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Lesson Study in Initial Teacher Education: Opportunities and Challenges

Wouter R van Joolingen, *Utrecht University*

Carien Bakker, *University of Groningen*

Evelien van Geffen, *Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences*

Wasył Cajkler, *University of Leicester*

Lesson Study is often seen as a method for professional development of teachers (Dudley, 2011). Less attention has been given so far to using Lesson Study in initial teacher education. However, as Tsui and Law (2007) argue, Lesson Study can play a role in bridging the gap between the teacher education institute and the schools where the practical part of education takes place. Cajkler et al. (2016; 2013) find that Lesson Study can indeed close the gap between theory and practice and between mentor and student. In this symposium, we present and discuss three different projects around Lesson Study in initial secondary teacher education, performed in the academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, in three major teacher education institutes in the Netherlands. In these projects, subjects taught include Dutch as a first language, biology, physics and mathematics. In all three projects, students in initial teacher education participated in Lesson Study teams. However, projects differed in approach and outcome. These differences and how we can learn from them will be the main topic of discussion in the symposium. Topics that will be addressed are:

- Team composition and facilitation. In one project, teams were a mixture of experienced teachers and students, whereas in the other projects teams consisted of student teachers exclusively. In the latter projects, the Lesson Study process was moderated by an experienced supervisor.
- Bridge between practice and theory. Students in one project explicitly reported on the opportunity to directly apply theory in practical lessons and see the outcomes in the lesson observation.
- Experienced benefits for students. Students reported positively on the experience. They mentioned the benefit of working together and thereby the necessity to explicate and legitimize choices in the lesson plan.
- Potential pitfalls and difficulties. Lack of teaching experience by the participants can make it hard for to perform all phases in the Lesson Study process effectively. For instance, LS-teams experienced difficulty in predicting observable student behaviour in the preparation of the research lessons.
- Practical issues. The organization of teacher education programs makes it sometimes difficult to organize a full Lesson Study cycle. For instance, in a group with only teacher education students, the availability of a class in which teachers would allow student teachers to teach and observe could not be taken for granted. The three presentations in the symposium will address these topics for the respective projects. In the overall discussion, will seek to draw lessons for establishing a tight integration of Lesson Study in initial teacher education.

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