

Begin with Teacher Curiosity: Letting teachers see that they are (re)searchers

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This article describes an activity that allows teachers to use their curiosity about how other teachers do things in the classroom. It allows them to begin to do research without using that daunting word. In brief, they simply generate questions around the things they are interested in, choose one they are especially interested in, ask other teachers (to gather data), and then write up results in a short report for class. All this is done very simply within the structure of an oral activity in the classroom. At the end teachers are told that basically what they have done is teacher research and that what they have written could be redrafted into a publishable article.

Step One: Ask teachers: What questions would you like to ask the other teachers in this group? What are you curious about knowing? What's the first things you do in the class? How do you get students' attention? (Perhaps give them a few things that you are curious about yourself - keep them simple). Put all their questions on the board.

The questions from one group of teachers

1. How do you know how much students understand?
2. How do you begin a class?
3. How do you address students?
4. How do you choose students to call on?
5. How do you deal with problem students?
6. How do you praise and encourage students?
7. How do you feel when you speak English in class?
8. How do you feel when your students get lower grades than other classes?
9. What do you do when you don't know the answer?

"generate questions around the things you are interested in"

本稿では教員が持つ「他の先生達は授業中何やっているんだろう」という好奇心を利用したアクティビティーについて述べます。各自の興味のかまきまに質問を作り、そのうち特に興味を持ったものを選び、(データを集める為に)教員に質問し、短いレポートに結果をまとめます。この要領で、「リサーチ」というもったいぶった言葉を使わずに実際にリサーチをし、書いたものをさらにまとめれば論文として体裁をつけることもできるわけです。

Step Two: Ask them to select one that they are especially interested in. Put the person's name beside the question. Do this until everybody has a question that they are interested in.

Step Three: Ask them to ask a partner beside them their question and to take notes on their answers so that they can tell someone else later. Sug-

gested time 5 minutes (time depends on lots of things).

Step Four: Ask them to turn to another person and report what they found from the first person.

Step Five: Ask to then get up and walk around (market-place mixing) and interview as many people as possible in the time given (15-30 minutes and depending on the size of the group) and to take note of all the responses so they can give an oral report later to their original partner.

Step Six: Ask them to report their findings to their original partner.

Step Seven: Ask them to write up a report of their findings for the trainer for the next class.

Step Eight: When they bring their reports in the next class, allow them to pass them around and read them. Ask them if they would like to make a class newsletter out of them. Ask them to redraft them in the form of articles (provide a few examples and guidelines) for other teachers and for the later groups you will train. Ask them to give advice to each other on how they might change their report into an article. Give a deadline for the redrafting.

Step Nine: When the class newsletter comes out, provide them with a list of external teachers newsletters and publications that might be interested in publishing their pieces. Let them know that their pieces could be expanded and they could ask the teachers at their schools the same questions and gather more data and write it up.

Step Ten (for the trainer): Keep copies of your students' articles in professional publications to show to other future students.

Creating publications for developing teacher researchers

In order to encourage a closure on and confirmation of this gentle form of teacher research, it is proactively generative if trainers begin their own small newsletters to publish their students redrafted articles. Seeing their articles in print gets student-teachers excited about contributing publications to the rest of the profession and they often end up doing so for the rest of their careers. While thinking of doing research and academic articles puts many teachers into "overwhelm", when trainers and institutions begin such friendly publications, they offer non-threatening "seeding grounds" to develop teachers as researchers.

Tim Murphey teaches at Nanzan University Graduate School of English Education and in the COLT course (Certificate of Oral Language Teaching) in which the ideas in this article have been tried out for several years. About half of his graduate students (all Japanese) have published articles in English in professional publications.

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