



Preservice and inservice teachers' perceptions of appropriateness of teacher self-disclosure

Shaoan Zhang^{a,*}, Qingmin Shi^a, Stephen Tonelson^b, Jack Robinson^b

^a Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 4505 Maryland Parkway, Box 453005, Las Vegas, NV 89154-3005, USA

^b Department of Early Childhood, Speech Language Pathology & Special Education, 210 Lions Child Study Center, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA 23529, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 30 June 2007

Received in revised form 14 July 2008

Accepted 25 July 2008

Keywords:

Teacher self-disclosure

Appropriate teacher self-disclosure

Inappropriate teacher self-disclosure

Preservice teachers

Inservice teachers

ABSTRACT

This study investigated preservice and inservice teachers' perceptions of appropriateness of teacher self-disclosure. A sample of 180 preservice teachers and 135 preK-12 teachers participated in the study. Results showed statistically significant differences between the groups of teachers in their perceptions of appropriateness of teacher self-disclosure in the three dimensions: Uncommon Topics, Uncommon Purposes, and Consideration of Students. No significant differences were found in the two dimensions: Common Topics and Common Purposes. This study makes an excellent contribution to the theoretical framework of the study of teacher self-disclosure and also provides implications for teaching and teacher education.

Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Ms. Smith, an experienced Caucasian art teacher, was teaching her fifth-grade students how to design a room. She told her students that she was building a house and she showed a drawing of her house as an example and explained the meaning of each symbol. She also went into depth about how she utilized all the space possible. Then she had her students plan out a new room for their school such as a gym or a recess room. The students were asked to explain what each part of the room would be used for as she did. During the lesson, the students would ask questions like "Why are you moving there?", "Who will be living with you?", "Is your husband building your house?" She answered the questions without going into a lot of details but allowed the questions to be asked and answered.

– Teacher candidate's classroom observation in 2006.

1. Introduction

From this teacher candidate's observations, it is not difficult to see that the experienced teacher was using her personal experiences in two situations in her teaching. First, the experienced teacher used her own house building plans as an example to teach

students the meanings of symbols that represented geometric positions and shapes and start their own explorations of these positions and shapes. She also answered students' questions related to her house briefly that might not be directly related to the topic of her teaching. The personal information that Ms. Smith shared with her students and the way she talked about her information is clearly an example of teacher self-disclosure behaviors, which Goldstein and Benassi (1994) defined as a teacher's "sharing of their personal and professional information and experience about himself or herself" (p. 212).

Since teachers engage in classroom self-disclosure, knowingly and unknowingly, it is vital that we begin to research this area. The associated literature, although somewhat sparse, indicates that two issues have been emerging as relevant to teacher self-disclosure behaviors. First, teacher self-disclosure may function as an effective instructional tool in classroom teaching (Cayanus, Martin, & Weber, 2003; Hartlep, 2001; McCarthy & Schmeck, 1982; Nussbaum & Scott, 1979, 1980; Sorensen, 1989). For example, Ms. Smith's use of her own house to engage students in learning can be regarded as an example of using her self-disclosure behaviors in the classroom in order to provide a live example for students to understand what they need to learn and to function as a guide for them to use what they learn. However, such behaviors also can be detrimental to student learning (Zhang, Shi, Tonelson, & Allen, et al., 2007). Let us suppose Ms. Smith used her self-disclosure differently. Instead of providing brief answers, she used 30 min in answering her students' questions regarding who lived with her and her

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 702 895 5084; fax: +1 702 895 4898.

E-mail addresses: Shaoan.Zhang@unlv.edu (S. Zhang), Shiq@unlv.nevada.edu (Q. Shi), stonelso@odu.edu (S. Tonelson), jerobins@odu.edu (J. Robinson).

husband's work on this house in detail. In this imaginary situation, students' opportunities to learn what they need to learn are greatly reduced. Thus, whether or not, and to what extent, a teacher understands the double-edged functions of self-disclosure behaviors is vital to use such behaviors appropriately in supporting teaching practice and to maximize student learning.

Second, a number of studies suggest that preservice and inservice teachers possess different beliefs and perceptions with regard to teaching and learning (Murphy, Delli, & Edwards, 2004; Wilson, Readence, & Konopak, 2002). Teaching experience is well recognized to make the two groups different (Murphy et al., 2004; Richardson, 1996). Thus, it is reasonable to question teachers' appropriate use of self-disclosure behaviors. Specifically, is a teacher's appropriate use of self-disclosure behaviors in the classroom a natural result of his or her teaching experiences or is it the result of careful reflection on self-disclosure behaviors and an appropriate teacher education process?

Research in answering these two questions is important in providing a knowledge base for teacher educators to help both preservice and inservice teachers to understand the functions of their self-disclosure behaviors and use them appropriately in their classroom teaching. The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions about the appropriateness of teacher self-disclosure and possible differences in these perceptions between inexperienced and experienced teachers drawing on the self-disclosure survey data.

2. Functions of teacher self-disclosure

The literature of teacher self-disclosure behaviors suggests different ways to look at the appropriateness of teacher self-disclosure. One of the approaches to this issue draws on theories of self-disclosure developed in clinical psychology to explore the appropriateness of teacher self-disclosure behaviors through improving social relationships in the classroom. Jourard (1964, 1971) pioneered the study of self-disclosure and found that in psychological counseling process, the counselors' self-disclosure elicits more self-disclosure by the clients. Jourard also found "a positive association between liking for another person and disclosure to that person in a sample of nursing students and faculty" (Collins & Miller, 1994, p. 457), which is referred to as 'disclosure-liking hypothesis' in the study of self-disclosure. Based on Jourard's theory of self-disclosure, Altman and Taylor (1973) proposed social penetration theory which involves different degrees (depth and breadth) of self-disclosure. These researchers also viewed self-disclosure as a critical component in the formation of relationships.

Based on the theories of Jourard (1964, 1971) and Altman and Taylor (1973), a number of studies have examined the effects of teacher self-disclosure on students' learning (Hartlep, 2001; McCarthy & Schmeck, 1982); classroom participation (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994), and their likes or dislikes for their teachers (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006; McCarthy & Schmeck, 1982; Sorensen, 1989). Several of these studies did not completely support Jourard's (1964, 1971) hypotheses (the self-disclosure-begets-self-disclosure hypothesis and the disclosure-liking hypothesis) and Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory. Based on Jourard's self-disclosure-begets-self-disclosure hypothesis, Goldstein and Benassi (1994) examined and supported their assumption that increased teacher self-disclosure was associated with increased classroom participation. However, Wambach and Brothen (1997) found no significant relationship between the amount of teacher self-disclosure and students' classroom participation. Two other studies (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006; Sorensen, 1989) also found conflicting results. Based on Jourard's self-disclosure-liking hypothesis, Sorensen (1989) proposed and supported the hypothesis that the amount of teacher self-disclosure should be related

with students' positive evaluation for their teachers. Sorensen (1989) found that perceived amount of teacher self-disclosure was associated with students' evaluations for teachers. However, in a replicated study, Lannutti and Strauman (2006) found that there was no significant correlation between perceived amount of teacher self-disclosure and students' evaluations for their teachers. In addition, Lannutti and Strauman (2006) found no significant correlation between perceived depth of self-disclosure and students' evaluation for their teachers, thus refuting the social penetration theory of teacher self-disclosure. These conflicting results suggest that additional research is needed to extend the exploration of the theoretical framework for teacher self-disclosure. Probably, the differences between classroom communication and personal communication in social settings require different theories for the study of teacher self-disclosure. For example, in a social setting, sharing information about intimate relationships may enhance the relationship between two participants; however, it would not be appropriate in the classroom setting to share intimate information and it most probably would damage teacher-student relationships. Thus, there seems to be a necessity for the reconsideration of appropriate teacher self-disclosure in classroom teaching.

In our current study, we have examined teacher self-disclosure from the perspectives of teacher decision making in curriculum implementation. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) posited that teachers' personal experiences function as curriculum. When teachers use their self-disclosure, they share their personal experiences and information. In the example of teacher self-disclosure, Ms. Smith talked about her house in order that her students better learn how to design a room or a house. Ms. Smith, in this case, used her self-disclosure as an informal and live curriculum.

Teacher self-disclosure involves teacher decision making in curriculum implementation. Henson (2006) suggested the consideration of four factors in the content selection process of curriculum implementation: knowledge or information, needs of society, student needs, and human development. Cornbleth (1990) argued that curriculum in practice cannot be understood sufficiently or changed substantially without attending to its setting or context where interactions between students, teachers, knowledge, and milieu reveal the nature of the teacher-student relationship, the organization of classes, and streaming. Based on Cornbleth's (1990) interpretations of curriculum, teacher self-disclosure as an informal curriculum may support a complex network of physical, social, and intellectual conditions that shape and reinforce learning objectives. In this context, teachers make decisions about what they should and should not discuss, whether their self-disclosure is well-meant or ill-purposed, and whether they have considered students' cultural background, gender, grade level, and emotional status. In the initial observation, Ms. Smith's self-disclosure elicited several questions about her family and provided brief answers to the questions. This is probably appropriate in helping students understand their teachers. However, she may have used her self-disclosure very poorly if she continued talking about her husband or other questions her students asked without paying attention to the lesson objective, the teaching time, and the students' grade level. What Ms. Smith actually did show is that teacher self-disclosure involves teachers' judgment and decision making in curriculum implementation and that inservice teachers may (and should) manifest a higher level of acceptance of consideration of students. The appropriateness of teacher self-disclosure should relate to what teachers can and cannot self-disclose (topics), for what purposes teachers can and cannot self-disclose, and what students' needs teachers should consider. For this study, the literature review addressed these three lines: topics of teacher self-disclosure, purposes of teacher self-disclosure, and consideration of students.

While teacher self-disclosure as an informal curriculum has significance in teaching, the appropriate use of teacher self-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/374659>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/374659>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)