



Title of Research Project: Teachers' Understandings of Lesson Study (LS) as a Professional Development Tool in a Primary Multi-Grade School

Researchers: Bridget Flanagan



Contact Details: bridget.flanagan@mie.ie

Relevant key words: STEM Education; Professional Development; Lesson Study; Primary

Summary:

With increasing focus on primary curricular reform in Ireland, a growing understanding of the importance of education in the early years has led professional development organisations to consider the effectiveness of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) education for young children. This research sought to explore the potential of Lesson Study as a vehicle to promote and support collaborative professional development in a rural, multi-grade Primary school. Three teachers were introduced to and participated in four cycles of Lesson Study over the course of one school year. Lesson Study was utilised to design and implement integrated STEM lessons in Junior and Senior Infants (ages 4–7 years). Through an action research methodology, qualitative data was generated from interviews, lesson plans, collaborative weekly meetings, observation sheets, and the researcher's reflective journal and field notes. Analysis suggests that teachers began to develop new pedagogical practices as a result of iterative and collaborative Lesson Study processes. Findings also reveal insights into the knowledge-related demands of designing and implementing STEM lessons. Successive and collaborative cycles enabled teachers to become more confident in their teaching of STEM education, and they believed they had a greater understanding of the children's learning. While teachers perceived Lesson Study to be a beneficial form of professional development, some factors constrained their engagement, including practical, cultural, and sustainability challenges. The work concludes by

contemplating the place of Lesson Study and STEM education in the current educational landscape and makes recommendations to support their implementation nationally.

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