Using a lesson study approach to deliver mental health education: student-teacher and mentor perspectives
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In England schools have been positioned at the forefront for improving children’s mental health through promotion, prevention and intervention. The aims of this research were to explore if a lesson study approach could be used to develop student-teachers’ confidence, skills and knowledge of mental health education in primary schools. This qualitative study recruited eight participants, four student-teachers and four teacher mentors. Participants were interviewed using a semi-structured approach to explore their understanding of children’s mental health, their understanding of lesson study and its application to support children’s mental health. The interview schedule focused on possible benefits and challenges in this context. All the lesson studies focused on supporting children, aged 7-9 years old, to identify and manage their feelings. The interviews lasted between 25 to 50 minutes and were transcribed verbatim. Additionally, student-teachers agreed for their assignments of their own lesson study to be analysed. Thematic analysis was used and data were coded separately by three researchers who identified three salient themes; 1) preconceptions held by both the student teachers and mentors about children and mental health; 2) practical application of conducting the lesson study; and 3) reflections of the approach. The analysis revealed that student-teachers and their mentors felt their skills to teach mental health education had been enhanced through collaboratively working together. Student-teachers also commented they felt it was important to provide children opportunities to explore and understand their feelings to support their mental well-being.