

Lesson Study

Category: Professional Learning, Coaching and Reflection

Lesson study is a collaborative form of professional learning in which educators investigate a shared question about learning by planning, observing and analysing a live research lesson. Originating in Japanese educational practice, it focuses attention on learners' responses and the development of teaching knowledge rather than on judging the individual who teaches.

A research lesson is part of a wider enquiry cycle, not a polished demonstration or one-off peer observation. Participants use curriculum knowledge, research and anticipated learner thinking to build a testable rationale, then examine what the lesson reveals ([Lewis et al., 2006](#)).

Collaborative Enquiry Cycle

1. **Set a research goal:** Identify a significant, shared question about learner development grounded in evidence.
2. **Study and plan:** Examine curriculum, research and likely responses; design the research lesson collaboratively.
3. **Teach and observe:** One member teaches while others gather agreed evidence of learning and participation.
4. **Discuss and revise:** Compare observations with predictions, analyse the lesson rationale and improve the design.
5. **Consolidate learning:** Reteach where appropriate, document insights and share situated knowledge.

Examples in Practice

A mathematics team investigates how students justify generalisations. They anticipate strategies, design prompts, observe selected learners' reasoning rather than rating the teacher, analyse unexpected responses and revise the sequence before a second research lesson.

Why It Matters

Lesson study makes classroom evidence and pedagogical reasoning collective, enabling tacit expectations to be examined. Useful adaptation preserves sustained enquiry, close observation and a research focus. Time, facilitation, curriculum expertise and psychological safety are material conditions. Findings remain situated and should inform professional knowledge without being treated as proof that a lesson works everywhere ([Dudley, 2013](#)).

Further Reading

6. Lewis, C. (2002). [Lesson study: A handbook of teacher-led instructional change](#). Research for Better Schools.
7. Lewis, C., Perry, R., & Murata, A. (2006). [How should research contribute to instructional improvement? The case of lesson study](#). Educational Researcher, 35(3), 3–14.
8. Dudley, P. (2013). [Teacher learning in lesson study: What interaction-level discourse analysis revealed](#). Teaching and Teacher Education, 34, 107–121.

Related Terms: Instructional Coaching | Professional Enquiry | Peer Observation | Collaborative Professional Learning