

The importance of socio-cultural milieu in implementing *lesson study* method

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Overview

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2. Lesson study in Hungary
3. Challenges in implementing lesson study in the United States
3. Would Hungarian education be receptive to lesson study?
4. Possible challenges for implementig lesson study in Hungary
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 - II. lack of traditions and preparedness
 - III. contextual/structural problems
5. Potential solutions

1.

Hungary

- Middle-Europe
- 94,000 km²
- 10,000,000 inhabitants
- former socialist country
- the year of the political changes: 1990
- since that: market economy; parliamentary democracy
- developing economy

Education

- past:
 - in IEA-studies: Hungary among the best countries in science and math (60-80-ies)
- present:
 - OECD-PISA: in important aspects under or close to the average (reading/writing; problem solving etc.)
- need of more effective teachers, more effective teaching, more effective education

Lesson study

- basically not known in the region: neither in the area nor in Hungary
- eg. in Hungary
 - one article (Gordon Győri, 2006)
 - presentations on conferences (Gordon Győri, 2004, 2007)
 - an introductory book (Gordon Győri, coming in 2008)
- after the political changes: more attention on Western (American) approaches in education
 - one book about education in East-Asia (Gordon Győri, 2006)

2.

Challenges in implementing lesson study in the United States (Fernandez, 2007)

„LS is easy to understand but not easy to do.“

(and as a part of it: it is not easy to implement)

„Lesson study asks teachers for whom working in independent isolation is most often the norm, to work collaboratively and to open up their classrooms for observation and candid discussion with peers“ (Fernandez, 2007, p. 398)

- expected challenges in the USA
 - finding time and interest
 - overcoming the fear of making one's teaching public
 - finding way of creating a curricular common ground for joint lesson planning
 - overcoming the knowledge limitation many groups are likely to encounter
- revealed challenges in the USA for lesson study adoption
 - eg. - posing rich, researchable questions
 - designing a classroom experiment
 - specifying the type of evidence to be collected
 - interpreting and generalizing results etc.

3. _

Would Hungarian education be receptive to lesson study?

- education =
 - system (flexible enough?)
 - people working in the system (ready/prepared?)
- investigation
 - * *an introductory article for the participants about LS (Gordon Győri, 2006)*
 - * *interviews with:*
 - experts of in-service teacher training programs in teacher training institutions (n 3)
 - school principals (n 4)
 - vice principals (n 4)
 - teachers (n 12)

„Jugyou kenkyuu was adapted for use in Iranian schools where collaborative learning and cooperative research activities have been lacking.”

(Sarkar Arani, sn.)

- *teacher training schools*
 - also laboratory schools, „experimental schools”
- *school principals, vice principals*
 - innovative school leaders
 - involved in the practical side of teacher (pre-service) education

- *cooperating teachers*
 - very practiced teachers
 - intellectual, academically orientated (3 participants hold PhD degree)
 - practiced in collaborative work with student teachers
 - practiced in being in teaching situations with other people (student teachers)
 - must cooperate with university teachers

etc.

4.

Possible challenges in Hungary

four areas of challenges

I. attitudinal challenges

II. lack of traditions and preparedness

III. contextual/structural problems

IV. content related issues

I.

Attitudinal challenges

1. Teachers' individualism and unbalance in competition /cooperation orientation



- PISA-study: cooperation/competition dimension

Hungarian students are low in preference of cooperative learning and high in competitive learning (competition and cooperation are not in balance) (Vári et al, 2005)

- also: Hungarian teachers apply competitive tasks more often than cooperative tasks and encourage spontaneous competition among students more often than spontaneous cooperation (Fülöp, et al 2007)

2. Teachers „pre-collaborative, individualistic ideas” about teachers as actors and teaching as acting

- teaching is something you every time do alone (you go to the classroom alone and there you have to survive by yourself)
- for Hungarian teachers eg. creativity means only an individual process
 - being creative means developing creative solutions individually, by yourself; one is not creative* if s/he has to depend also on others

3. „The closed box syndrome”

- the teacher/school relationship: if a teacher closes the door of the classroom, he/she finally reached his/her professional independence and autonomy from the school (from the school as an institution, from principal, vice principals etc.)

- historical aspect:

one of the most impressive aspects of being a teacher was for many decades (during the socialist system) that the teacher could feel less control being alone behind closed doors in the classroom with the students only

(„no windows”)

4. Ambivalent reactions to

4.a Ambivalent reactions to experts

- to invite an expert (researcher, professor, highly acknowledged expert of an educational topic) and to work with him/her:
 - teachers are ambivalent:
 - admiration
 - avoidance attitude

„Maybe s/he is an excellent expert but what can s/he tell to me? I know it much better!”

- a more knowledgeable person not necessarily evokes respect, but might mean threat to teachers' self-esteem and identity
- perception of differences does not necessarily evokes the desire to improve the self and to learn, but rather to avoid the unfavourable comparison

4.b *Ambivalent reactions to prescribed protocols*

protocol = kind of „authority“ people should follow

*„Maybe it is an excellent method
but why should I follow it step by step?
I know it much better!“*

- teaching is something that comes from a person's personality.

*„It is a kind of art in which spontaneity
and here- and-now-creativity is dominant.
Why to follow an order of a protocol then?“*

II.

Lack of traditions and preparedness

a) no tradition of

- co-teaching
- team-teaching
- collaborative preparation of lessons (eg. making lesson plans together)
- no systematic mentoring system only occasionally there are mentors working with the beginners in some schools

many times not even mentioned in teacher education

b) action research

- altogether less than 5 articles about action research in Hungarian
- not present in Hungarian professional knowledge and practice
- real bottom-up approaches in school work were not welcome in socialist countries for half a century (rather refusal of bottom/up approaches in educational development)
- ***teacher-as-researcher***
 - mentioned but was never really implemented into Hungarian teacher preparation programs
 - never became a practice
- ***reflective teacher***
 - it is a topic in pre-service teacher training programs, but:
 - no patterns, no tradition how to apply by teachers in their everyday work

c) teachers' writing about their own practice

don't like and don't do it

- „good practices“: in some subject-teaching journals (fragmented, not systematic, not with the teacher's whole thinking process)
- memoires (rather about their life)

no training how to do it

d) teachers on video

only during pre-service teacher training

III.

Contextual/structural challenges

1. *In in-service teacher education*

- in-service teacher education doesn't support „peer-coaching“-type of programmes, but accredited top-down programmes (typically: lectures for teachers given by academics, university teachers etc.)
- in-service teacher education doesn't really foster school-based programmes (rather „serious“ professional programmes offered by the Ministry of Education, universities, in-service teacher education centres)

2. *In the school*

- principals and vice-principals: the school can pay neither for the teachers' efforts, nor for the expert or for any other kind of costs of LS-projects
- to organize eg. an open-house-day would be a very sensitive issue
- it is too stressful for the teachers(s) who run(s) the research lesson, therefore it can't be an obligation of a teacher

3. Teachers' out of school workload

teaching as a profession is attractive for many:

- teachers are civil servants
- but: they don't have to stay in their workplace from the early morning until the late afternoon

- LS: needs extra time (mainly) in the afternoon and/or during the weekends, holidays

Hungarian teachers:

- mainly women: family
- need of extra work

(General problem in countries with a certain economic level: „*we have another job and no time to stay after class*” /Sarkar Arani; sn./)

5. Potential solutions

1. Develop a good foundation

- * developing a theoretical foundation that fits the Hungarian context
 - to find the best practice or elements of effective practices that are the most adaptable to the Hungarian context
 - learning from the theory and practice of
 - Japanese
 - Honkongese
 - Swedish
 - Chinese
 - American
 - Singaporean
 - and other emerging approaches (Iranian, German etc.)

2. Integrate with educational specialities in Hungary

I. Attitudes

1. Teachers' individualism
2. Pre-collaborative values

3. Closed box syndrome

- let teachers feel that group work is a *democratic* process that *gives them more, not less freedom*
- not to tell them that their fears are unrealistic or of fake-feelings (the fear of the situation to be a teacher of research lesson seems to be a universal phenomenon /very much present also in Japan and the United States and everywhere/); but build a safe atmosphere in which
 - * one can get also individual honours (for Hungarian teachers it is vitally important)
 - * and the teacher feels that his/her faults were common faults of the whole group: they as a whole couldn't prevent an understandable but probably countereffective personal factor in teaching
- to open the doors and windows make them stronger not more vulnerable in case of a trusting atmosphere is established

4 A/ Ambivalencies towards experts

comes from low self-esteem of Hungarian teachers

- more attention also on the teachers in LS process; continuous reinforcement of their existing competencies while introducing them the new method
 - eg. to express that they are competent enough to *give* knowledge to the outside-expert, to teach him/her (their practical experience and subtle peaces of understanding of their work) and this is a mutual benefit
 - to express that they are also LEARNERS in LS-process; eg. they want to learn about themselves and about the reasons why they work effectively or not as effectively as they would like
 - *as learners* they also need clear educational objects (for example to understand: „What were the critical elements that caused *my* failures in teaching of a topic?“ /the critical points that cause the students failures/)

- more space to work on teachers' own emotions too, to let them find subtle clues about their own emotions while

lesson) * teaching the students (eg. during the research

* working on a lesson study project with the others

to let them discover by the group work how their personality traits and emotions block or foster what they do as teachers

4 B/ Ambivalences toward protocols



to make it clear to the teachers that protocols don't block their spontaneity in their work but they give them more freedom and help them to concentrate on the real problems (while they follow the protocol they are free enough to concentrate on the real pedagogical issues)

III. Contextual/structural problems

- a) developing a programme with the Ministry of Education /let lesson study be a possible in-service teacher training programme; teachers could get credits and schools money for LS as a possible part of teachers' compulsory in-service training/
- b) implementing LS into pre-service teacher education
- c) *teachers' out of school workload: ???*

To build on before „...**BUT**“-parts of the reactions

- **„It seems to be an interesting, probably an effective method, but ...”**

/officer in in-service teacher training center/

(no money, no time, no energy
from the teachers' side...)

- **„I would be happy to see this method in my school, but...”**

/school principal/

(I cant make a pressure on my teachers,
I have no time to control what happens,
I can't organize an open-day for any goals or reasons, it has no culture in our
school...)

- ***„It is surely very fascinating method and good against burning out syndrom also, but...”***

(vice principal)

(our teachers have so many obligations with their student teachers that they have no time and energy to this with quality...)

- ***„It is something we teachers really miss and badly need in Hungary, but...”***

(cooperating teacher)

(we have no time, Japan, Singapore, Hongkong, China are so far and different...)

To take some risks and:

**start pilot lesson study programmes in schools
with some receptive groups of teachers
with the help of supportive school leaders**

as soon as it is possible.

(Rather to start the work on the ground
– while working on the structural issues also –
despite all the possible risks and theoretical and practical problems.)

Thank you for your attention!