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Lesson Study: a handbook

Early Years Edition edited by Jean Lang



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About the author

Pete Dudley introduced Lesson Study (LS) to the UK. He conducted his first Lesson Study in 2001 and later ran the national Lesson Study pilot from 2003-5. This was cross phase and funded by the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme, the National College for School Leadership and CfBT.

Pete is responsible for raising achievement and aspiration in the London Borough of Camden as well as honorary visiting Professor of Education at Leicester University. He has conducted extensive research on LS at the University of Cambridge and promoted professional learning through LS in thousands of schools during his 5 years as Director of the government's Primary National Strategy.

Pete has supported Lesson Study research programmes at the Universities of Leicester, Exeter, Queen's Belfast and Bethlehem, Palestine. He and Jean Lang are now leading a LS development and research programme in the London Borough of Camden with Cambridge University. Pete also advises organisations such as the Teacher Development Trust, the Centre for the Use of Research Evidence in Education (CUREE), and the Education Endowment Funded 'Edge Hill University Lesson Study Program' and Edge Hill's 'Every Child Counts' and 'Every Child a Reader' programmes.

In addition to Palestine, Pete's international work with Lesson Study has been in Singapore, Hong Kong, Chile, Kazakhstan and the US. He is Honorary General Secretary of the World Association of Lesson Studies and is on the editorial board of the International Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies (Emerald).

Acknowledgements

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The research drawn upon in this publication and in those listed above was carried out by the author between 2003 and 2011 at the University of Cambridge with the assistance of a fellowship awarded by the Economic and Social Research Council's Teaching and Learning Research Programme and was runner-up in the 2012 British Research Association (BERA) Doctoral Thesis Awards.

This version has been edited specifically for practitioners working in Early Years settings by Jean Lang, Head of Primary School Improvement in the London Borough of Camden, for a project currently taking place involving schools and Children's Centres in the borough.

I would like to thank all the teachers, head teachers, local authority staff, academics, policy makers and international colleagues who have enabled and contributed to my knowledge and understanding of Lesson Study and thus to the various iterations of this handbook. Over 60,000 copies have been distributed or downloaded worldwide in 5 languages.

Pete Dudley

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Improving practice and progression through Lesson Study: a handbook for senior leaders and practitioners working with children in the Early Years

This booklet is a step by step guide on how to use Lesson Study to develop and refine teaching techniques to help improve children's learning and development.

The booklet contains information about:

- Getting Lesson Study going in your setting,
- Planning, learning and analysing the 'study session'.
- Involving children in the process.
- Suggestions for distilling what the participants have learned, how practice has been improved and how to pass new practice knowledge on to others.

Lesson Study is a professional learning process. It works because it focuses on the **learning** and **progress** made by children as their practitioners develop specific pedagogic techniques designed to improve an aspect of teaching and learning identified within their setting.

Lesson Study has been used in Japan for over 140 years and is now used widely in the East Asia. It is a model for collaborative classroom professional learning which embodies all the features of effective teacher learning: high quality input which is followed by activity where:

- Two or more practitioners work together, developing practice in the classroom, focusing on the needs and learning of real children and trying to

solve a teaching or learning based problem which is affecting children's progress.

- They are engaged in developing a teaching technique which is designed to improve a specific aspect of learning for identified children.
- They keep a record of what they learn and they pass on the practice knowledge which they gain to others – for example by coaching, leading a professional development meeting or providing a demonstration session.

Lesson Study has been used successfully in this country to improve teaching techniques and children's progress in core subjects in primary and secondary schools and to develop broader pedagogic approaches such as assessment for learning. It has also been used successfully in Japan and Singapore to improve learning and development in the Early Years.

During a Lesson Study cycle a small group of practitioners (or even a pair) will:

- Use the information they have gathered from day to day and periodic assessment to agree a focus for child learning and development.
- Jointly identify a teaching approach to develop or improve which addresses that need (See Fig. 1 Page 5)
- Identify three 'case children'. Each should typify a group of learners in the class – for example high, middle or lower attaining in the strand being taught and developed.
- Jointly plan a 'study session' which both uses develops and closely studies the



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effects of this new approach – and keeps in mind the three case children. (Also known as *Research Lessons*, there can be a danger that people think study sessions are for conducting experiments rather than developing practice. They are definitely for **developing practice**).

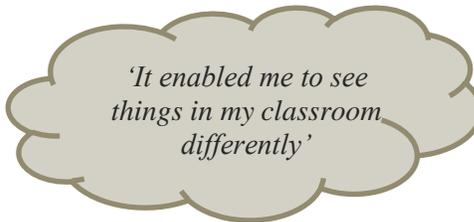
- Teach and jointly observe the study session focusing on the case children's learning and progress. They may repeat and refine this over several sessions or teaching sequences. Not all these need to be observed study sessions.
- Interview the case children to gain their insights into the study session.
- Hold a post session discussion analysing how the case children responded to the technique, what progress they made and what can be learned about the application of the approach – next time.
- Formally share the outcomes with a wider audience of other practitioners – in a presentation, by demonstration or by coaching.

Guidance for each of these stages is a section of this booklet. The guidance is drawn from what we know about how Lesson Study has worked in other schools.

The final two sections provide ideas on how Early Years leaders can

- Create time for Lesson Study and build it into the organisation.
- Use expert practitioners to support and develop the professional learning from Lesson Study and using the Lesson Study model as a platform for coaching.

a. Getting Lesson Study Going



What has worked well

As a “school or setting leader”

Choose a group of practitioners – **three works well** – who are likely to enjoy the challenge of starting up a new professional learning approach in the setting. We know Lesson Study works well when there is at least one member of the senior team involved and the practitioners have a mix of teaching experience.

Hold a meeting with them to set out expectations and ground rules which enable people to feel free to take risks and not feel they are under scrutiny. In a Lesson Study all members of the group are of equal status – as professional learners.

Give them some parameters which are based on identified setting, class or group needs. (For example to develop boys’ engagement in writing independently)

Use common formats for planning, observation or analysis. (Examples you can use are in this booklet)

Give dedicated time (an hour at least) to plan the first study session.

Protect their time on the day of the study session and make sure there can be a post session discussion within a day or so of carrying out the study session.

Take an active interest in how the process is going.

Make sure that the group has dedicated opportunities to share what they have developed with other colleagues –a staff meeting, a coaching opportunity.

Use these members of the group as Lesson Study champions in the school to convene and develop the next Lesson Study groups.

Notes

Study session planning, observation and discussion sheet							
Subject:		Focus Stand:		Year group:		Practitioner/observer:	
What is this study session aiming to teach? (it may be a section of a longer teaching sequence)							
What learning approach is the study session aiming to develop? <i>We are improving...</i>							
Current attainment and success criteria Describe what you are looking for from them by end of lesson in the identified aspect	Case pupil A Current approximate learning and development Emerging/Expected/Exceeding (delete) Success criterion for this focus		Case pupil B Current approximate learning and development Emerging/Expected/Exceeding (delete) Success criterion for this focus		Case pupil C Current approximate learning and development Emerging/Expected/Exceeding (delete) Success criterion for this focus		
	Stage of lesson sequence	How you hope case child A will respond	<i>How they are observed to respond</i>	How you hope case child B will respond	<i>How they are observed to respond</i>	How you hope case child C will respond	<i>How they are observed to respond</i>
Stage ... (approximate time)							
Stage ... (approximate time)							
Final stage ... (approximate time)							
What were they able to do? (What progress have they made and how do you know?)							
Initial thoughts							

Post Lesson Discussion record

	Case child A	Case child B	Case child C
<p>What learning did you observe? Was this what was expected?</p> <p>What about others in the group of learners they typify?</p>			
<p>How did the approach being developed help or hinder? (Maybe a bit of both)</p> <p>What surprises were there?</p>			
<p>What aspect(s) of the teaching approach could be adjusted next time to improve the progress of each</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 		
<p>So what should we try next time?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 		

Initials

Date

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