

How Lesson Study Impacted the Practices of Untrained Teachers in a Special Education School

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Abstract

This presentation illustrates how participating in lesson study has impacted the practice of initial teachers in a special education school in Singapore. These teachers, who wanted to research on formative assessment to inform their practice, participated in two cycles of lesson study within the year, prior to attending formal teacher training. Adapting from Sadler's (1989) framework of formative assessment, two guiding principles were selected, focusing on post-assessment feedback, involving students in assessment and using the data as evidence to guide scaffolding decisions.

Although the project aimed to explore the effects of post-assessment feedback on students' learning of inferring skills in reading comprehension, qualitative results showed that initial teachers not only gained insight into lesson planning, but also in embedding post-assessment feedback to students throughout the lesson. This enhanced teachers' awareness of the significance of feedback to make learning visible and help students progress in reading comprehension. Through lesson study, the professional development opportunities through self-directed reading and professional conversations became an integral part of on-the-job training for these untrained teachers.

The results of this research show that the impact of participating in lesson study on the teachers' lesson planning, design and execution is both reflective and reflexive. This is marked by evidence of deep reflection during the group's post-lesson discussions of the lesson itself, and the individual's objective examination of one's practice. The results are encouraging to consider the necessity of lesson study as a form of school-based professional development for initial teachers.

Key words: Lesson study, initial teacher training, special education