EVALUATING THE USE OF LESSON STUDY AS A NOVEL ‘RESPONSE TO TEACHING’ OR DYNAMIC METHOD OF ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF PUPILS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

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Lesson Study (LS) can be defined as a systematic collaborative investigation of classroom pedagogy by a small group of teachers with the aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning. The paper explains how LS was adapted for assessment purposes because of its key principles (focus on learning, observational assessment, collaboration and iterative planning). Research from a recent UK Lesson Study – Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) project showed that LS helped teachers to understand the needs of pupils with MLD (Norwich and Jones, 2014). From this came the idea of using LS as a ‘response to teaching’ approach to assessing learning difficulties in a teaching context.

The paper aims to present the rationale for the LS development and the findings from its evaluation in order to revise and further develop it as an assessment approach. This development and evaluation trial was informed by Design Based methodology.

The development phase involved:

i. Translating the concept of LS for assessment into a specific design and set of procedures and materials.

ii. its introduction to 6 LS teams in 3 primary and 3 secondary schools. and

iii. preparing and supporting teachers in the process.

The evaluation phase used data sources:

i. observation and planning templates completed at each stage of the process.

ii. LS team review and planning meeting were audio recorded.

iii. end of lesson study case reports for each pupil.

iv. teachers completed an evaluation questionnaire.

v. selected teacher semi-structured interviews about the LS for assessment process and outcomes

Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, content and thematic analyses respectively.

While some data are still under analysis, the questionnaire data analysis indicates positive perceptions of outcomes, e.g. the process enabled new understanding of pupils’ strengths, difficulties and learning needs, and the underlying processes that teachers identified as involved in these practices, e.g. the teachers provided honest and constructive observations of research lessons to each other and teachers were able to observe pupil learning in novel and revealing ways. The pre and post case pupil assessments show a move from more general assessment to more specific assessment accounts and a focus on factors that can be altered in class teaching. The paper
concludes with details about revisions to the assessment approach and for future development and research work.

Reference: