

Narrative Conferences for Teacher Professional Development:

An educational significance of “clinical episode analysis” (CEA) in Graduate School of Education at Hokkaido University of Education

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1. Agenda: Clinical Approach to Teacher Education

Supporting the life-log development of teachers is one of the most important agendas of education in our country. According to a variety of research conducted by the OECD, in spite of the economic or cultural differences, the targeted quality of the professional abilities of teachers has gradually shifted toward global standards from the following α to γ . Because there is an increasing recognition that teachers should correspond the individual/developmental needs of each child in a rapid-changing society.

- α). Expertise on cultural knowledge with related school curriculum
- β). Expertise on educational methods and skilful didactics
- γ). Expertise to understand and support the child's development

It is necessary to consider the following two vectors in educational studies. One is top-down educational study moving from α to γ , and the second is bottom-up educational study from γ to α . The vectors are neither inconsistent nor antagonistic. In general, placing an emphasis on the former is called a practical approach, and emphasizing the latter is called a clinical approach. Especially the latter is an important agenda for teacher education nowadays. Narrative conference is a novel practice corresponding with this current issue.

2. Background and Concept

In Japan, there is a particular historical background practice behind the narrative conference. A typical one is called *Seikatsu-tuzurikata* (narrative writing of the children's life) education, which has been developed as a self-educational movement among ordinary teachers. Some innovative researches on conference have been done

based on this historical background. It is also underpinned by the research projects named “clinical pedagogy”, which means clinical researches on educational activities (CREA-projects) in our country. In the theoretical point of view, some parts of these projects might be influenced by the theory of emotions in Vygotskian (see, Fig.1) and Wallonian perspectives.

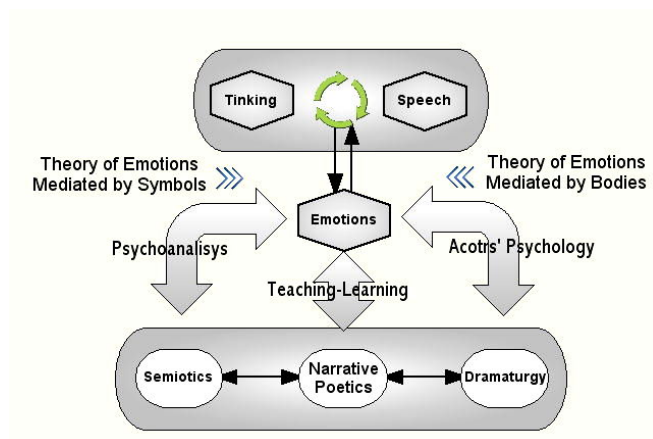


Fig1. Schema of the Vygotsky theory of emotions:

Narrative conference is a case-based inter-reflective activity that integrates the narrative empowerment approach and the community empowerment approach. (Fig.2). The goal of this narrative conference is to sophisticate the teachers’ senses/intuitions to understand the child development holistically and to enhance the imagination of the collaborative strategy to support the child at risk and those with difficulties.

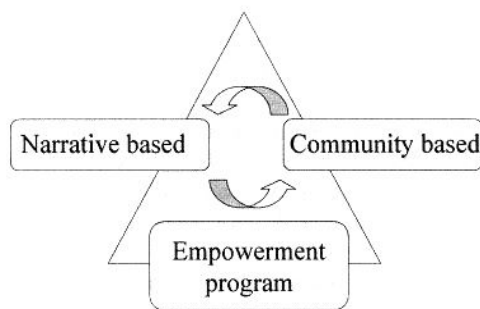


Fig2: Basic concept of narrative conference

3. Materials and Methods: Clinical Research on “CEA”

a) Case: Three stages of “clinical episode analysis”

In the field of teacher training and teacher education, the narrative conference has

been applied with different clinical/educational group-sessions in order to integrate the theory and practice. From 2002, in the Special Course of Clinical Psychology and School Education at the Graduate School of Education in Hokkaido University of Education, 'clinical episode analysis' as a narrative conference has been tried in three stages:

1st stage: *Virtual* narrative conferences: Special lectures on clinical guidance theory (Interactive, remote class via broadband Internet connection) . 6-cases

2nd stage: *Experimental* narrative conferences: Special seminars on clinical studies of education (face-to-face classes) , 48-cases

3rd stage: *Practical* narrative conference: Clinical workshops for school teachers who have worked 10-years (in-service training). 54-cases

b). Outline of the Process:

One of the most important methods applied to this narrative conference in the clinical episode analysis (CEA). In clinical episode analysis, the case reporter (mostly, a teacher or a graduate student) should describe their disturbing experiences that has been not yet resolved as a *narrative episode*. The reporter ought to extract the educational episode that has left the deepest impression from his or her own experiences.

In this extracted narrative episode, the reporter is supposed to write his or her own *distressing events* (experiencing) to support children. In listening to the reporter's narrative voicing clinically, the audience has to focus on the holistic understanding (multi-voiced orchestration by multi-dimensional investigation) of the child.

After listening the reporter's own narrative voicing under the circumstances of 'synchronicity in silence', the audiences will be allowed to ask questions to the reporter only to concentrate their attention on understand the child. Subsequently, the audience will be permitted to give some advices to the reporter as a peer-partner.

At the end of the CEA, the supervisor (mostly professor/researcher) who facilitates the narrative conference should synthesize these polyphonic voices to the *dramatized episode of education* in narrative mode of thinking. Furthermore, if it is possible, this synthesized episode needs to be sophisticated to the *academic or philosophical concept* of the clinical pedagogy that could include paradigmatic mode of thinking.

4. Coda: Result and Discussions

The following five aspects are significant for the teacher professional development

- 1). Sophisticating the senses/intuitions to understand the child's development holistically from both psychological and sociocultural view.
- 2). Enhancing the imagination of the collaborative support of teachers and another supporting professionals (school counselor, psychological counselor, social worker in the community, etc.) to support the child
- 3). Narrative empowerment for the teacher as a reporter: There is a sort of therapeutic effects in verbalization of his/her feelings in narrative environment.
- 4). Community empowerment for the participants: to construct the collaborative support system of the child at risk and those with difficulties as well as his/her parents.
- 5). Participants of the CEA are also gradually becoming aware of a clinical sense to support the child's self-esteem and self-actualization in some community-settings.

As for the first aspect, as a result of these CEA, we could also elaborate the framework of three dimension model of understanding the child development (see. Fig.3). The narrative conference in using the CEA could create a zone of the proximal development (ZPD) of the teachers and their supporters as well as the child at risk and those with difficulties.

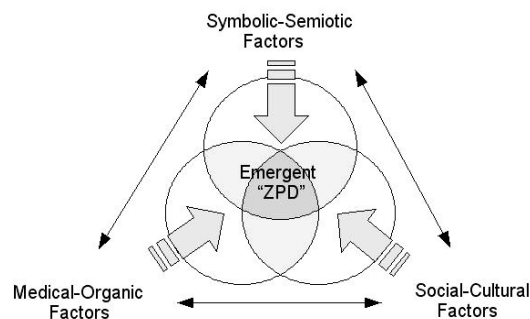


Fig3: Three dimension model of understanding the child development

Generally speaking, owing to the hard work and demands placed on teachers, we cannot help saying that the time and space to practice this sort of narrative conference is very much restricted in Japan. Moreover, the epistemological framework of common school teachers in our country tends to be pure-practical and without a sense of the clinical or narrative one. One of the most important steps that need to be taken is to create some systems to train and support supervisors who facilitate this style of CEA as a narrative conference to support teachers' professional lives.