

**PLAN OF  
A THEMATIC VOLUME OF IJLLS  
ON LS4VET**

Lesson Study (LS) has been part of the global educational culture for a quarter of a century now. From East to West, from North to South, thousands of teachers participate in some kind of LS activity every year. At the same time, it can be noticed that LS is more widespread in certain segments of education, certain types of educational institutions, and in certain subjects than elsewhere. Without having a real statistics on it, we assume, that LS is the most popular in primary/elementary schools and in lower secondary education, in mathematics as a subject, and in general or academic education.

The chief editor of the planned thematic volume, prof. dr. János Győri and his Hungarian and international colleagues – among them Eszter Bükki, Claida Mehwald, James Calleja – realized in late 2010s, that LS was not present in vocational education worldwide at all. More precisely: it was very rarely, only sporadically used in vocational education and training (VET) institutions. As they discovered: VET is such a special segment of education, that the use and sustaining of LS to this context is practically impossible without adaptation.

In 2020 a four-country-team started an Erasmus+ project for the adaptation of LS to VET context. With the leadership of the Hungarian team, Austrian, Maltese and Dutch teams started their job under the title of Teachers' Collaboration through Lesson Study for Improving the Quality of Vocational Education and Training. Now that the project teams have completed their three-year work, in the current thematic volume of the journal, the experts summarize some of the lessons learned from their work, in the hope that it will be useful to many others who are interested in possibilities of developing teachers' work in collaborations.

**The planned structure of the thematic volume**

**I. General articles**

**1. Short introduction of the volume [János Győri, guest editor]**

**2. The evolution of LS4VET project [four-country-authors]**

This chapter does not primarily describe the genesis and development of the LS4VET project over time in a descriptive approach, but reflects and presents with critical reflections the theoretical and practical steps in which LS VET adaptation took place and the challenges it had to face and solve in each step to the working group. From the formulation of the work goals through the research exploration of the LS and VET situation, we present the evolution of the training program that helps teachers to learn LS4VET. We write about the pilot and subsequent trials of our LS4VET training program, we show at which points the four cooperating countries were able to follow the same principles and practical elements, but for what structural and cultural reasons we had to give the four countries a free hand.

At the end of the article, we discuss the results achieved during the project, the limitations of the work, and further professional opportunities.

## II. Country related articles

### 3. LS4VET and the students' voice – The Austrian case [Claudia Mewald et al.]

Lesson Study does not only provide learning opportunities for the research lesson teacher, but also for the other participants. How other teachers and students learn from the research lesson determines the quality of the Lesson Study. An excellent research lesson does not necessarily mean a high-quality Lesson Study (Akita, 2012). Learning from failure, seeing the “uncomfortable” in a lesson, and listening to what the students have to say about either, often carries more potential for innovation and change than the perfect lesson. Still, it is the successful learning we strive for and the success stories we are most interested in.

In this article we will report about student voice in LS4VET in Austrian schools. We want to show that pupils were able to contribute actively and successfully in all phases of Lesson Study. Their voices were collected before, during, or after the lesson study research lessons and their examples of active participation constituted contributions to feed-up, feed-back, and feed-forward (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) processes in these studies. Taking their input and output as starting points, we will show that all pupils, whatever their academic readiness may be, can contribute substantially to the learning of all participants in a Lesson Study and that attending to their voices is an investment that will scaffold better learning and support the development of ownership throughout the learning process. We will conclude our contribution with a close look at the role of backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006) in Lesson Study and suggest that already in the phase of pre-study and throughout the careful planning of learning goals and assessment for learning, pupil voice can and should create the link between theory and methodological choices with successful learning in mind.

Akita, K. (2012). Building learning and caring communities through high quality lesson studies. *Presentation to the international conference of the World Association of Lesson Studies*. Singapore: Nanyang Technological University.

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81–112.

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: Pearson.

### 4. LS4VET and the role of school leadership – The Hungarian Case [János Győri et al.]

In the LS literature - for understandable professional reasons - the main emphasis rests on the autonomous, bottom-up innovative initiatives of teachers. However, teachers do not operate in a vacuum of professional space, but in teaching institutions – that always have their own legal/accountability and control/support system, used by the school leaders to manage and govern their institution. Anyway: LS is very difficult - essentially impossible - to do without support from the school management and without a collaboration between LS team and school leadership. However, the literature pays little attention to this.

In the planned article, the authors show, using the Hungarian example, what role the school management can play in organizing and supporting LS activities, what cooperation is necessary and/or possible between the LS team(s) and the school management of VET institutions, what conflicts and what common benefits can be expected from this collaboration, especially in case of schoolwide LS4VETs. The authors also discuss the role of the cooperation between the LS4VET

team(s) and the school management in the sustainability of LS, as well as why schools should also set up a meta-school-level LS team.

#### **5. Exploring professional collaboration during the implementation of the LS4VET professional development programme in Malta [James Calleja, Michael Buhagiar, Michelle Attard Tonna & Therese Camilleri]**

Professional collaboration is a key characteristic when a group of educators participate in a lesson study experience. This collaboration is usually embedded, often in a rather structured manner, within the programming of the lesson study experience and/or it can emerge 'spontaneously' during the professional development (PD) experience itself, possibly in response to the arising needs of the participants themselves. When the PD programme of the LS4VET project was implemented in Malta, the importance of participant professional collaboration, in line with the project's core principles, was stressed and encouraged among participants. Feedback from participants suggests in turn that they found professional collaboration, something that is typically missing in the local education system, to be the most rewarding aspect of their participation in the project's PD programme. The lesson study participants, who were organised in five groups that were each led by one of us, expressed this sentiment informally throughout their participation in the PD programme itself and later when feedback from them was collected in a more structured manner. This structured feedback included reflective writings in their portfolios and group presentations that they shared during the closing event of the project in Malta. On our part, as group leaders who also facilitated the five VET lesson studies, we noted that there were instances when the professional collaboration to which the participants referred so enthusiastically went beyond the expectations of the project itself. Moreover, in at least one instance this collaboration went even against the specific instructions that were discussed and agreed among the members of a particular group. Intrigued by these developments, we decided to explore the issue of professional collaboration further. We thus decided to collect additional data on two different levels: (i) an online survey that was sent out to the participants; and (ii) a focussed group discussion among us. While the survey served to probe further into the different forms of professional collaboration in which the lesson study participants engaged and their reasons for doing this, our discussion served to help us focus more on the issue of professional collaboration and generate data based on our own experiences as group leaders and lesson study facilitators. The thematic analysis of all the data suggests that for novice participants in a lesson study experience, more than the learning from the experience itself, it is their chance to meet and collaborate professionally that actually makes the difference. Their stories reveal moreover that participants, in addition to the formal channels of collaboration, have their own way of finding means of professional collaboration. This self-driven form of professional collaboration was largely unplanned, in response to their perceived needs and contextual constraints, and at times contrary to the expectations of the project itself.

6. LS4VET, heterogeneity and cross-bordering in LS4VET - or: LS4VET and sustainability [Matthijs Brouwer et al.]

### **III. Focus on the practice**

#### **7. The implementation of Lesson Study in Vocational Education and Training – A perspective of the School Administration / Management [Peter Kaufmann et al.]**

Modern challenges require modern solutions – a phrase which is more and more adherent to 21<sup>st</sup> century pedagogical expectations. The numerous approaches aiming to fulfil both the students' needs, and the standards of the labour market have a tremendous impact on educational institutions as well as teacher training professionals. While the latter ones are open to reforms in pedagogy and methodology, the former part have to face several challenges such as the expectations of policy makers, the limited human and infrastructural resources and the sanctity of the curriculum. No matter how promising or enticing a certain innovative trend or method is, its introduction requires precise and accurate planning.

The foundations of the LS4VET model are built on the pillars of a bottom-up initiative driven by the instructors, however, it is essential to examine the role and responsibilities of the administration of the VET school.

Without the wholehearted commitment of the management, any methodological reforms are bound to fail as there is little opportunity to integrate it into the organisational structure of the institution, which emphasises not only the need for cooperation between staff and management, but the importance of finding the appropriate structural position of the method in a way that does not interfere with the cultural and traditional norms of the school.

The pilots and the developed alternatives of the LS4VET project could become successful because of the devotion of the management of the VET schools and the invaluable mentoring of the university experts who spent a lot of time providing the necessary base in order for the groups to be able to conduct the whole process.

The main question now is whether the management of the schools are ready to operate the Lesson Study cycle on their own with the given circumstances. The data received from the partner schools in Malta, the Netherlands, Austria and Hungary provides conclusive information to demonstrate both the required steps during the experimental phase and some further roles of the actors wishing to participate in such implementation of a new methodological way in vocational education and training.

#### **8. From an international project to a professional development programme: Reflections on the potential to sustain lesson study in a VET school in Malta [James Calleja, Glen Farrugia, Michael Buhagiar, Michelle Attard Tonna, Therese Camilleri & Ruth Azzopardi]**

The 'Lesson Study for VET' (LS4VET) project promoted collaboration, research and reflection amongst teachers. For the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), the LS4VET partner VET school collaborating with the University of Malta team, this approach to teacher professional development (PD) resonated with their immediate need to support teachers so that they could offer a more holistic education to their

students, centred on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. In this paper, we discuss the onset of Lesson Study (LS) at the ITS and delve into the issues, challenges and learning opportunities that arose as a result of the school's participation in the LS4VET project. To do this, we draw on data from a number of project activities, notably: (i) the piloting of the LS4VET PD programme with three VET educators at the ITS; (ii) consecutive implementation of the PD programme with six other VET educators at the same institute; and a follow-up reflective discussion on the potential that LS can offer to the future professional development undertakings at the ITS. We do this through a self-study approach involving the University of Malta and the ITS project teams. The ITS project team included members in a leadership position. This paper explores how lesson study can develop and move towards becoming a long-term professional development programme, once it is embedded within the school's vision and strategic planning.

#### **IV. synthesis**

10. Synthesis [János Győri et al.]