
Conditions and Problems on Implementing Japanese Lesson Study in Islamic Private Schools in Southern Thailand

muhammadafeefee.a@psu.ac.th

Muhammadafeefee Assalihee¹

Kasem Premprayoon²

Wittaya Payayam³

Nifarid Radenahmad⁴

Abstract

Lesson Study (LS) has been rapidly spread in many countries. It is a form of long-term professional development that teachers collaboratively plan, do research, and study on how to teach lessons to enhance students' learning capability. This study aimed 1) to find out the perception of principals and teachers in the Islamic private schools towards LS, 2) to find out conditions and problems on the implementation of LS of the teachers in the schools. The samples were three school principals and seven teachers affiliated with Assalam Smart School Association. The qualitative data collection and the analysis employed were the in-depth interviews, and content analysis, respectively.

The study found that the principals and teachers perceived LS as a new significant approach to support teacher professional development. It was also discovered that the Islamic private schools began to practice it two years ago in the mathematics classrooms. The implemented lesson study consisted of seven processes as follows: 1) setting learning goals and designing problematic situations; 2) Islamizing situational knowledge; 3) creating teaching and learning materials, media and lessons based on the different approaches of thinking; 4) implementing the lesson plans; 5) classroom observation; 6) reflecting the results of teaching; and 7) exchanging knowledge among the teachers. It was explored the four major problems of its implementation namely 1) the ability to coach teachers, 2) lack of the principal involvement and support, 3) time management of LS team, as well as 4) lack of supporting facilities and resources.

Keywords: Conditions and Problems, Lesson Study, Islamic Private School, Three Southern Border Provinces of Thailand

¹ Ph.D. (Development Education). Lecturer of Islamic Studies, Department, College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University Pattani Campus

² Ph.D. (Teaching Mathematics). Lecturer, Department of Science and Mathematics, Faculty of Education, Thaksin University Email: kasem_run@hotmail.com

³ M.A. (Educational Evaluation). Teacher, Hatyaiwittayakarn School Email: wittaya@hwks.ac.th

⁴ M.Ed. (Teaching Science). Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Prince of Songkla University Pattani Campus Email: nifarid.r@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Lesson Study (LS) is an activity or a classroom action research focusing on the teacher professional development, it has been used by the teacher in Japan for more than hundred years (Lewis, 2002). It is a process in which teachers attempt to improve their teaching methods by working with other teachers to examine and critique one another's teaching techniques and, it functions as a mean of enabling teachers to develop and study their own teaching practices (Baba, 2007).

The impact of the lesson study has successfully achieved the goal of the Japanese education reform (M. Inprasitha, Isoda, Wang-Iverson, & Yeap, 2015) and the program was carried out with continuity and aimed at achieving the students' learning objectives. It also took the classroom context into consideration and emphasized the mutual learning among the teachers involved (M. Inprasitha et al., 2015; Stigler & Hiebert, 2007). Dudley (2014) pointed out that LS works because it helps teachers closely see pupil learning activities; see the gaps between what they had assumed and was happening when pupils learned and what it is actually happening; find out how to plan learning which is better matched to the pupils' needs as a result; do all this in the context of a supportive teaching and learning community which is strongly committed in helping pupils to learn and to the professional learning of the members of the group; change their teaching to better support learning as a result.

LS has been a growing interest in the education worldwide and attracted teachers and educators to improve the teaching and learning in the classroom (Nashruddin & Nurrachman, 2016). In Thailand, the first adoption of LS was in the year 2003 by Maitree Inprasitha. He initially implemented LS with his

mathematics practicum students and in the same year, both lesson study and the open approach were utilized in school by Center for Research in Mathematics Education (CRME), Khon Kaen University (Jaijan & Suttiamporn, 2013).

The implementation of LS in Thailand as proposed by CRME includes 3 phases of the process as follows (Jaijan & Suttiamporn, 2013):

1) The collaborative design of the research lesson (Plan); At this stage, the researchers and the participating teachers joined in the planning, started with designing the mathematical problem using open-ended problem situation. Afterwards, the instruction is carried out focusing on an open approach which opens for an individual student to take part in the mathematical activities collaboratively constructed using open-ended problems.

2) The collaborative observing the research lesson (Do); At this stage, after the instructional plan has been actualized in the classroom by one of the teachers who constructed the plans, there would be classroom observation collaboratively conducted by the research team members and other teachers. The aim was to learn about the students' thinking process, not the teacher's performance.

3) The collaborative reflection on teaching practices (See), the research team and teachers discussed to reflect on the observation of the classroom teaching in order to improve the instruction and use the revised ideas in the next round of the classroom teaching.

In the three southern border provinces of Thailand (Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat), the majority of the population is Thai Malay Muslim. At present, there are about 1.4 million Thai Muslims in the three southern border provinces, which is eighteen percent of the Thai Muslim population. Islamic integrated schools in the south of

Thailand are mostly the government-sponsored school. The school offers Islamic education in conjunction with the national curriculum. The language used in the instruction is Thai for academic subjects, and Arabic or Malay for Islamic subjects. In some areas, this school refers to a madrasah. (Alee & Baka, 2012). At the primary and secondary school levels, Thai Muslims are able to choose between attending public schools or private Islamic schools (Pondok) or private schools that offer both Islamic and academic subjects. For Muslim parents, they prefer to send their children to the Islamic school.

Although there are plenty of Islamic schools in southern Thailand, the parents are very concern about their children education and endeavour to support the children to study both Islamic and academic subjects in the Islamic schools. However, the Islamic schools still lag behind in terms of the quality of education. The Ordinary National Educational Test or ONET was significantly showed that the quality of the education in southern Thailand is lower than another Thai region. In this matter, all educational agencies and authorities have been trying very hard to enhance and reform the education system in southern Thailand (National Institute of Educational Testing Service, 2011).

Despite the widespread acknowledgement of its success, the adoption of Lesson Study in Islamic school newly exists. Due to the culture, context, and curriculum using in Islamic schools in southern Thailand are deferent from the normal public schools, the introduction of a new teacher professional development such as Lesson Study poses a range of challenges to Islamic school teachers and school in the whole system. However, some implemented problems and a lack of understanding implementation still exist. This study

aimed to find out the perception of principals and teachers in the Islamic private schools in southern Thailand towards Lesson Study and find out the conditions and problems on the implementation of Lesson study in accordance with the culture and context of the Islamic schools in three southern border provinces of Thailand.

OBJECTIVE

1) To find out the perception of principals and teachers in the Islamic private schools towards the Lesson Study.

2) To find out conditions and problems on the implementation of the Lesson Study of the teacher in the Islamic Private Schools.

METHODS

This research employed qualitative research methodology with longitudinal study and emphasized on the process and meaning utilizing ethnographic study method.

Key Informants

The key informants were the three school principals and seven mathematics teachers affiliated with Assalam Smart School Association in the three southern borders provinces (Yala, Pattani, and Naratiwas). All key informants from these three Islamic integrated primary schools were collected by purposive sampling technique (Palys, 2008). The researchers and the school principals discussed to collect the data and ensure applicable teachers who meet the study criterions. For the three principals, one of them was from Pattani and the rest were from Yala. Each of them was from the small size school (less than 360 students), the medium-sized school (between 361 - 720 students) and the large-sized school (more 720 students). For the seven mathematics teachers, four teachers teach in the lower primary classroom (year 1-3)

and the rest teachers teach in the upper primary classroom (year 4-6). Three teachers graduated in the Bachelor of Science Education, three teachers graduated in the Bachelor of Mathematics Education, and another one teacher graduated in the Bachelor of English Education. The age of teachers was ranged from twenty-seven to thirty-six years old.

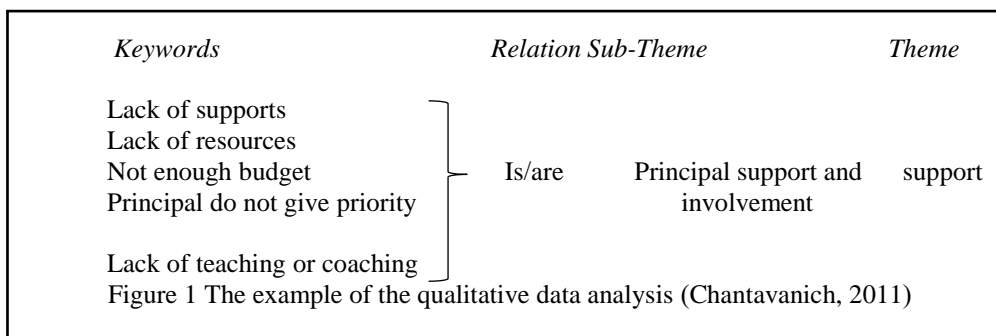
Instruments and Data Collection

The semi-structured interview questions were developed from the relevant literature to gather the data from the key informants. There were three parts of the question, (i) the personal information, (ii) the perception of Muslim teachers towards the Lesson Study, and (iii) the conditions and problems of the implementation of the Lesson Study in the schools. The three experts from the field of education validated the quality of the instrument. The key informants received the research information document before the interview. They also got informed the detail of the interview by the researchers. The researchers

employed the face to face interview, and the interviews were recorded. The interviews took around forty-five minutes to one and half hours depends on the circumstances and participation’s satisfaction (Schensul, 2008).

Analysis

Interview data were transcribed and imported into a computer, and after transcribing the data to texts, the key informants were asked to check or correct the data again and fulfill the missing information they wished. The descriptive and content analyses were used as the qualitative analysis method. The sub-themes and theme as shown in the Figure 1 were developed based on the literature reviews and questions asked in the interview. The symbols and the numbers were used in the data analysis. The data were analyzed by two different researchers to examine the similarities and differences that emerged (Kocoyigita, 2015). Triangulation Methodology was also used to verify the obtained data credibility (Shenton, 2004).



Findings and Discussion

1. The perception of principals and teachers in the Islamic private schools towards the Lesson Study.

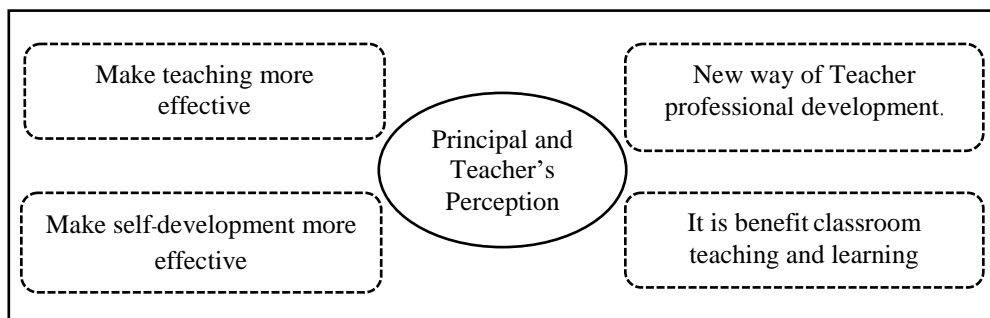


Figure 2 Teacher's perception on the Lesson Study

The Lesson Study has been initially adopted in Thailand since 2003; however, it's still the new thing for Islamic school principals and teachers in the southern of Thailand. It has been initially adopted in Northeastern (Isan) of Thailand led by the Faculty of Education, Khonkan University. For the southern of Thailand, it has been adopted when some lecturers who graduated from Khonkan University and become the lecturers in the public university in the South. The ideas and the knowledge of LS were also expanded in the southern provinces. Taksin University (TSU) and Prince of Shonkla University (PSU) act as the southern Thailand region coordinator with Khonkan University for implementing the lesson study as the teacher professional development.

The perceptions of both principals and teachers in Islamic school were mostly in the positive view. All key informants reflected that LS was being the new way of teacher professional development. It was also benefit the classroom teaching and learning, and teachers expressed that they perceived more effective in teaching and self-development. The finding was in accordance with the opinion of Waranetsudathip (2011), she stated that this LS is important in the continuous improvement of teachers for the

following reasons: 1) it helps understand in an educational concept relating to the teaching procedure; 2) it can adapt the concept and technique of teaching and learning; 3) teachers learn and develop their teaching methods through students' reflection; and 4) teachers are supported by their fellows. Suhaili & Khalid (2011) also stated from their study about Mathematics Teachers' perception of LS that teachers suggest that Lesson Study promotes the practice of teaching innovatively, provides teachers with a platform to improve and reflect their own teaching, and has many advantages compared to other professional development programmes.

However, some teachers faced some difficulty at the beginning of the implementation because LS was different from their previous teaching method. Also, the students did not response much enough when this new approach of teaching was implemented to them.

The principals' perception towards Lesson Stud: A case interview sample.

Researcher: *When do you first know about the Lesson Study?*

School Principal, Sample Case: *I first know when I participated in the training program by College of Islamic studies, Prince of Songkla University. The training was conducted by the college in*

collaboration with Faculty of Education, Khonkan University.

Researcher: *What do you think about the Japanese Lesson Study?*

School Principal, Sample Case: *To me, this Japanese teacher development approach is very significant for teachers to be developed. Teachers can share the ideas with their colleges, so they will be able to develop their teaching technique by learning from other teachers.*

Researcher: *How does it work?*

School Principal, Sample Case: *My teachers never plan a lesson plan together with other teachers. Lesson Study encourages them to meet other teachers, and collaboratively plan, have a classroom team observation, and a reflection meeting. I noticed that the new school culture of teaching and teacher professional development appears in my school.*

Researcher: *Does LS benefit to students and in what way?*

School Principal, Sample Case: *Surely, it benefits a lot to the students. When a teacher helps each other to plan, observe, and reflect the teaching and learning. The student will be able to learn the best lessons and the techniques that teachers planned to be the best for their students. The problems in the teaching were fulfilled during the reflection activity.*

Researcher: *Do you have any suggestions to improve the teacher development program in the Islamic school?*

School Principal, Sample Case: *I think we have Halakah (Islamic study group) that could apply for teacher professional development. The problem is we do not use Halakah continually and lack of commitment to run this Prophet's technique in our school.*

2. The conditions and problems on the implementation of LS in the Islamic schools.

2.1 The conditions on the implementation.

The study found that the Lesson Study in the Islamic school context consisted of seven processes as follows: 1) setting learning goals and designing problematic situations; 2) Islamizing situational knowledge; 3) creating teaching and learning materials, media and lessons based on the different approaches of thinking; 4) implementing the lesson plans; 5) classroom observation; 6) reflecting the results of teaching; and 7) exchanging knowledge among the teachers. The finding is in line with the classic approach of the Japanese Lesson Study proposed by Baba (2007) which include 1) problem identification, 2) class planning, 3) class implementation, 4) class evaluation, and review of results, 5) reconsideration of class, 6) implementation of class based on reconsiderations, 7) evaluation and review, 8) sharing of result. Nevertheless, the Lesson Study in Islamic school context is different from others in terms of Islamizing situational knowledge. This is because Islam is the way of life and Muslim teachers always integrated Islamic teaching in the teaching process.

The conditions and problems of the implementation: A case interview sample

Researcher: *How long have you implemented the LS in the school?*

Teacher, Sample Case: *For about one and half years ago.*

Researcher: *Do you think LS is worth to adopt in the school?*

Teacher, Sample Case: *It is a very interesting approach and I got many benefits from using it. I feel more confident in my teaching, I also learn a lot from my friends because for this approach teacher has to share and work together in all process of teaching. I explored many benefits from this Lesson Study approach.*

Researcher: *Could you tell me the method you used in school?*

Teacher, Sample Case: *I use the method as proposed by Dr.Maitree Inprasitha.The normal process in three phases namely 1) planning together, 2) teaching and team observation, 3) sharing and reflection.*

Researcher: *Do you implement anything different from another school in Thailand for the LS process?*

Teacher, Sample Case: *In the Islamic school we integrated Islamic*

teaching knowledge into the lesson, so the students will be able to learn Islamic knowledge while learning academic subjects.

Researcher: *How do you integrate Islamic teaching to the lessons?*

Teacher, Sample Case: *We integrated Islamic knowledge at the beginning of setting learning goals. We also integrated Islam in the lesson during our teaching and at every time as much as we can do it.*

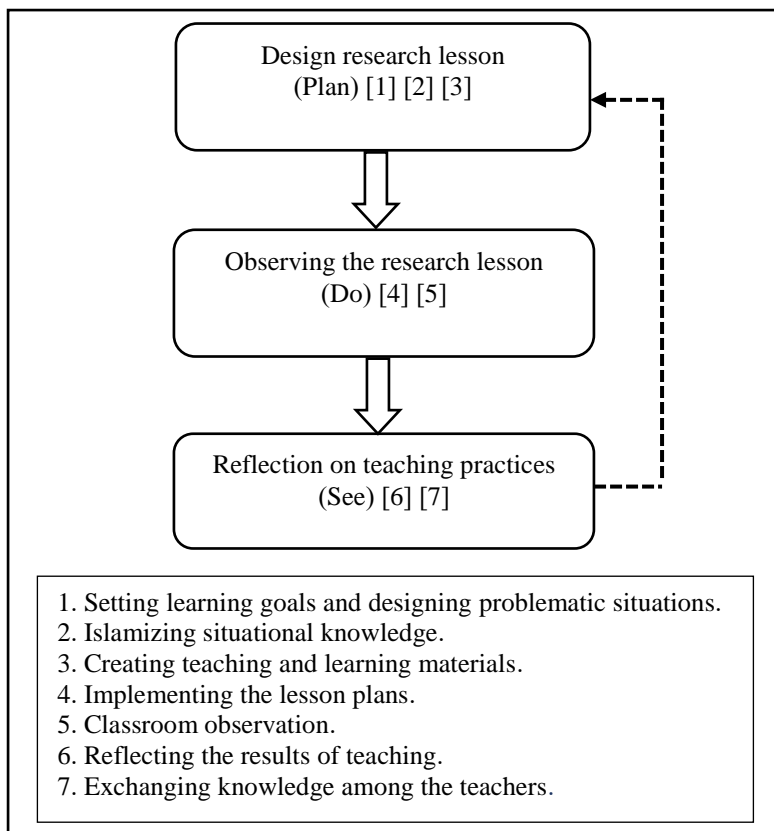


Figure 2 Lesson Study Process as Implemented by the teachers in the Islamic schools in southern Thailand.

2.2 The problems of the implementation.

It was discovered the four major problems of its implementation namely 1)

the ability to coach teachers, 2) lack of the principals' engagement and support, 3) time management of LS team, as well as 4) lack of supporting facilities and

resources. The finding is in tandem with Ngamkanok (2013) about his proposed on educational administration for promoting Lesson Study. He suggested that the school environment should be conducive to learning especially the media, and equipment used in the classroom. The school principals should allocate more budgets to their teachers in order to develop the media and learning resources for the students. He also suggested using coaching technique as teacher supervision and using the reflection as a tool to improve teacher teaching skills. Inprasitha (2009) also stated that the success factors for the implementation of LS are including 1) the support of above authorities; 2) the support from the school administrators; 3) the collaboration of outside experts; 4) teachers and students awareness of change; 5) belief of the successful of LS for teacher professional development; 6) teacher experiences; and 7) teaching guidelines.

The problems of the implementation: A case interview sample.

Researcher: *Is it hard to implement the LS in the school?*

Teacher, Sample Case: *It is hard at the beginning because it is a new way of teacher development. It is different from the method we use. Our culture is totally different from of Japanese people.*

Researcher: *What should you do for the first time when the school wants to implement LS?*

Teacher, Sample Case: *Change the culture of teaching, share and collaborate in work.*

Researcher: *what are obstacles of its implementation?*

Teacher, Sample Case: *Initially we do not have skills in using LS. Nobody in*

the school teaches us about this approach. Also, the school principal could not teach us. We have to join the workshop and training launched by the university.

Researcher: *Do you have other problems of its implementation?*

Teacher, Sample Case: *We have no booklets or learning resources.*

Researcher: *What's about the school policy towards LS?*

Teacher, Sample Case: *Our school principal is very supportive and encouraging teachers to use LS in the school. However, we still need more budget to develop learning resources for students. We understand that our school has insufficient budget compared to public school, but we try to utilize our available resources as we can.*

Conclusion

We could consider that the lesson study was different from other professional development. It was the teacher professional development innovation that had been adopted worldwide. This was a good opportunity for the Islamic schools in the southern of Thailand for using LS as a teacher development tool. Lesson study valued teachers as professionals and allowed them to share their ideas and experiences to enhance the students' achievement. It was not a new program, but a tool that could help teachers to be effective learners by themselves. One of teachers noted that, "Lesson study is like the culture of Islamic brotherhood that encourages Muslim believers to help (Taawanu) each other increase Takwa towards Allah, we as Muslim teacher must apply Lesson Study to our daily responsibilities"

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