to pass a ball, the class will be more excited. But the ball the teacher Hang used is small, hard to catch. If I was her, I would use a rubber ball; it's **easier for the students** to catch, a rubber ball is stickier; the ball should be bigger, easier to catch; don't use a plastic one, it's likely to drop, a rubber ball is not. Passing the stick is slower … If the ball is bigger, passing around, the class will be **more delighted**, that's the final activity. Also, I think music is rather …; use rock **music … louder**, louder; **being excited**, let it happen, that's **funnier**…*'

(Grammar Lesson - Meeting C3, 12/12/2013

Findings - Discussion

Observing the other teachings → seeing the critical incidents from the perspectives of a teacher and of an observer:

- To 'produce valuable insights for them to see their work in new and critical light' (Kumaravadivelu 2012, p.107)

- To recognize the professional identity or teacher identity roles of being PETs (Beijaard et al., 2004; Farrell, 2011)

Findings - Discussion

PETs' recitence in the PLCs:

- Are they engaging?

- Are they learning?

Interview data showed that these quiet learners = thoughtful learners undertaking "critical auto-ethnography" of their teaching upong seeing the others (Kumaravedivelu, 2012, p.69)

Findings - Discussion

Private reflections on demonstration teacher Cuc in C2 lesson

*'I think that teacher Cuc spent little time on students' reading [aloud]. My students **need more practice**. Reading [aloud] in that amount of time is not enough …. And I don't design games on PowerPoint as teacher Cuc. My school has **only one projector** used for all teachers. It's not convenient at all. Instead, **I draw simple pictures** on the board or miming to **attract students' interest**. My students **enjoy a lot**.'*

(Teacher Anh - Interview 2 – 29/11/2013)

Findings - Discussion

Private reflections on demonstration teacher Cuc in C2 lesson

*In my teaching, **I don't carry out so many activities** in a reading lesson as teacher Cuc. My students, not good [at English], I want them to **practise** saying new words **more**. They need more time on reading the text and do exercise.'*

(Teacher Thuy - Interview 2 – 03/12/2013)

Findings - Discussion

Private reflections on demonstration teacher Cuc in C2 lesson

*"Observing teacher Cuc's lesson, I found that she was too **'mechanical'.** Her compliments or instructions didn't reflect her emotion. No emotion at all in her voice, gestures or eye contact, like a talking machine. Not at all. I think I need to avoid this mistake. In my class, I always try to be **friendly** and to understand students' **personal lives**.'*

(Teacher Lai - Interview 2 - 02/12/2013)
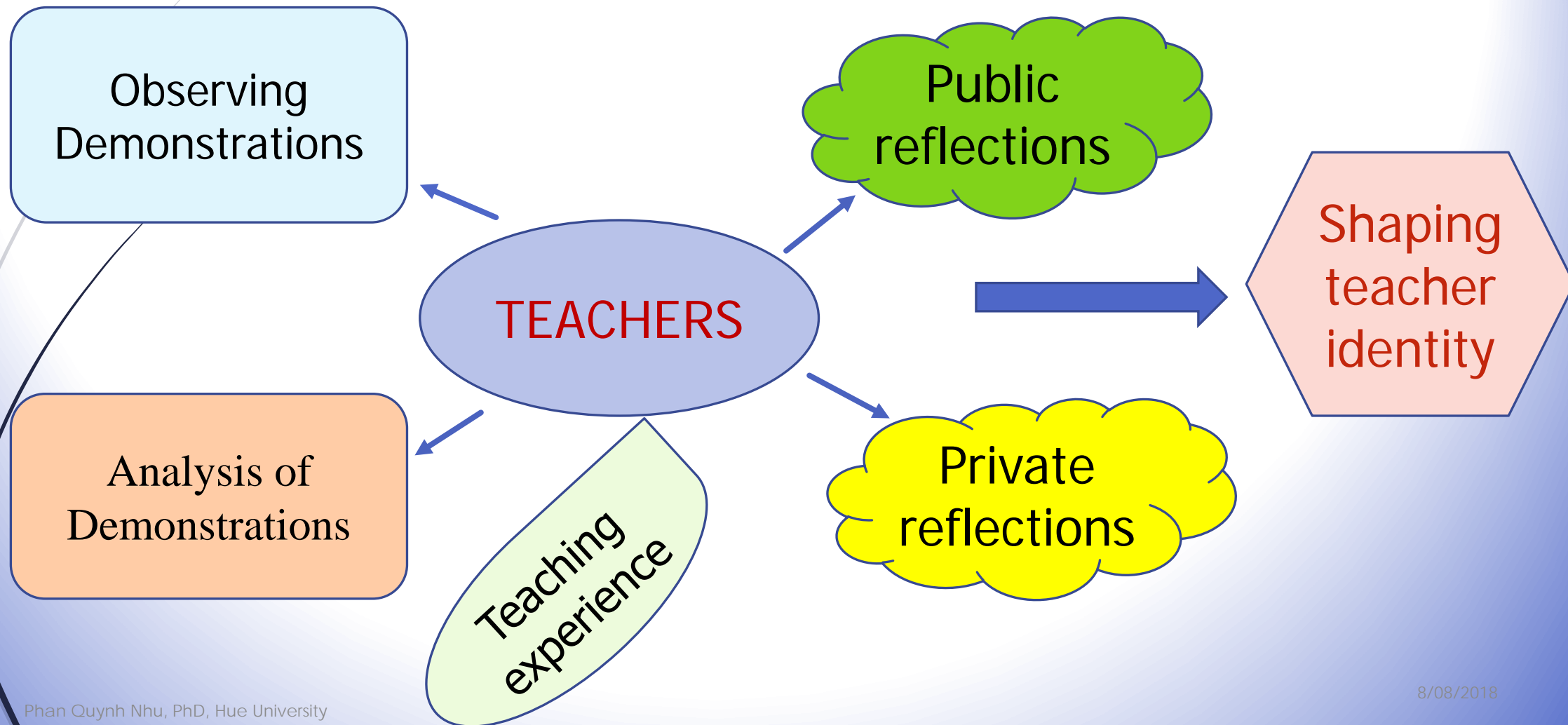
Findings - Discussion

A successful English lesson at primary school:

- More practice

- Visuals – simple drawings

- Enjoyable environment

- Friendly and caring teachers

Final Remarks

- Demonstrations worked as stimulus for reflections
- PETs acted as the owner and subject in the reflection process
- PETs critically interpreted their teaching self and were likely to (re)construct their self-image of who they are as PETs

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The Study – PLCs in practice

Observing Demonstrations

Public reflections

Shaping teacher identity

TEACHERS

Analysis of Demonstrations

Teaching experience

Private reflections

Recommendations

PL activities for Vietnamese teachers:

▪ Being expanded beyond conventional programs

▪ Supporting reflective and inquiry-based learning

▪ Developing a culture of collaborative inquiry

▪ Promoting (re)construction of teacher identity

▪ Being conducted on a regular basis

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THANK YOU!

Questions & Comments?

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