Abstract

Extensive research has been conducted on student learning, and pre-service teacher learning inside the classroom, but this is not the case with in-service teachers engaged in learning opportunities provided by professional development.

In this study a framework was developed to analyze and provide a description of a professional development session as it occurred. The researcher makes use of the phenomenological perspective, to analyze the ‘lived experience’ of professional development sessions and describe teachers’ reactions to a variety of approaches and activities.

As a result of her analysis of professional development sessions, the researcher brings forward some important elements to consider like mood, motives, wants, and who is carrying the flow of the conversation (flux) during the sessions. The researcher also focused on engagement, and how through engagement teachers show their motivation, wants, moods, needs and learning.

To represent the phenomenology of professional development in a way that was succinct and useful, the researcher developed the idea of scenarios for her analysis. A scenario is defined as a unit of exchange, where the professional developer has a plan, and in accordance with it, s/he introduces or presents an idea or task. This action is taken in by the teachers, and the teachers then respond. Communication is not perfect, the original idea passes through the teachers’ ‘wants-motives-mood’ filter, so what the teachers take out of what the professional developer presents to them is not necessarily what the professional developer expects, given that the response the professional developer receives also passes through her/his ‘wants-motives-mood’ filter. The unit is completed when the professional developer takes in the response and sees a need to re-direct. By dividing activities into scenarios, and then focusing on each of its components the analysis was considerably simplified. The researcher was able to find units of meaning, and significant themes emerged from the analysis: how teachers use the teacher guides, how previous practice can play a role for change, and how a teacher’s resistance can interfere with the learning of others.