A Case Study of Private School Teachers' Personal Practical Knowledge

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Abstract. This paper is a case study of the personal practical knowledge of two private middle school teachers, discussing the core teaching concepts and practices of private middle school teachers and their causes. The research shows that these two teachers have their own core concepts to guide teaching practice, and found that their personal experiences \textit{The social environment in which they live affects the formation of their core ideas to varying degrees. The article focuses on the great impact of the teaching and management mode of private schools on Teachers' education ideas, and hopes to have more research in this regard. For a long time, private schools have been subordinates to the public education system, so the academic community has not paid enough attention to private teachers for a long time, but the impact of private school teachers on students is not weaker than that of public teachers. It should receive more attention from the academic community for their development. The theoretical framework of personal practical knowledge offers a way to thoroughly examine teachers' instructional strategies and methods. This paper will then describe the theoretical framework, outline the research procedures, describe and evaluate two cases, then talk about the enlightenment of these two situations and highlight the importance of this study.}

1 Introduction

“I need to have a sense of control over the class and the classroom, otherwise it will be difficult for teaching to proceed smoothly.”. “In our school, stability is paramount.” (quoted from teacher interviews)

The author found that in interviews with two private middle school teachers about teaching concepts and practices, they frequently mentioned the words “sense of control” and “stability,” considering that in their teaching practice, maintaining order and controlling the classroom are the most crucial tools to ensure teaching results. This statement caught the author’s attention since, according to the current mainstream education concept, kids must develop holistically and liberate their individuality. Their thoughts appear to be at odds with the direction in which education is moving. Why then do the two private middle school teachers place such a strong emphasis on order? What kind of instructional strategy should we use to promote “stability”? What effect does it have on the way that these professors teach? Can we examine the issues private middle schools face by exposing the “ideas” expressed by these instructors’ words? The author discovered that the amount of study on teachers’ practical knowledge, or personal practical knowledge, increased in the early 1980s when she searched the research literature on Teacher Education and progress in pedagogy. In actuality, this “personal practical knowledge” includes the development of teachers’ instructional strategies. This essay is a case study of the first-hand experience of two private middle school teachers. By exploring their teaching philosophies and their guiding roles in classroom practice, the aim is to understand the professional growth process of private school teachers and provide inspiration for their development. The theoretical framework of personal practical knowledge offers a way to thoroughly examine teachers’ instructional strategies and methods. This paper will then describe the theoretical framework, outline the research procedures, describe and evaluate two cases, then talk about the enlightenment of these two situations and highlight the importance of this study.

2 Theoretical framework

Elbaz’s study on teachers’ practical knowledge served as the foundation for Clandinin & Connelly’s development of the theoretical framework of personal practical knowledge. According to Elbaz, teachers’ practical knowledge is a type of knowledge that is based on their understanding and use of schools and classrooms [1] and is intended to address the issues they encounter when teaching. Personal practical knowledge emphasizes that teachers’ experiences and experiences can be understood through their narratives and places more emphasis on “individuality.” Teachers’ professional and personal experiences make up a type of empirical knowledge called “personal practical knowledge” that is continually recreated by teachers’ constant narrative. It should be noted that personal experience does not detest social interaction. Connelly & Clandinin place a high value on the influence of social context on one’s own practical knowledge; as a result, the idea of the “professional knowledge scene” is put out. The professional knowledge scene describes the social and cultural setting in which instructors work. This idea is put forth to highlight how instructors’ interpersonal relationships and working environment have an impact on how they build their own practical knowledge. Therefore, it is vital to situate

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instructors in the social milieu in which they work in order to properly appreciate their own unique practical expertise. Connelly & Clandinin believe that because the development of teachers' personal practical knowledge is closely related to the social environment in which they work, it is also closely related to their identity. Specifically, they believe that as teachers' knowledge grows, so does their awareness of their own identities, which in turn affects how they teach and ultimately has an impact on students' learning. Clandinin and Connelly promoted and used narrative inquiry as a research methodology to examine teachers' specialized knowledge. To define the traits of personal practical knowledge, they created a set of words such as "rules," "principles," "personal philosophy," "metaphor," "rhythm," etc. [2]. They emphasized the significance of the word "image" in particular. Image can be viewed as the central concept of teachers' personal practical knowledge because it condenses teachers' personal experience, connects the integration of teachers' new and old information, and directs teachers' teaching practice macroscopically [2]. Therefore, by looking at teachers' images, it is possible to understand the traits and factors that contribute to their unique practical expertise. As a result, the case study chosen as the theoretical basis for this paper. In addition, the idea of "image" is utilized to understand the essence of instructors' own practical expertise, which is helpful for summarizing the key elements of teachers' teaching philosophies and methods.

3 Research methods and steps

The author conducted the case study that is the subject of this work on an independent basis. Two questions are addressed in this study: (1) What are the traits of the two teachers' individual practical knowledge? (2) What elements influence the development of their own practical knowledge?

The case study technique is used in this study because it allows for thorough and in-depth investigation and analysis of the research object by clearly defining the scope and object of the study, leading to a thorough comprehension of the research object.

The two teachers come from two distinct private middle schools, and their experiences show both some commonality and originality. The two teachers were interviewed one-on-one and in person for the majority of the data included in this study report. Other materials come from the teacher's lesson plan, the author's research log, and classroom observations. The author took notes during the interview, which she then assembled into a verbatim manuscript. Following extensive analysis that involved reading the text corpus, listening to the interview recordings, watching the teaching logs, and reviewing the author's research notes numerous times, the two teachers' central personas—their teaching theories and methods—finally came into focus. The key concepts of the two teachers' leading images, or teaching philosophies, will be reported on and analyzed in the following. This study's main objective is to describe the traits of private school instructors' personal practical knowledge and to examine its root causes. Because of this, we don't care if the case study teachers are outstanding educators and refrain from evaluating their teaching strategies during the analysis.

4 Case report and analysis

4.1 Mr. Zhao's case report and analysis

4.1.1 Zhao's personal and teaching school background

Mr. Zhao is the head teacher of RD middle school. Rd Middle School is effectively a part of the RD Education Group, which has more branches located around the province of Hebei in numerous counties and districts. The majority of the students at this middle school in a nearby township are young people from quite affluent backgrounds. There are more than 1000 students in 24 of the school's classes. Mr. Zhao received a bachelor's degree after completing a regular secondary education, which is the same academic level found in private middle schools in towns and townsships. Since it is now quite difficult for graduates of regular secondary schools in China to find "career editors," the majority of teachers with regular majors opt to work at private schools close to their homes. The two courses taught by Mr. Zhao consistently receive praise from the school for their results, which fall into the upper middle range of the grade. Mr. Zhao was still extremely concerned and frequently believed that there was no hope in life, despite the fact that the institution had acknowledged his work.

4.1.2 "maintain my authority" -- teacher Zhao's teaching philosophy and Practice

"Children in towns and villages frequently do not acquire effective study habits. In addition, parents are too preoccupied with work to discipline their kids. Children don't have "rules" in school as a result, which causes disruptions in classroom behavior and ruination of the dorm environment. Some kids don't treat teachers with enough respect. So that I can preserve my authority and keep the classroom in order while also managing the students, I must "set rules" before the start of class. The teacher was in charge when we were in school. The teacher intimidated us all. Schools cannot grant us powe
like chanting together while waiting for meals, reading textbooks, and walking in formation to the playground. The supervision of students by Mr. Zhao also covers all facets, from the election of the class committee to the sanitary scheduling of the dormitories. They should all take part in creating the rules. As time went on, the pupils started to realize that Mr. Zhao was the only person in the class with any authority. During the author's observations of the class, both instructor Zhao's work completion and the level of class discipline have greatly improved.

4.1.3 analysis of the causes of Mr. Zhao's core ideas

The leading image, "authority," which embodies the central idea of Mr. Zhao's teaching and directs his thoughts and actions, may be seen in the report up top. Teacher authority is the status and power that come with being able to rely on, respect, and obey a teacher. In addition to serving as the cornerstone of educational influence, teacher authority is also a prerequisite for the smooth operation of the educational system. Then, what elements contributed to Mr. Zhao's fundamental belief? The following three elements can be found by analyzing the interview with Mr. Zhao: (1) Mr. Zhao's educational background and experience; (2) the effect of the students; (3) the shameful placement of private schools. As one of the contemporary Chinese teachers with a middling to lower level of education, Mr. Zhao frequently feels insecure. Teachers who work in private schools frequently experience this emotion.

Mr. Zhao claims that the turnover rate for instructors at private schools is extremely high and that they frequently look for other positions while employed, particularly "iron rice bowls." Private instructors must therefore frequently find a sense of control amidst the uncertainties. This feeling of control is related to keeping things organized in the classroom. Teachers' anxiety may be somewhat reduced by this sense of order, and they may feel more secure knowing that everything is in control. The second factor is student influence. In Chinese villages and cities, the occurrence of "left behind children" is particularly prevalent. People's expectations for their children continue to rise as their economic levels rise, in an effort to give them a better educational setting. Township Middle Schools in China currently have a constrained enrollment, and there is a critical teacher shortage. Consequently, the number of private schools, especially Rd middle schools, is growing yearly in township regions. Lack of parental supervision, which results in a lack of boundaries and a disregard for regulations, is a typical issue among these students. As a result, "establishing norms" has grown to be a crucial teaching strategy for educators at private schools.

And lastly, the shameful placement of private schools. Private schools must offer additional "services" to parents as a result of their high tuition costs, which in turn weakens the authority of the schools to some extent. As a result, many private school teachers serve as both "educators" and "waiters." In order to oversee the instructional activities and uphold their authority, the private teachers Mr. Zhang is representing must do every effort. According to Mr. Zhao's experience, both internal and external influences might affect a teacher's practical knowledge.

4.2 Mr. Zhang's case report and analysis

4.2.1 Mr. Zhang's personal and teaching school background

Mr. Zhang is employed by a public high school's exclusive division. Many renowned middle schools have started to form their own educational organizations and develop their own private branches since the so-called "school selection fee" was eliminated. These private branch schools have quickly taken hold and grown thanks to the "brand" of public schools. The shortage of teachers stands in stark contrast to the expansion's rapidity. Such private schools frequently carefully standardize the teaching process in order to assure the quality of the instruction, and via extensive teaching and study, guarantee that each teacher completes every crucial knowledge point in every class. Mr. Zhang likewise received his degree from a university with a common major. Prior to joining YZ Middle School, he had two years of teaching experience, thus he readily adjusted to the school's teaching style. He thinks that the school uses practice of knowledge points as its primary teaching strategy in order to raise students' performance. At the moment, this method is particularly effective in China's exam-focused education system.

4.2.2 "smooth teaching and repeated practice" -- teacher Zhang's teaching philosophy and Practice

The pupils were quite "obedient," and the teaching process was very efficient, according to my observations of Mr. Zhang's classroom. In fact, Mr. Zhang used the word "smooth" quite a bit during the interview. It can be seen as the epitome of Mr. Zhang's own practical expertise and the center of his philosophy; it is the aim of his instruction. Mr. Zhang's teaching style more precisely reflects the emphasis on "fluency." From the very beginning to the very end of each course, there is a clear plan. The systematic method of "introduction, guidance, presentation, comments, review, and detection" is closely followed by Mr. Zhang when instructing. In this procedure, the 3-5 knowledge elements from this lesson are the focal points of "guide," "comment," "review," and "detection." Every day, the school also sets up equivalent self-study seminars for "limited time practice" to evaluate the lessons learned that day. The "6 + 1" efficient classroom mode is what it is termed. YZ Middle School has consistently led the pack of middle schools in its area when it comes to teaching methods. Mr. Zhang is of the opinion that this "assembly line" teaching method, which involves smooth instruction and repetitive practice, is sensible if the general direction of China's "exam focused education" does not alter. This method of repeated practice is used at Hengshui Middle School in Hebei Province to help students understand the exam's essential concepts and raise their academic standing.
4.2.3 analysis of the causes of Mr. Zhang's core ideas

Mr. Zhang's teaching concept is also constrained by environmental and personal circumstances. Mr. Zhang claims that the university trained its students to be teachers while he was a student there. It comes naturally for me to adjust to this teaching style given that my professional training has prepared me to control the classroom's rhythm, ensure the accuracy of the instruction, and provide knowledge points. From the standpoint of the schools, the rapid expansion is coupled with a teacher shortage. The solution to this issue is to create a "standardized method" for the curriculum, which will allow for consistent teaching across courses. The repetitive repetition of knowledge points is the basis of this "6 + 1" teaching approach. Even if YZ's education group is short on teachers, the main school has a large number of senior teachers who can thoroughly understand the test points and transfer them to the branch school. For the majority of Chinese students, improving their exam performance at this time still requires accurate control of test points. Mr. Zhang's fundamental concept was formed as a result of both his education and the school's resources.

5 Conclusion

What illumination can Mr. Zhao and Mr. Zhang's personal experiences provide for us? First of all, it is clear that both professors follow their own leading images even when their fundamental ideas differ. Maintaining his authority and the structure of the classroom are Mr. Zhao's top priorities when teaching. Mr. Zhang puts a lot of emphasis on the penetration of knowledge points and the overall fluency of the teaching process. According to the author, the main component of a teacher's effort to establish their own teaching style is their leading image, and this process is what constitutes the teacher's own professional development. We can see from the situations of Mr. Zhao and Mr. Zhang that personal and contextual factors both limit teachers' practical knowledge. The situation involving Mr. Zhao serves to highlight the current dilemma of private school teachers. First of all, due to their own educational backgrounds and other factors, teachers in private schools have long lacked a sense of security; secondly, due to the shameful position of private schools, teachers are unable to receive authoritative protection and can instead invest their energy in the creation of numerous rules for an extended period of time. Teachers are unable to cultivate thoroughly in their professions because of the lack of assurance and authority that comes with this sense of security. This makes it harder for them to advance, which makes their worry worse. The situation involving Mr. Zhang demonstrates the actual opposition to China's educational reform. Education reform continues to encounter a lot of opposition given the current situation with the teacher shortage and inconsistent teaching quality. The strength of teachers cannot be significantly increased, teaching is still the indoctrination of "knowledge points," and actual quality education is still challenging to attain as long as the overall direction of "exam focused education" is maintained. The different "efficient classroom" approaches in middle school education are currently only concealed by reform. The primary function of teachers has long been disregarded or even undervalued in the domains of curriculum reform, teacher education, and professional development. Private schools have received little attention for a long time as a subordinate of the public education system. This study details the causes and enlightening experiences of private school teachers. The author, on the other hand, wants to draw attention to this group. The era of educational reform can only truly arrive when every aspect of education is completely taken into account and comprehended.

References