
Book review: Stepping up lesson study, an educator's guide to deeper learning

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Stepping up Lesson Study: An Educator's Guide to Deeper Learning

Murata, A. and Lee, C.K. (Eds.).

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Educators across the globe have adopted lesson study, the practice of Japanese origin, for teachers' professional development. *Stepping up lesson study* consists of 12 chapters which are rich in theories and practices in lesson study and a wealth of educators' experiences about bridging the theory into practices to sustain and enhance lesson study quality. In the first chapter, the editors, Murata and Lee, introduce three interrelated foci of lesson study practices that form the structure of this book. In the beginning, chapters 2–4 examine the urgency of clarifying students' learning in lesson study. Chapters 5–8 discuss perspectives and tools used in lesson study, such as *kyouzai kenkyuu*. Then, chapters 9–11 explore the significance of lesson study facilitation. In chapter 12, the final chapter, Lewis addresses the necessity of carefully rethinking and reflecting on lesson study experiences.

1. The importance of careful research on student learning

Lesson study offers educators deep insights into unfolding actual student learning. This part discusses lesson study practices that focus on students' learning perspectives to enhance teaching and learning and promote teachers' professional development.

- **Chapter 2 – Lesson study as research: relating lesson goals, activities and data collection (*Aki Murata*)**

Murata emphasizes that students' learning should be the foundation of lesson study as a research process. Murata's idea of streamlining and maintaining the connection of research lesson goals, lesson problems and data collection would be beneficial for teachers to sustain their research stance and investigate their students' learning. However, further discussion on encouraging teachers to analyze various data to uncover students' authentic learnings might be necessary for enhancing lesson study as research.

- **Chapter 3 – How case pupils, pupil interviews and sequenced research lessons can strengthen teacher insights in how to improve learning for all pupils (*Peter Dudley and Jean Lang*)**

In chapter 3, Dudley and Lang discuss case pupils-based research to deepen teachers' insight on pupils' learning. Eliciting pupils' learning through sequenced research lessons proposed by the authors could empower teachers to construct empirical knowledge collaboratively. Nevertheless, further study on promoting teachers to create generalizable knowledge genuinely through case pupils' investigation might be more significant.

- **Chapter 4 – Teacher learning through seeing students' mistakes during inclusive mathematics lesson study (*Judith Fabrega*)**



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Fabrega portrays the advantages of open-ended activities in inclusive mathematics problems for teachers to clarify students' understandings and strategies. Fabrega's suggestion to rethink students' process of making mistakes could be helpful for teachers to unfold various student learning perspectives. However, it might be significant also to discuss how teachers should systematically utilize students' mistakes to redesign and improve lessons.

2. Different perspectives and tools lesson study may use to improve practice

In this part, educators shared their fruitful experiences and challenges to sustain their lesson study practices. They introduce the value of various perspectives and tools to enhance lesson study.

- **Chapter 5 – Going deeper into lesson study through *kyouzai kenkyuu* (Ban Heng Choy and Christine Kim-Eng Lee)**

Choy and Lee discuss the refinement of teaching material through *kyouzai kenkyuu* based on anticipation of students' responses. Guiding questions for *kyouzai kenkyuu* suggested by the authors could effectively assist teachers in refining teaching material that fulfills students' needs. Nevertheless, it might also be crucial to investigate how the guiding questions could bring a more collaborative teachers' discussion during *kyouzai kenkyuu*.

- **Chapter 6 – Refining the research lesson's instructional approach during lesson study: mock-up lessons (Shelley Friedkin)**

Friedkin clarifies the benefit of mock-up lessons in encouraging teachers to consider whether teaching materials could guide students to solve problems and grasp content. Friedkin's explanation of anticipating several expected students' responses during mock-up lessons could support teachers to improve teaching material although further discussions might be needed on employing mock-up lessons that stimulate teachers to reconsider whether their refined lesson design could promote students' learning.

- **Chapter 7 – Strengthening knowledge development in teachers' conversations in lesson study (Edel Karin Kvam and Elaine Munthe)**

Kvam and Munthe present the importance of a critical reviewing manner for teachers participating in lesson study to construct knowledge. The authors' recommendation to consider carefully the relevancy and recontextualization of knowledge resources, such as theory and research, could deepen teachers' conversation. Nevertheless, more concrete research findings might be imperative for teachers to evaluate knowledge relevancy and recontextualize them into their actual classroom practices.

- **Chapter 8 – Scaffolding student teachers' professional noticing when using lesson study (Gro Naesheim-Bjørkvik, Nina Helgevold and Deborah Sorton Larssen)**

In chapter 8, the authors investigate the use of record sheets and prompts as scaffolding to promote student teachers' noticing. The authors' suggestion to associate scaffolding steps with pupils' thinking or reactions could provide student teachers with opportunities to sharpen their insight into pupils' learning. However, guiding student teachers to utilize scaffolding properly might be insufficient. It is also necessary for them to be aware of the scaffolding meaning and construction.

3. Facilitation of lesson study: development of an effective facilitation practice to scale up a lesson study

The main goal of facilitation is not just to guide lesson study groups to have a well-organized lesson study. Facilitation should also nurture the lesson study groups' autonomy. Moreover, through lesson study, not only the teachers but also the facilitators could improve their capacity.

- **Chapter 9 – Facilitators’ roles in lesson study: From leading the group to doing with the group** (*Stéphane Clivaz and Anne Clerc-Georgy*)

Clivaz and Clerc-Georgy describe lesson study facilitator roles as convenor, teacher trainer, researcher and team member. As convenors, facilitators should lead the lesson study process; as teacher trainers, they should become knowledgeable others; as researchers, they should ignite the teachers’ research mind; and as team members, they should have an equal stance with teachers. The authors’ assertion that teachers within the lesson study community become co-facilitators and gradually bear a role as knowledgeable persons must be beneficial to sustain lesson study. Further research on a comprehensive model to nurture teachers acquiring adequate roles and competencies as facilitators might be essential.

- **Chapter 10 – Facilitating a lesson study team to adopt an inquiry stance** (*Siebrich de Vries and Iris Uffen*)

De Vries and Uffen introduce adopting an inquiry stance for lesson study facilitation to encourage teachers toward explorative conversations to consider alternative ideas for designing lessons. Facilitation procedures and guidance detailed by authors could advantage facilitators to build and maintain mutual trust among team members during discussion. However, more elaboration on developing the self-reliance of facilitators might be crucial to make them more independent from prescribed guidance.

- **Chapter 11 – Learner-centered facilitation in lesson study groups** (*Shannon Morago and Sveva Grigioni Baur*)

Morago and Grigioni Baur examine the learner-centered approach to facilitate student teachers in conducting lesson study. The authors’ recommendation for facilitators to indirectly guide student teachers through reflective questions could encourage them to notice students’ learning and grow their autonomy. Nevertheless, providing reflective questions might be challenging, especially for novice facilitators. Therefore, further investigation into nurturing facilitators to have this capacity might be necessary.

4. Conclusion

This book contains invaluable lesson study praxis in diverse cultures and contexts from educators across the globe. This book might be relevant for university students to broaden their lesson study perspectives, for school-teachers to sustain their lesson study community practices and for researchers to contribute to continuous lesson study development. The educators’ meaningful findings in this book raise our awareness of considerable challenges for lesson study improvement. Lesson study implementation should generate the knowledge base of teaching by sharpening our insights into the classroom learning process. Moreover, lesson study facilitation should lead teachers’ collaboration towards a new horizon of lesson study movement in every school. Any educational endeavor to escalate our worldwide lesson study communities must preserve the perpetual common goal of ensuring high-quality learning for every student.

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