

An examination of the role of collaborative lesson planning among Irish post primary teachers in urban post primary schools.

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ABSTRACT

This study is focused on what is the significance of collaborative lesson planning or co planning among subject departments on teacher performance in an urban mainstream school. While collaborative lesson planning or co planning is well documented internationally there is very little that is documented nationally. This study used a qualitative methodology and interviewed six participants in total to seek their opinions and beliefs of the process. It consisted of three participants who have experienced this collaborative experience for several years and three participants who have recently begun the experience. It explored the benefits and challenges as well as the school structures needed for the collaborative planning to be a success and the impact it has on effective teaching and learning. The findings of the study showed that effective collaborative planning creates a positive working environment whereby all teachers' strengths and experiences are combined to plan for the greater good of the students learning. Respect, trustworthiness, and the willing to learn are the core traits needed for the success of the collaborative planning process. This results in a more productive teaching environment whereby teachers are less stressed and burdened by individual work. The findings of the study also highlighted that for collaborative planning to be a success among subject departments management must co-timetable it for subject departments for it to be successful.

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INTRODUCTION

This study is an examination of the role of collaborative lesson planning or co planning among Irish post primary teachers in urban schools. Collaboration is a major tool that is being encouraged in all schools worldwide. However, collaboration is a broad topic that this study has narrowed down collaboration to the effective and at times a challenging impact it can be for the teachers when narrowed down under the heading of collaborative lesson planning or co planning. Fried (2014) states "Collaborative planning, or co-planning, occurs when a special and general educator combine their expertise to plan instructional content, instructional delivery, and assessment of student learning. Thereby reducing stress of our educators".

The research question associated with this dissertation is "What is the significance of collaborative lesson planning among subject departments on teacher performance in an urban post primary school" The embedded questions that underpin this research question are: 1. What is the "Glue" to Collaborative Lesson Planning or co planning? 2. The impact of collaborative planning and teacher performance and leadership? 3. Is the culture of the school essential to the success of collaborative lesson planning or co planning? 4. What is the school structure to success?

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The appropriate method chosen to answer the research question is qualitative research. The question at hand aims to explore the success and benefits of collaborative lesson planning among subject departments in post-primary education. The research design interpreted to this dissertation is qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to expand our understanding of human behaviour by exploring the root reasons for individuals who behave and think as they do. The research method associated with this dissertation is semistructured interviews. The rationale for conducting semi-structured interviews is as they allow for 'open responses in the participants' own words. The sampling method used to conduct this study was quota sampling. This method was chosen as it allows the researcher to focus on those who have experienced collaborative lesson planning for a number of years and those who have commenced the experience.

FINDINGS/ RESULTS

The major findings throughout this dissertation, the lack of time teachers have in certain schools compared to other schools who have a timetable hour every week for the collaborative planning process to be a success. Participants highlighted that time is key for the success of the planning. It is evident that the timetabling of this process has to be granted by schools in their timetable planning annually otherwise it creates more work for teachers to meet in their departments for it to be a success.

Secondly, all participants highlighted that the "Glue" to the process is leadership, respect and trust. Leadership is to come from the top down whereby management lead by example. Participants stated that respect and trust must be mutual between staff for collaborative lesson planning to be a success. Without this mutual level of consideration, the whole experience is a failure.

Thirdly, participants alluded to the powerful aid of the use of ICT resulting in the success of collaborative lesson planning, WhatsApp group chats were highlight recommended and describe as an asset to the process as teachers could share their thoughts and ideas at the touch of a button. This allowed for a planned and structures planning meeting as a result as the agenda was already arranged in the group chat.



DISCUSSION

Teachers illustrated that time is essential for the whole collaborative lesson planning experience to be a success. Teacher expressed that for effective collaborative lesson planning schools must timetable an hour for subject departments to allow this process to happen.

Teachers also highlighted by bringing all teachers together in their departments results in more effective teaching in terms of assessment, differentiation, and teaching methodologies.

Teachers also raised a major advantage of the collaborative experience on the well being of teachers. The participants all stated the impact the experience has on reducing stress on teacher and sharing the work load. This leads to a positive happy classroom.

CONCLUSIONS

It evident that teacher planning is improving and enhancing both nationally and internationally. It is clear that for the collaborative process to be as success all involved has to be on board for it to be a success. Their must be trust, respect, care, and integrity in the process for collaborative planning to be effective in the classroom. Furthermore, time is the crucial factor in the whole process as stated and needs to timetabled for teachers to achieve the process effectively

KEY REFERENCES

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