Lesson Study: Cultivation Of Professional Learning Community (PLC) In The Institute Of Teacher Education (IPG) In Negeri Sembilan Malaysia

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Abstract
Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a platform that is recognizable to the development of professionalism among educators as well as the aspects of teaching and learning of educators. A professional learning community, or PLC, is a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students. Therefore, an initiative has been taken by the Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia (IPGM) to cultivate PLC among teacher educators in all 27 IPGs in Malaysia. One of the collaborative tools recommended for its application is Lesson Study (LS). LS is seen as a collaborative tool that focuses on student learning and is implemented collaboratively. A study was conducted by applying LS in the Teaching and Learning process (PdP) at Raja Melewar Teacher Education Institute to student teachers in the Post -Education Diploma Program (PDPP) for Philosophy and Educational Development in Malaysia (EDUP2072). The students involved are students majoring in History and TESL. A total of two cycles were implemented and the results of each cycle were shared with fellow teacher educators and given improvements before the implementation of the 2nd cycle. Observations were carried out during the TnL process by seven fellow teacher educators as well as one expert. A reflection session was held immediately after the end of each TnL and discussed. The results of the study found that i. LS can provide an impact on student learning towards better understanding and clarity, ii. Collaboration between teacher educators can produce a healthy culture in the organization and iii. Cultivation of LS among teacher educators can promote the cultivation of PLC in Teacher Education Institutes in Malaysia. Overall LS and KPP should be given focus by all instructional leaders in Teacher Education Institutes and The Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia (IPGM) as a culture and in an effort to develop the professionalism of teacher educators..

Keywords: Lesson Study, Professional Learning Community, Teacher Educator, Cultivation.

Introduction

Professional Learning Community (PLC) is an idea that needs to be cultivated in an effort to strengthen the professionalism of educators and student learning. The vision and mission of the Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia (IPGM) explains the direction of IPGM as a leader in teacher education excellence and to produce competent and educator–souled teachers. How can the vision and mission be translated into practice and work for IPGM? Thus, IPGM's initiative in empowering PLC is a decision parallel to IPGM's vision and mission. PLC was introduced in 2010 and 2011 in the IPGs. However, only in 2019 PLC was reintroduced and in 2021 a large-scale initiative was taken to re-mobilize PLC among teachers, school leaders, IPG lecturers and education management officers throughout Malaysia. The purpose of this paper is to explain how PLC through collaborative tools Learning Study - LS (Lesson Study) is practiced as one of the efforts to cultivate PLC in IPGs..

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

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The Theory of Action Teacher Leadership Conceptual Model (York-Barr and Duke, 2004), explains that educator/teacher leadership influences collaboration in teams to improve teaching and learning practices with the goal of improving student learning outcomes. Educator/teacher leadership is supported by elements such as professional discourse, sharing of resource materials and time to perform tasks. All these elements are present in PLC (DuFour et. Al., 2016) and accordingly the empowerment of PLC will be able to realize the culture of PLC. In an effort to empower PLC, an organization needs to reduce bureaucracy that greatly restricts the culture of learning organizations. The organizational culture of learning is in alignment with the PLC where learning collaboratively among employees in the organization is encouraged. The practice of working in silos is prohibited and each individual in the organization has a common vision and mission, that is focusing on student learning, sharing best practices or deprivatization of practice and focusing on collaborative practices in many aspects through sessions. dialogue and reflection sessions (Senge et. al., 2012; Smulyan, 2016 and Schap & Bruijn, 2018). PLC is also an effective and democratic model where every member in the organization is given empowerment in discussions related to teaching and learning as well as in the decision-making process (Darling-Hammond et. Al., 2017). Cultivation of PLC effectively impacts student/pupil achievement and has a long-term impact on student/pupil achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2017; DuFour et. Al., 2016 and Hanzieker, 2012).

Lesson Study (LS)

Lesson Study (LS) is one of PLC"s collaborative tools that is often used by teachers, and educators in the teaching and learning process (TnL). LS requires teachers/educators to work collaboratively with other fellow teachers/educators in identifying students'/pupils' learning issues and finding the best methods to address them gradually. Dialogue and reflective discussions are held among educators/teachers in an open and broad -minded and critical manner. The main focus of LS is observation of students learning in the classroom/lecture room by observers during the teaching sessions. According to DuFour and Marzano (2012), effective teaching ensures that all students/pupils learn at the maximum level. This requires an important responsibility on the part of the educator/teacher who plans the TnL to ensure that the instruction delivery leads to meaningful and effective learning (p. 141). However, educators/teachers also need to be aware and know that the LS implemented will not necessarily find the best results but educators/teachers need to provide opportunities to improve practice in the team. There is no one teaching strategy that guarantees maximum students' learning even though the strategy has been conducted in depth study because educators/teachers need to know whether the strategy to be applied meets the needs and context of students(Marzano, 2009). This means that educators/teachers need to be smart and sensitive in determining the strategies to be applied during the TnL process. Therefore, LS planned and implemented by educators/teachers should give priority that students learn and take appropriate action if students do not learn. How can an educator/teacher know whether a student is learning? The team of observers who are in the classroom or lecture room during the TnL process will provide feedback on whether the student is studying or otherwise. LS can be cultivated in schools or educational institutions that cultivate PLC.

Method

This study was conducted among students who are doing their Diploma in Education programme at a Teacher Education Institute in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The course involved is Philosophy and Development of Education in Malaysia (EDUP2072) under the sub - topic Development of the Education System in Malaysia - Before, After and Today . The first cycle of LS was implemented History major students and there were seven lecturers who conducted observations during the TnL process together with an appointed field expert. TnL was done online. Once the TnL process was over, a reflection session was conducted between the lecturers conducting the TnL on that day, other lecturers teaching the EDUP2072 course, field experts and a chairperson to the reflection session. Reflection sessions provide opportunities for each individual involved to provide insights and suggestions to ensure students are learning. The second cycle was implemented by taking into account all the items stated in the first reflection session. Cycle 2 involved TESL major students and TnL was conducted using English as the medium of instruction. Reflection sessions were recorded and verbatim transcripts were generated for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2.

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Results and Discussion

Strengths

1. Notification on Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

At the beginning of the lesson, the lecturer informs the CLO to the TnL process. This notification is very appropriate as the students are postgraduate students. In this way, students can conceptualize the direction of the lecturer's discussion to the TnL topic of the day. Figure 1 explains the CLO:
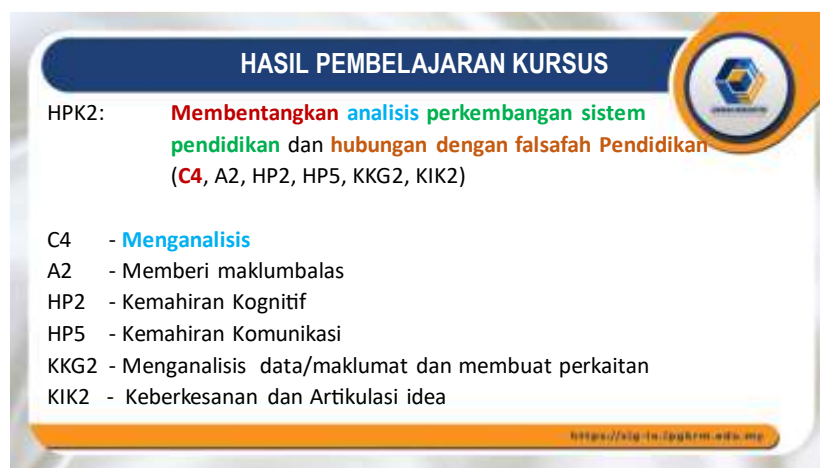

Figure 1: Course Learning Outcomes

The presence of observers and experts as well as other lecturers who teach the same course does not disturb the students. Figure 2 illustrates the atmosphere.

Figure 2: Observers, Experts and Lecturers During the LS Session

2. Use of Videos and Maps

The use of videos and maps can be used as a basis for discussion among students and several levels of questioning can be formed from the videos shown. The selected videos are suitable to get the attention and interest of the students. The screening of the videos can be considered as ice-breaking among students who have never actually met each other due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Appropriate

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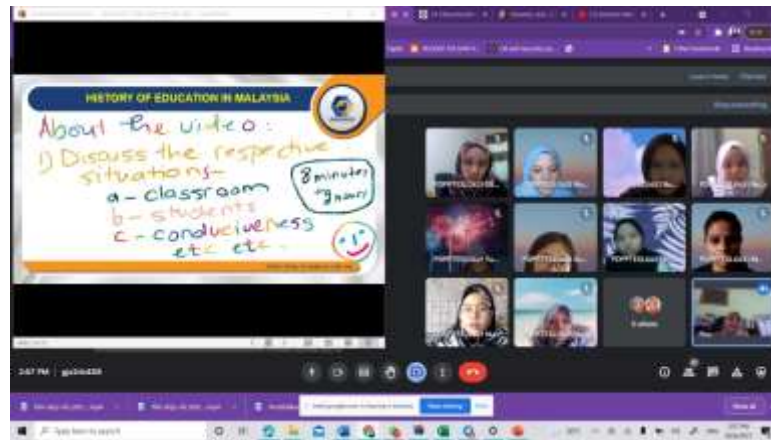video screenings and video selection can also reduce "stifness" among students and can engage their focus.

Figure 3: Video Usage

Figure 4: Map Usage

3. Use of Media

Some of the media used seemed to give the impression of being in the classroom physically. For example, the lecturer performs a group discussion activity by using the breakout rooms application as shown in Figure 5.

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Figure 5: Group Discussion Activities - Breakout Rooms

The use of power-point slides that are interesting and can be used by lecturers as support material when giving lectures. The lecturer writes notes and annotations on the power-point slides as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Using Power-point with Annotations

4. Lecturer's Description

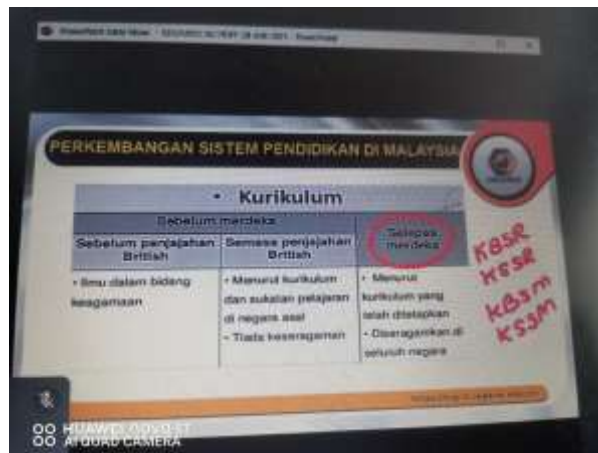Descriptions of the topics help students' understanding and confirmation

Figure 7: Lecturer's Description

Suggestions For Improvement

1. Induction Set/Video Screening
Indeed the selection of appropriate videos is placed in the induction set as it creates an element of enthusiasim in the learning process. Video screenings can grab the attention of students. The content of this video can be linked to the topic under discussion. However, it is suggested that some guiding questions be given before the video so that the students' focus can be directed and the discussion will be more focused.
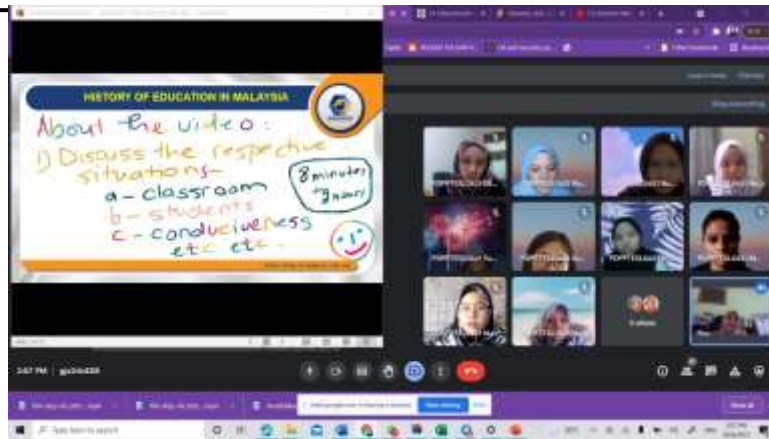
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Figure 8: Video Screening Improvements with Questions

The question and answer activity only involved a few students compared to the video screening stage. There needs to be better time management so that the video-question and answer ratio becomes more balanced and can be utilized by students.

2. **Dispersment of Questions**

The questions were not distributed to all students and focused more on the same students: Amir, Zul, and Mirha. Questions asked:

> What were the significant differences between pre -colonial, post -colonial and post -independence schools?

However, the students did not have time to answer and have moved on to the next step.

Figure 9: Higher Level Questions

3. **Level of Questions**

Questions posed to students with a Bachelor of History degree are considered low-level. For example the difference between National School and National Type School is a fact that is considered simple by the students. Table 1 is provided to show the differences of levels in the education system that should be used by the lecturer as an activity to be completed by students as the basis of discussion or items to be discussed.

Basis of Discussion	Pre colonization	Post colonization	Post Independence
Curriculum			
Teaching staff			

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Educational goals			
Effect			

Table 1: Examples of Group Questioning Activities

Some questions that are at a higher level such as:

Give a justification for the root cause of the Chinese community's reluctance to accept colonial government control over their education system and the impact of their reluctance as a whole?
Provide students' opinions on national education policies that celebrate the diversity of mediums of instruction for the same curriculum;
Discuss the effects of medium language diversity for the same curriculum.

Time should be given to students after questions, (especially those that require time to think) are asked to students.

Suggestions for high-level questions in contemporary issues:
Discuss in depth the trend of the Malay community sending their children to Chinese National Type Schools

3. Utilization of Tutorials
Tutorials (in asynchronous form) should be planned to delve into the issues that have been discussed in the lecture

SECOND CYCLE OF TESL UNIT VIA ONLINE

Some improvement occurred in the second cycle after the reflection session was held. This has led to some weaknesses that heve been overcome.
1. Dispersment of questions gets better. Before the video was screened, several discussion criteria/discussion questions were posed and this drove a more directed discussion after the video screening (Figure 8).
2. Photographs were used more effectively, and Graphic Management was used which also resulted in a more structured and directed discussion.
3. With guidance from the lecturer, students can conclude that in fact there is no big   difference between the education during the colonial period and the post-independence   period fromthe aspects of the use of the different mother tongue.

There was one student who concluded that what happened was standardization of curriculum or streamline curriculum happened only after independence. Clearly, the lecturer's conclusion managed to drive towards that exact conclusion. However, in an online class, it cannot be ascertained that other students are also on the same level of thinking as that student.

Conclusion

Overall, the PLC that has been implemented has been able to provide several perspectives on the culture of PLC in Raja Melewar Teacher Education Institute. Cultivation of PLC through the application of collaborative tools LS has yielded good results and some suggestions that need to be given attention to realize the efforts of cultivating PLC. The following are the recommendations of the study conducted:
1. Two LS cycles help improve the quality in TnL. Some of the weaknesses identified in the first cycle were corrected through reflection sessions.
2. Input from fellow observers are very important in a reflection session
3. Isolation of lecturers can be reduced. Teaching preparation becomes group work
4. Fellow observers can also train themselves in observation and doing criticism.
5. Lecturers and fellow observers alike learn and get new ideas to implement in their teaching.

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6. Content and pedagogical knowledge can be improved.
7. Collaboration among lecturers of the Teacher Education Institutes can be improved

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