

Is There Anything Special about Lesson Study in Special Schools?

Sarah R Seleznyov, *UCL Institute of Education*

This research into the implementation of lesson study in special schools explored whether there are features unique to the way in which English special schools implement lesson study. The study examined the structures and processes which enable special schools to use lesson study as an effective and sustainable professional development tool. It also explored what special schools believe the impact of lesson study is on teachers and pupils.

In the study, four leaders of lesson study in their own special schools acted as both researchers and participants. They worked alongside the academics to identify research questions, design their own research tools and to explore 12 case study schools. The case study schools included participants' own special schools and a further four special schools. Four mainstream schools were also studied, with the intention of comparing and contrasting lesson study practices across mainstream and special contexts. The study involved visits to eight case study schools, a series of interviews amongst the four participating school leaders and a questionnaire for participating teachers in all 12 case study schools.

The early findings from the study found differences between mainstream and special schools in terms of their capacity to structurally accommodate lesson study due to higher staffing ratios, which might support the sustainability of lesson study in special contexts. The study also explored a tendency in special schools to focus more on studying the needs of individual pupils and best approaches to meeting these needs, instead of a focus on the development of pedagogical content knowledge with broad application across pupils and contexts.

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Implementation Of Collaboration Learning To Achieve Learning Objective For Specific Learning Disorder Student at Gagasceria Primary School

Siti Latifah, *SD Gagasceria*

How a teacher could fulfill the students' right in studying during individual learning process? This objective is being developed in Gagas Ceria's School by implementing lesson study in special class which facilitates children who have specific learning disorder (dyslexia, dyscalculy, dysgraphia). In the third grade, this class has two students that having difficulty in language and mathematics.

In this lesson study, lesson plan are developed by using collaboration learning methods. The learning objectives are :

1. Student can solve the word problems of mathematics by applying conversion in measuring two durations of time.
2. Student can communicate their ideas or thinking process in solving mathematical problems.

When planning collaboration learning, the selection of challenging task and predicting students' responses are important. These responses may appear from diversities of their understanding and difficulties in studying. The selection of challenging task is based on facts that special needs' students usually have more learning stages and need more time to understand the problems. In addition, teacher also have to awaken student self-confidence during learning process. Based on these consideration, teacher choose only one challenge in the math word problem: correlation concept between conversion with the sum of duration. As for the selected word problem, one-step word problem is choose in order to guide the students to be more focussed on concept only. Next is to predict students' responses and anticipate them by processing communication sentences that teachers can give in order not to become excessive teacher intervention.

During the lesson, one of the students is able to understand the word problem faster than other student, while another student is faster in connecting the concept with the math procedure than other student. These different abilities make the discussion among them happens comprehensively and enthusiastically in solving the challenging word problem. This situasion show the improvement of students' activeness in studying. They ask each other and try to explain their thoughts both to their teacher and their friend. Another result is the growth of their self confidences when they finally could solve the problems together. They can comprehend with the lesson they learn and their efforts to learn by themselves. In the end, they could gain their own succes story.

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Applying Learning Study to Unravel the Pedagogical Myths in Special Education

Ka-wai Leung, *The Education University of Hong Kong*

PoYuk Ko, *The Education University of Hong Kong*

MengChoo Lai, *The Education University of Hong Kong*

As a response to the ‘one curriculum for all’ principle put forward by the Curriculum Development Council, special education teachers are adopting the mainstream curriculum framework and units to plan their lessons (Li, Tse & Lian, 2009). Encountering the teaching challenges in special education, teachers may have employed some misguided notions in their daily practices. Heward (2003) has stipulated ten faulty notions about teaching and learning that may hinder the effectiveness of special education. It is found that research-based teaching strategies are scarcely used (Björklund, 2012; Moscardini, 2010; Kroesbergen & Van Luit, 2003; Stough, & Palmer, 2003; Van Acker, 2006) and research about applying Learning Study in special school setting is limited (Cheung & Wong, 2014).

This paper proposes a possible approach to catering for students with special needs, based on the Learning Study approach with Variation Theory (Marton and Booth, 1997) as conceptual framework. Mathematics teachers of five special schools were invited to apply variation theory in their teaching. ‘Making a pictograph’ was selected as the Object of Learning and its critical features were identified as informed by the theory.

The results show apparent improvement in student learning outcomes upon the adoption of Variation Theory as the guiding principle for pedagogical design. The insight gained from the experience seems to affect the teachers’ ways of seeing the object of learning, their knowledge in identifying the critical features of the learning object, their concept of discernment as a tool of formative assessment, the use of the patterns of variation in pedagogical design, mostly importantly in helping teachers unravel the pedagogical myths in special education. This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of Variation Theory and its application in practice, from mainstream schools to special education. The paper concludes that the learning study model with variation theory can be a powerful framework to enhance teachers’ professionalism.