
Guest editorial: Emerging voices in lesson studies

Guest editorial

121

Background

The idea for this special issue originated during the early stages of creating the PhD and Early Career Researchers (ECRs) committee of the World Association of Lesson Studies (WALS). For an international research and practitioner community like the WALS, it is imperative to include and involve PhD students and ECRs to give them opportunities to socialise in the scientific community as part of their preparation for possible future careers in academia or as practitioner–researchers. We also aim to provide an outlet for their voices to be heard, as much of their work will not be seen or heard in the developing process. One way of doing so is to foster connections between young researchers through shared interests and collaboration on research. As a result, the four guest editors of this special issue pursued the idea of showcasing doctoral studies, which eventually evolved into this special issue.

We recognise and appreciate the increased emphasis on supporting the overall development of PhD students and ECRs. Over the past two decades, politicians, policymakers and universities have expressed a desire to not only prepare doctoral candidates and graduates for academic careers but also to equip them with the skills and training necessary to make valuable contributions to the knowledge society as well-trained researchers (Zinner *et al.*, 2022). To facilitate and support such development in doctoral education for early-stage researchers, initiatives such as including doctoral consortiums in conferences and building a peer support network are becoming more prevalent (Fakunle *et al.*, 2019).

In terms of publication in academic journals, it has been shown that writing and publishing can be difficult for early-stage researchers (Habibie and Hyland, 2019; Murray and Metheny, 2002) due to four main factors. The first factor is due to the massive workload of a doctoral student (Moradi, 2019; Stoilescu and McDougall, 2010). Juggling between graduate coursework, exams and doctoral dissertation is one of the common reasons why doctoral students delay the writing process. The second factor is finding publishing opportunities (Syeda *et al.*, 2021). Doctoral research is often considered unready for publication or remains hidden in university repositories. The final factor is the need for more skills and techniques in publication (Shamsi and Osam, 2022). Only a few doctoral students have the formal academic writing skills to be accepted for publication in reputable peer-reviewed journals (Hanafizadeh and Shaikh, 2021). Young professionals are also inclined to experience inadequacy and uncertainty during their postgraduate studies. They feel intimidated or anxious to publish their work (Nori and Vanttaja, 2022).

This special issue emerged as a reflection of the demand to provide opportunities for PhD students and ECRs to share their work and as a means to support their development in the journal publication field and to give them a safe space to do so. We have compiled five papers for this special issue, and each paper will be discussed in detail below.

The collection

Aligned with the aim of the *International Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies*, this issue publishes a collection of papers written by doctoral and early career researchers on the subject of lesson and learning studies that are pedagogically aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning in educational settings. With the global spread of lesson study,



International Journal for Lesson &
Learning Studies
Vol. 12 No. 2, 2023
pp. 121-125
© Emerald Publishing Limited
2046-8253
DOI 10.1108/IJLLS-04-2023-129

since it was introduced to the community outside Japan through the publication of [Stigler and Hiebert \(1999\)](#), lesson study has been adapted widely in different educational contexts, as documented by [Lewis and Lee \(2017\)](#). There has been a significant increase in lesson study and learning study research in recent years. Researchers have explored various topics, including the benefits and challenges of lesson study for teacher professional development and the processes and conditions that support such learning ([Vermunt et al., 2019](#); [Xu and Pedder, 2014](#)). Additionally, the effect of lesson studies on the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) ([Coenders and Verhoef, 2019](#)), the role of external collaborators, such as facilitators and knowledgeable others ([Ni Shuilleabhain and Seery, 2018](#); [Takahashi, 2014](#)), the implementation of lesson studies in initial teacher education (ITE) ([Cajkler and Wood, 2019](#); [da Ponte, 2017](#)) and the role of theories in lesson study ([Huang et al., 2023](#)) have also been examined. The proliferation of research in lesson studies has opened up possibilities for more diverse research in the field. With this in mind, doctoral research offers the opportunity to explicate and investigate various in-depth subjects given the duration of the trajectory to focus on a specific element/topic within lesson studies. By collating this extensive research, we can create spaces for knowledge sharing for PhD students and ECRs to offer valuable insights into the field. Additionally, we endeavoured to ensure that the authorship regional and subject area distribution are met.

In his work, Lelinge (this issue) focused on using variation theory in lesson design to enhance classroom learning and meet the needs of students with different educational needs. Particularly, his study aimed to understand how the intended object of learning, as planned by teachers, was perceived by students. This was done through a learning study in which the intended, enacted and lived objects of learning were all considered. Lelinge drew data from a lesson on Physical Education and Health in Sweden, using a video-recorded dance choreography. The results of the study showed how an analysis of learning material based on variation theory could help teachers consider the complexity of the object of learning and identify which parts of the lesson may be more challenging for students with different educational needs. It is noteworthy that Physical Education and Health is a subject very much under-explored. Therefore, Lelinge's work has added to the existing body of knowledge in lesson studies. Furthermore, the findings have contributed to the field by highlighting the potential of using theoretical assumptions in lesson design to enhance classroom learning and guide teachers in meeting the needs of their students.

In a similar vein, Gomes and her colleagues (this issue) placed the emphasis of their research on the potential of lesson study to support teacher development in Portugal. Taking the approach of qualitative and interpretive research, Gomes *et al.* examined how participation in lesson studies influenced a secondary school mathematics teacher's ability to lead whole-class discussions. Through data collected from participant observation, audio recordings of lesson study sessions, semi-structured interviews and video recordings of lessons, Gomes reported that the teacher's participation in lesson study influenced her teaching practice in several ways, including her ability to guide students through explanations of their strategies, challenge them to justify their ideas, explore incorrect strategies and disagreements and involve students in drawing connections. The teacher was given an opportunity "to rethink her role in the classroom, understand the benefit of giving students the floor to explain their ideas and reflect on their peers' ideas to foster student learning". This study has raised some critical implications on the implementation of lesson study to maximise its potential fully.

With Cardoso and her co-authors' work (this issue), readers have the opportunity to gain more insights into lesson study conducted in Portugal. Cardoso *et al.* conducted their studies in ITE, a context that has received increasing attention. Cardoso and her colleagues from Portugal added to this research base how the development of PCK of prospective primary school teachers could be promoted through lesson study. The authors are particularly

interested in promoting PCK for mathematics teaching. They use, amongst others, the frameworks by Ball *et al.* (2008) and Carillo-Yanez *et al.* (2018) to study how this process took place. Focussing specifically on two prospective teachers using video recordings, research journals, interviews, lesson plans and written reflections, the authors followed a qualitative approach to determine how these prospective teachers developed their PCK during a lesson study. The results suggested how prospective students develop knowledge about lesson planning, task design, students' difficulties in solving strategies, and communication and observation skills. The learning process of these prospective teachers was well-described and offered an interesting perspective on the ITE context in Portugal.

Meanwhile, Goh *et al.* (this issue) shifted the focus to the social contexts where lesson study took place, examining how teachers in two Singapore schools with contrasting contexts engaged in curriculum deliberation through lesson study. The study employed a qualitative case study approach, including participant observations and post-lesson study interviews with teachers, to explore the processes through which LS enables deliberation, the types of teacher knowledge that are drawn upon and co-constructed during this process, and how the school-level orientation influences teacher learning in lesson study. Goh *et al.* reported that lesson study enabled a trajectory of deliberation characterised by cycles of pedagogical reasoning and actions across its stages, transforming content into pedagogical representations. These findings are novel because they provide a nuanced understanding of how curriculum thinking occurs in lesson study teams and how processes that create the dialogic space for coordinating curriculum commonplaces enable the transformation of content into pedagogical representations and the development of students' future capacities. The study also drew the readers' attention to the importance of considering the social contexts in which lesson study takes place and suggests that an interconnected view of teacher learning is necessary for sustainable lesson study practices.

While the four papers above describe studies conducted in a conventional and face-to-face setting, Holden's (this issue) paper focused on online lesson study as a vehicle for teacher collaborative professional learning, explicitly focussing on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. Online lesson study recently sparked the interest of various lesson study researchers, primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, Holden's study added to a new perspective on lesson study that explores how lesson study takes place in an online environment, having to deal with so-called "digital boundary objects". Holden followed two parallel online lesson study cycles in two teams, which she facilitated using various digital collaborative tools. The results showed how teachers gained a new understanding of inquiry-based pedagogies in STEM, enabling students to uncover new knowledge themselves instead of being mere recipients of knowledge delivered by a teacher. Another interesting finding was that teachers noted the importance of incorporating adaptive teaching practices in STEM to meet their students' educational needs. However, limited evidence was provided of specific STEM content knowledge development amongst the teachers who participated, which may offer interesting opportunities for follow-up studies by anyone interested in online lesson study.

Despite the differences in research focus and setting, all papers highlighted the potential of lesson study as a professional development approach for supporting both in and pre-service teacher development via learning through collaboration. The choice of papers in this issue is representative of the global scope of lesson and learning studies, and journal readers may concur with us on this point. This special issue has provided a chance to highlight the fascinating possibilities that result from combining PhD and ECRs' work. We hope that the studies included in this issue will be able to expand further the robust discussion and exchange of ideas among researchers of all stages. Any suggestions or questions for the authors are greatly appreciated to support these emerging voices in lesson studies.

Shirley Tan

*Nagoya University, Nagoya, Japan and
Windesheim University of Applied Sciences, Zwolle, The Netherlands*

Tijmen Schipper

Windesheim University of Applied Sciences, Zwolle, The Netherlands

Stéphane Clivaz

University of Teacher Education, Lausanne, Switzerland, and

Sui Lin Goei

*Windesheim University of Applied Sciences, Zwolle, The Netherlands and
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

References

- Cajkler, W. and Wood, P. (2019), "Lesson study in ITE: a family of approaches", in Wood, P., Larssen, D.L.S., Helgevold, N. and Cajkler, W. (Eds), *Lesson Study in Initial Teacher Education: Principles and Practices*, Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 31-46, doi: [10.1108/978-1-78756-797-920191003](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78756-797-920191003).
- Coenders, F. and Verhoef, N. (2019), "Lesson Study: professional development (PD) for beginning and experienced teachers", *Professional Development in Education*, Vol. 45, pp. 217-230, Routledge.
- da Ponte, J.P. (2017), "Lesson studies in initial mathematics teacher education", *International Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies*, Vol. 6, pp. 169-181, Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Fakunle, O., Dollinger, M., Allah-Mensah, J. and Iazard, B. (2019), "Academic conferences as learning sites: a multinational comparison of doctoral students' perspectives and institutional policy", *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, Vol. 14, pp. 479-497, doi: [10.28945/4383](https://doi.org/10.28945/4383).
- Habibie, P. and Hyland, K. (2019), "Novice writers and scholarly publication", *Palgrave*, Vol. 10, pp. 978-973.
- Hanafizadeh, P. and Shaikh, A.A. (2021), "Developing doctoral students'/researchers' understanding of the journal peer-review process", *The International Journal of Management Education*, Vol. 19 No. 2, 100500, doi: [10.1016/j.ijme.2021.100500](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2021.100500).
- Huang, R., da Ponte, J.P. and Clivaz, S. (2023), "Guest editorial: networking theories for understanding and guiding lesson study", *International Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 1-6, doi: [10.1108/IJLLS-01-2023-128](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLLS-01-2023-128).
- Lewis, C. and Lee, C. (2017), "The global spread of lesson study: contextualization and adaptations", in *International handbook of Teacher Quality and Policy*, Routledge, pp. 185-203.
- Moradi, S. (2019), "Publication should not be a prerequisite to obtaining a PhD", *Nature Human Behaviour*, Vol. 3 No. 10, p. 1025, doi: [10.1038/s41562-019-0690-7](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-019-0690-7).
- Murray, R. and Metheny, N. (2002), "Writing for publication: the transition from course assignments and presentations to journal publication", *Missouri Nurse*, pp. 18-21.
- Ni Shuilleabhain, A. and Seery, A. (2018), "Enacting curriculum reform through lesson study: a case study of mathematics teacher learning", *Professional Development in Education*, Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 222-236, doi: [10.1080/19415257.2017.1280521](https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2017.1280521).
- Nori, H. and Vanttaja, M. (2022), "Too stupid for PhD? Doctoral impostor syndrome among Finnish PhD students", *Higher Education*. doi: [10.1007/s10734-022-00921-w](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00921-w).
- Shamsi, A.F. and Osam, U.V. (2022), "Challenges and support in article publication: perspectives of non-native English speaking doctoral students in a 'publish or No degree' context", *SAGE Open*, Vol. 12 No. 2, 21582440221095021, doi: [10.1177/21582440221095021](https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221095021).
- Stigler, J. and Hiebert, J. (1999), *The Teaching Gap : Best Ideas from the World's Teachers for Improving Education in the Classroom*, Free Press.

-
- Stoilescu, D. and McDougall, D. (2010), "Starting to publish academic research as a doctoral student", *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, Vol. 5, pp. 79-92.
- Syeda, M., Woodend, J., Liu, J. and Roy, S. (2021), "Ready to leave the nest? Education graduate students' voices on publishing", *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 107-116.
- Takahashi, A. (2014), "The role of the knowledgeable other in lesson study: examining the final comments of experienced lesson study practitioners", *Mathematics Teacher Education and Development*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 4-21.
- Vermunt, J.D., Vrikki, M., van Halem, N., Warwick, P. and Mercer, N. (2019), "The impact of Lesson Study professional development on the quality of teacher learning", *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 81, pp. 61-73.
- Xu, H. and Pedder, D. (2014), "Lesson study: an international review of the research", in Dudley, P. (Ed.), *Lesson Study: Professional Learning for Our Time*, Routledge, pp. 29-58.
- Zinner, L., Lindorfer, B. and O'Reilly, A. (2022), "Leadership in changing doctoral education", *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 57 No. 3, pp. 424-437, doi: [10.1111/ejed.12517](https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12517).