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Hallitzky, Maria [Hrsg.]; Mulhanga, Félix [Hrsg.]; Spendrin, Karla [Hrsg.]; Yoshida, Nariakira [Hrsg.]: *Expanding horizons and local connectedness. Challenges for qualitative teaching research and development in intercultural contexts.* Bad Heilbrunn : Verlag Julius Klinkhardt 2025, S. 53-58



Quellenangabe/ Reference:

Kinyanjui, Joyce: Challenges and recommendations for teachers' professional development through lesson study in Kenya - In: Hallitzky, Maria [Hrsg.]; Mulhanga, Félix [Hrsg.]; Spendrin, Karla [Hrsg.]; Yoshida, Nariakira [Hrsg.]: *Expanding horizons and local connectedness. Challenges for qualitative teaching research and development in intercultural contexts.* Bad Heilbrunn : Verlag Julius Klinkhardt 2025, S. 53-58 - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-341825 - DOI: 10.25656/01:34182; 10.35468/6193-05

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-341825>

<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:34182>

in Kooperation mit / in cooperation with:



<http://www.klinkhardt.de>

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Challenges and Recommendations for Teachers' Professional Development through Lesson Study in Kenya

Abstracts

EN

Given that the quality of an education system will not exceed the quality of its teachers, the article describes official frameworks and programs to enhance teachers' competences in Kenya. Lesson Studies are introduced as a possible methodology for teachers' professional development. However, a number of challenges are named, which can impede the success of different phases of Lesson Studies in the specific context, mostly concerning the fit between the cultural and linguistic context and educational policies. Finally, some recommendations are given on how teachers' professional development could be better enhanced through Lesson Study.

DE

In Anbetracht der Tatsache, dass die Qualität eines Bildungssystems nur so gut sein kann wie die Qualität seiner Lehrer:innen, werden in diesem Artikel die offiziellen Rahmenbedingungen und Programme zur Verbesserung der Kompetenzen der Lehrer:innen in Kenia beschrieben. Lesson Studies werden als eine mögliche Vorgehensweise für die berufliche Entwicklung von Lehrer:innen vorgestellt. Es werden jedoch eine Reihe von Herausforderungen genannt, die den Erfolg der verschiedenen Phasen von Lesson Studies in dem jeweiligen Kontext behindern können, vor allem in Bezug auf die Passung zwischen dem kulturellen und sprachlichen Kontext und der Bildungspolitik. Abschließend werden einige Empfehlungen gegeben, wie die berufliche Entwicklung von Lehrer:innen durch Lesson Study besser gefördert werden könnte.

PT

Dado que a qualidade de um sistema educativo não excederá a qualidade dos seus professores, o artigo descreve os quadros e programas oficiais

para melhorar as competências dos professores no Quênia. A abordagem de Lesson Study é apresentada como uma metodologia possível para o desenvolvimento profissional dos professores. No entanto, são referidos vários desafios que podem impedir o sucesso das diferentes fases de Lesson Study em contextos específicos, sobretudo no que respeita à adequação entre o contexto cultural e linguístico e as políticas educativas. Por último, são apresentadas algumas recomendações sobre a forma como o desenvolvimento profissional dos professores pode ser melhorado através de Lesson Study.

JA

本稿では、教育システムの質がそのまま教師の質を決定するわけではないという立場に立ち、ケニアにおける教師のコンピテンスを拡張するための公的な枠組みとプログラムを叙述する。教師の専門性発達の有力な方法として、授業研究(Lesson Studies)が導入されている。しかし、数多くの課題が指摘されており、特有の文脈におかれた授業研究の異なるフェイズの成功が妨げられていることもある。これは、文化や言語に関する文脈と教育政策を適合させる際にもっとも顕著な問題となっている。さいごに、教師の専門性発達を授業研究によってよりうまく拡張するために何ができるかについて、いくつかの提言をおこなう。

Aims and challenges of Lesson Study for teachers' professional development in Kenya

The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) of Kenya is an independent government commission established under the Constitution of Kenya to manage human resources within the education sector. The latest data from the TSC website indicate that in 2017 (TSC 2017), 758,914 teachers were employed in Kenya. However, of these, only 300,000 were employed by the TSC, whilst the remainder were employed by boards of management, non-governmental organisations, churches and other private institutions managing schools.

It has been stated that the quality of an education system will not exceed the quality of its teachers. Indeed, the professional development of teachers remains a critical and effective strategy in providing good quality education. This means, therefore that education and training initiatives should be geared towards the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in trainee teachers that are requisite for the development of abilities to effectively cater for the learning needs of the Kenyan child. To accomplish this, the Department of Education has developed a 'Pre-Service Teacher Education Draft Framework' (KICD 2019) that stipulates competence requirements for teachers at all levels including primary school, early childhood development

and education (ECDE), teacher training and secondary school teachers. The framework details skills and competencies that teachers in Kenya should be capable of utilising. It includes indicators by which competencies for teachers can be identified and measured. These indicators are useful for decision making as well as in measuring the extent to which the targets are met. The competencies are organised in four domains, namely: knowledge, teaching skills, assessment and evaluation, professional values and behaviour. This article focuses on the challenges of assessing teaching skills in Kenya.

In order to improve the teaching and learning process, it is imperative that Lesson Studies are carried out. Ideally, Lesson Studies involve determining the following:

1. Planning: What perspectives are to be observed?
2. Observation: How do we collect data? Is it through video recording?
3. Conference: Holding discussions on what was observed
4. Lesson analysis
5. Feedback: Sharing feedback with the teachers.

The current 'Pre-Service Teacher Education Draft Framework' (KICD 2019) requires that teachers use learner-centred as opposed to teacher-centred pedagogies. The following are some of the indicators the framework suggests for learner-centred pedagogies: active participation of learners, collaborative learning with others mainly through groups, flexible time management to match learner needs, learning activities that are personally relevant to learners, peer learning and peer teaching as part of the instructional method and so forth. Despite these well-outlined indicators, there are challenges to Lesson Studies in Kenya in pursuit of teacher professional development:

1 Validity of tools

- a) The use of non-participant semi-structured observation, which utilises both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, simplifies a very complex issue. The teaching and learning process can be affected by many factors like teacher motivation and learners' emotional well-being, overall health, and nutritional conditions, which may not be observed. Such factors raise questions on the validity of observation tools.
- b) The use of semi-structured tools may reduce the Lesson Studies to a checklist. It may miss out other components that are key to enrich learner experiences. In addition, it may not always be possible to observe all the indicators in one lesson. Making conclusions on whether a teacher is

using learner-centred pedagogies while using a structured tool becomes a challenge.

2 Hawthorne effect

The Ministry of Education has a Directorate of Quality Assurance for assessing teachers' competencies. However, the Directorate is regarded by many as an aid for school inspectors as opposed to a system of teacher support and coaching. As a result, when inspectors go to a school to observe lessons, there is always the risk of teachers and students changing or modifying behaviour when under observation. A popular example given in Kenya is where a teacher supposedly asked students to raise their right hand if they knew the answer and their left hand if they didn't in order to generate the impression of active learner participation.

3 Different learners over time due to migration

In order to accurately determine teachers' professional development, a longitudinal study is required. However, longitudinal studies in Kenya in certain contexts present challenges, and appraisal of teachers' skills become difficult:

- a) In pastoralist communities, families migrate in search of water and pasture. As they migrate, children enrol in different schools in the course of their schooling, which may result in continual shifting of classroom dynamics.
- b) As public servants, teachers can be deployed anywhere. When teachers are transferred to a different context, it may take a while for them to build a relationship with their students that allows for the use of learner-centred pedagogies.

4 Large classrooms

Pupils-teacher ratio in some areas in Kenya is high due to a teacher shortage of about 80,000 teachers. Due to the shortage of human resource, some teachers must teach as many as 60 children in a class. This large number of children does not allow for the use of learner-centred pedagogies, especially the use of group work, as classes are overcrowded with no spaces to move around in. In addition, teachers cannot walk around the classroom to look at learners' work and to support pupils learning at a different pace.

5 Language of instruction

- a) The Language in Education Policy (MoEST 1976) requires that teachers use the language of the catchment area for instruction from early childhood development and education (ECDE to Grade 3). The language of instruction is usually the language spoken by the majority of the pupils. While many children's learning needs are addressed through this policy, children who are in the minority, who do not speak the language of the catchment area, struggle to understand the lesson until they master the language. This barrier affects active participation of learners from minority communities.
- b) As stated earlier, teachers can be deployed in any area where there are vacancies. Many teachers are posted in places where their first language is different from the language of the catchment area. In such a case, language becomes a barrier to the use of learner-centred pedagogies by teachers. Furthermore, learners are unable to respond to the teacher due to the language barrier.
- c) English is seen as the language of the elite. Parents demand that their children learn in English as learning in the mother tongue or the language of the catchment area is viewed negatively. As a result, teachers are pressured to use the national languages, English or Kiswahili, to appease parents. Language barriers eventually become an impediment to the use of learner-centred pedagogies.

6 Cultural values

Most communities in Kenya are highly patriarchal. Children are socialised not to talk when adults are talking. Girls are socialised not to look at a man directly. This socialisation affects the teaching and learning process. Pupils seldom ask or answer questions. In very remote rural communities, the use of learner-centred pedagogies thus becomes a challenge.

7 Lack of comprehensive in-service training

Compelling evidence indicates that a strong system of continuous in-service professional development and training has an immense impact on teacher capacity and performance. However, Kenya lacks comprehensive in-service training. The link between researchers, teachers and trainers is weak. Consequently, the whole purpose of Lesson Study, which is teacher professional development, cannot be achieved.

Recommendations

In order to improve teacher professional development through Lesson Study, this article recommends the following:

1. As part of reforming the education and training sectors, the Department of Education should develop a teacher development and management policy so as to institutionalise continuous professional development (CPD) for all teachers. This policy framework would provide a clear focus on teacher development and utilisation under which in-service education and training (INSET) is a priority area. Such a policy would allow for linkage among the researchers, teachers and trainers which is currently lacking.
2. An atmosphere of trust should be created between the teachers and the assessors to reduce the pressure associated with Lesson Study. Teachers can only benefit from Lesson Study if they are convinced that its aim is to enable professional development and not to censure or fault them, should competency development be required in certain areas.
3. Teachers for early grades should be native speakers of the language of instruction to allow for enriched learner experience. Thus, Lesson Studies that are able to isolate teachers' skills without the influence of language barriers would be possible.

Competencies that define learner-centred pedagogies in various contexts should be at the disposal of teachers and headteachers. This would ensure that all stakeholders in Lesson Studies are aware of the requisite skills. Teachers, trainers and researchers would be aware of the skills to focus on.

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