Exploring the Effect of Professional Development on Primary Teachers’ Practice in Northern Ghana: a Two-Cycle Action Research Project

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Abstract

A two-cycle action research design was used to investigate how professional development could lead a cohort of Ghanaian teachers to start using teaching methods that were more likely to teach students to pronounce and comprehend what they read than the rote methods they were using. Teachers had informed the researcher that most of their students experienced difficulty reading. However, teachers were generally not inclined to examine the role that the rote methods they relied on contributed to this problem. The first action cycle involved the researcher teaching the teachers another way of teaching reading and guiding a process of reflection on teachers’ practice. This failed to have any effect on how teachers taught reading. The explanation put forward by this research is that action cycle 1 failed because it assumed that teachers did not have a good reason to continue using rote, and bypassed the tacit reasoning which led teachers to view rote as the answer to their problems. The second action cycle explored the effect that the researcher had when he assumed the teachers were well intentioned, began to inquire into the types of problems that teachers faced and negotiated, rather than imposed, ways of evaluating current and alternative teaching approaches. The findings indicate that action cycle 2 successfully led a small group of teachers to start exploring alternatives to rote teaching that were more likely to teach students to pronounce and comprehend what they read.
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