

Parental Understanding and Involvement on Students Learning Process: Dialogic Method in PLC Settings

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Abstract

The aims of this study were to examine a process of gradual change in dialogue method in PLC settings and to promote parental understanding and involvement on students learning process at Vithidham School of Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University. For this reason, the dialogic method in professional learning community (PLC) settings was used as a communication strategy among the parents, for promoting the parents' involvement and better understanding on the students learning process. For this purpose, observational data through reflective interviews and the video recordings of several dialogic activities in PLC settings were collected. The participants of this study were school administrators, teachers, and parents. The results showed that there was a gradual change in parental understanding and involvement on students learning process. This meant the greater number of parents participating in PLC settings (using dialogic method), the higher probability of involvement and understanding of students learning process.

Keywords: dialogic teaching, dialogic method, PLC, parental involvement

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Introduction

Parental involvement was participation of the parents to the school and to the students. There were many problems concerned with the involvement. Many schools did not know how to cope with the areas of concern [1]. Usually, parents felt unwelcomed and misunderstanding about students learning process at school [2]. Further, they simply did not know how to help the school or did not have the time, money, resources, and knowledge.

The most important issue for the school to deal with the parental involvement was ‘communication,’ especially, formal and informal communication and informal exchanges between teachers and parents. There were many ways that a school could improve communications. One way was friendly parents-teachers meetings, which could encourage and involve parents to get to know their child’s teachers better. The most important of this, school climate was one of crucial principles to foster parental involvement [3]. For instance, they were more willing

to share their knowledge of occupations, special skills, hobbies, etc.

By doing this, one of interesting methods that can be used to improve parental involvement is ‘*dialogic method*’ (or *dialogic approach*, *dialogic learning*, *dialogic teaching*) in PLC settings [4], [5]. Typically, classroom that used dialogic method is like “Learning Community.” Members in learning community consist of school administrators, teachers, and parents. They are both learners and teachers at the same time. This means learning community members can share common goals, interests, skills, attitudes, and concerns, in order to strengthen their relationship and increase student results. To be more precise, ‘*dialogic method*’ in PLC settings can foster members in learning community learn together, which are accountable to one another to achieve the goals of the school that support the students’ improvement [9], [10].

The term ‘dialogic teaching’ was developed by Robin Alexander since the early 2000s [4], [5], [7]. This term is now in regular use but means different things

to different people in such different contexts. Sometimes it was called ‘dialogic learning,’ ‘dialogic approach,’ ‘dialogic method’ [5], [7]. It was distinct from the question-answer and listen-tell routines of traditional teaching and learning. To clarify, it advanced students’ learning and understanding, harnesses the power of talk to stimulate and extend their thinking [4], [5], [6], [7]. Then, it could help the teachers more precisely to diagnose students’ needs, frame their learning tasks, and assess their progress.

Vithidham School of Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University is an alternative school which is located in the university area and surrounded by positive learning environment. It offers some different aspects and teaching methods from mainstream [schools](#). The goal of the school is to develop good learners with happy mind and understanding life holistically. However, there were many problems concerned with the parents understanding and involvement on students learning process at the school. Accordingly, this study aimed to examine a process of gradual change in dialogue

practices and to promote parental understanding and involvement on students learning process at Vithidham School of Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University by using ‘dialogic method’ (or dialogic approach, dialogic learning, dialogic teaching) in PLC settings.

Theory and Background

Vithidham School of Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University is one of alternative schools in Thailand which is different from mainstream schools in the country. Inevitably, many problems concerned with the parents understanding and involvement on students learning process at the school are discussing. There are some research works proved that these concerns can be incorporated with the theory of ‘dialogic teaching,’ ‘professional learning community (plc),’ and ‘parental involvement.’ Through these methods, community can engage and stimulate and extend thinking, learning, and understanding.

1. Dialogic Teaching

The term ‘dialogic teaching’ was developed by Robin Alexander since the early 2000s. It is now in regular use but

means different things to different people in such different contexts. Dialogic teaching harnesses the power of talk to stimulate and extend students' thinking, and advance their learning and understanding [6], [7]. Through dialogic method, teachers can elicit students' perspectives and engage with their developing ideas. Typically, dialogic teaching is not a single set method of teaching [4], [5]. It focuses on the relationship between language, learning, thinking and understanding, and in observational evidence on what makes for good learning and teaching. In addition, dialogic teaching concerns about the classroom relationships, the balance of power between teachers and teaching, the techniques that teachers use, and the way teachers and learners conceive of knowledge.

Dialogic teaching requires a particular approach in the classroom which focused on questions, answers, and feedback [4], [7].

1. Collective: Participants address learning tasks in the activity together.
2. Reciprocal: Participants listen to each other, share ideas, and then consider alternative viewpoints.
3. Supportive: Participants express their ideas freely and friendly, without fear of embarrassment, and then they help each other to reach common understandings.
4. Cumulative: Participants build on answers and other oral contributions, and then chain them into coherent lines of thinking and understanding.
5. Purposeful: Classroom talks through dialogic method is also planned and structured with specific learning goals in view.

2. Dialogic Method using at Vithidham School



Figure 1: Dialogic Method Using at Vithidham School

There are 6 practices of dialogic method using at Vithidham School of Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University.

1. Learning design: Plan, design, and structure each step (8 steps) of every learning activity which focuses on each participant's need.

2. Learning tasks: Guide learners to reflect on their own experience and actively engage with the activities

3. Leaning objectives: Give learners concrete terms for understanding their actions and progress in each phase of the learning event.

4. Recognizing and supporting different learning styles: Work with each preferred individual learning style and multiple intelligences.

5. Weaving, waiting, and affirming: Facilitate a safe and respectful atmosphere to make sure that each learner is valued and supported.

6. Integral practicing: To maximize each learner's results, warm-ups, safe feedback, synthesis, and evaluation are built into the learning experience.

3. Professional Learning Community (PLC)

PLC refers to a collaborative effort related to share the learning of teachers, administrators, educators, and also parents [9], [10]; on the basis of a good relationship, the vision, values, goals and common missions. Accordingly, working together as a learning team can gradually develop professional quality change which emphasizes the success or effectiveness of the learners, and the joy of collaboration among members in the learning community.

The importance of a professional learning community (PLC):

1. Increase enthusiasm to fulfil mission and goals with the cooperation of the learning team.
2. Increase the potential of learning based on learners' interests.
3. Collaborate the strengths of all parties in the development of learners.
4. Create continuous professional learning as it is a tool for continuous and sustainable development.

The processes of creating a community of professional learning are as follow: step 1 identify problems, step

2 analyse the cause of the problem, step 3 brainstorm ideas to find solutions to problems, step 4 try the solution by observing together, and step 5 summarize the solution by discussing the results of the trial [1], [2], [5].

4. Parental Involvement

In learning community, parents take important roles for their child's learning results and improvement. Some schools promote parents to participate in school events, activities, volunteer opportunities, or involve parents themselves with their children's education both at home and at the school.

For this reason, if schools and parents continuously involve themselves and encourage the children's learning and development, it should be more positive. Accordingly, parents' involvement that are well planned and implemented using dialogic method in PLC settings can foster benefits to children, parents, teachers, and the school as follows [1], [2], [3]:

1. Children have better self-esteem. They are more self-disciplined; and they

show higher aspirations and motivation toward school.

2. Parents' perceptions of the school are improved. They have a better understanding of the teacher's job and school curriculum; and they are more likely to help when they are requested by teachers to become more involved in their children's learning activities at home.

3. To foster positive communication and relations between parents, teachers, and school administrators; teachers earn greater respect for their profession from the parents, teachers acquire a better understanding of families' diversity and form deeper respect for parents' abilities and time.

4. To establish better school's reputations in the community and also experience better community support.

5. Vithidham School of Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University

Vithidham School of Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University is an alternative school which is located in the university area and surrounded by positive learning environment. It offers some different aspects and teaching methods from mainstream [schools](#). The goal of the school is to develop good learners with happy mind and understanding life holistically.

Typically, there are three main concepts of the school; Dharma, Nature, and Ordinary. Dharma refers to the teachings of the prophets of the various religions. All of them teach us to be good people from the good heart inside. Nature refers to the idea of cultivating children to love nature. Ordinary refers to the idea of cultivating children to grow up like normal persons.



Figure 2: (a) the atmosphere of the school, (b) the activity of students, (c) sharing ideas after teaching, and (d) praying before having lunch

Methodology

Observational data were collected through reflective interviews and the video recordings of several dialogic activities in PLC settings. The participants of this study were school administrators, teachers, and parents; who attended the school activities and the school's 'Open House' events:

3.1 Shared ideas about the school's curriculum and learning process

3.2 Opened the parents' class to foster the relationship of the participants.

3.3 Promoted the relationship among the participants in a safe and respectful atmosphere to make sure that each participant is valued and supported.

3.4 Created continuous connection between the school and the families.

3.5 Participants gradually adjusted their concerns and attitudes.



Figure 3: (a) choose a picture for meaning of life, (b) discuss about the picture, (c) make a dialogue in the meaning activity, and (d) hug for love

Result and Discussion

There are three main concepts of the school; Dharma, Nature, and Ordinary. Dharma refers to the teachings of the prophets of the various religions. All of them teach us to be good people from the good heart inside. Nature refers to the idea of cultivating children to love nature. Ordinary refers to the idea of cultivating children to grow up like normal persons.

Teachers-to-parents' questions were described as follows:

- What do you expect from the school?
- What do you want students to get after attending this course?
- What do you think how Vithidham school differs from a typical school?
- What do you need to prepare your child?
- How to learn the right way?
- Do you want to participate in school-sponsored schools? (No donations)

- Think what your child's success is when he or she approaches the course.

Parents-to-teachers' questions were described as follows:

- What will our children learn from the course?
- What are the differences between Vithidham School and mainstream schools?
- What do parents need to do?

- Will children learn how to have a lot of homework? Can children read and write?

- What are the advantages of this methodology?

- What parents need to adjust?

The results showed that the greater number of parents participate in PLC settings (using dialogic method), the higher probability they can involve and understand students learning process.

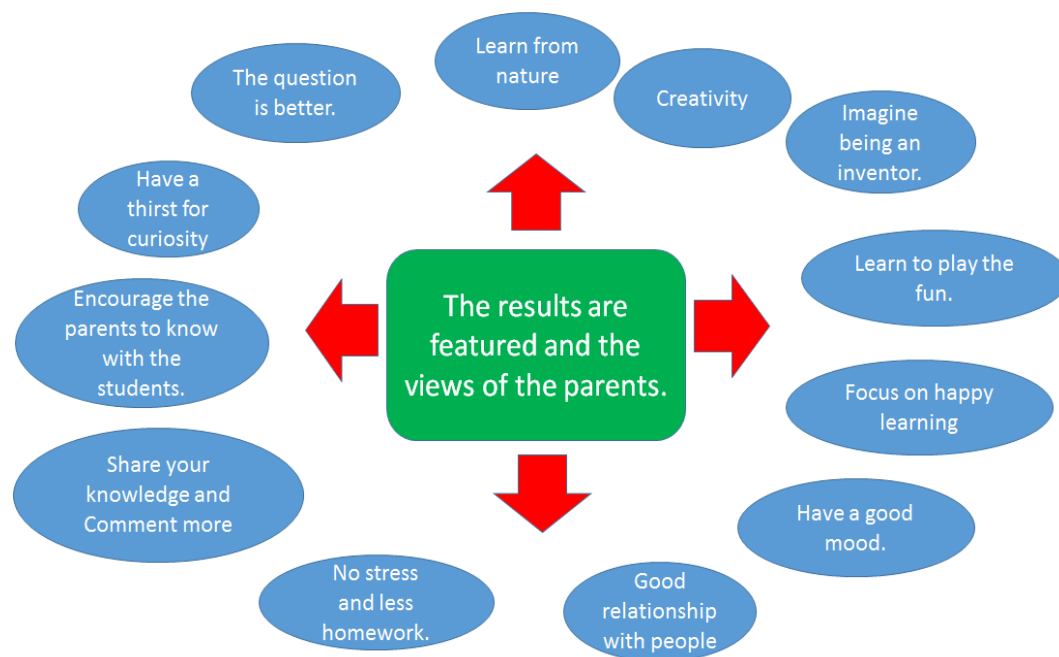


Figure 4: The result are featured and the views of the parents

Conclusion

The results showed that there was a gradual change in parental understanding and involvement on students learning process at Vithidham School of Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University. This meant the greater number of parents participate in PLC settings (using dialogic method), the more they can involve and understand their students' learning process. In addition, talking to parents and interactions had been successful among the expectations of the school system, the collaboration between the school and the families, the understanding of the context of teaching strategies, the sharing of knowledge and resources to each other, and finally the children get happier and more confidence as well as understand their life holistically better. For this reason, dialogues will be an important tool to

change the classroom and mind, and every thought will not be ignored.

Future possible research should include the concept of dialogic teaching among the school community (teachers, students, parents, etc.) which will be accountable for helping and supporting the students learning. For this reason, the goal is to form a community of practice in which all members work towards students learning and focus on their success ultimately.

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