

Reception of Lesson Study (Jugyô-Kenkyû) Abroad: Potentials and Challenges for Pedagogy of Diversity

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要 旨

近代以降に日本の学校内外で教師による授業開発・専門発達の実践として展開した「授業研究」は、1990年代以降、北米の学校研究・実践およびアジア・アフリカにおける日本の開発援助をつうじて「レッスンスタディ」としてグローバルに展開した。本稿では開発文脈でのレッスンスタディに関する研究を教育借用の概念から検討し、グローバルな教育目標に直結した議論がなされるいっぽう、各実践・国・地域の多様性に照らした個別の課題設定が待たれることを指摘した。

Key words: Lesson Study, educational borrowing, comparative education, diversity

キーワード：授業研究，教育借用，比較教育，多様性

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, the differentiation and integration of forms of social order in modern society take place simultaneously and repeatedly in diverse political, economic and socio-cultural areas of the world and redefine their structure (cf. Iyotani 2000: 19). As to the area of education, modern national education systems cannot ignore the global order, while they confront with their own traditions and ideals of education (cf. Green 1997/2000). In other words, supranational organizations such as the UNESCO and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play today a critical role for the nation state-based education policy. Especially for comparative education, these global processes mean “the travel of education reforms from one cultural context to another” (Steiner-Khamsi 2012: 3). In such reforms, classical approaches of comparative education experience also a new stage, different from the previous phases of the foundation of the nation states, its colonial expansion and the Cold War (Steiner-Khamsi 2015). Thus, comparative education focuses on (power) relations between the global and the local reforms.

Based on educational borrowing as a classical and yet changing approach of comparative education, this overview essay aims at considering global expand of Japanese Lesson Study (Jugyô-Kenkyû)⁽¹⁾ in so-called developing countries as an example of “the travel of education reforms”. To do so, I will elaborate on the ideas of educational borrowing in relation to Lesson Study (section 2) and outline the reception of Lesson Study in developing countries (section 3). The conclusion will summarize characteristics of Lesson Study borrowing and show its potentials for the pedagogy of diversity (section 4).

2. Lesson Study in Educational Borrowing

Educational borrowing and lending has been one of the central approaches in the classical comparative education. It aims to analyze the education reforms under influences from one system to another in the modernization process. These approaches focus on nowadays power relations between borrowing and lending countries, institutions and/or systems. This change is closely related to post-national and -colonial perspectives (Steiner-Khamsi 2012: 4; Steiner-Khamsi 2015) and unmasks critically colonial or hegemonic settings in educational knowledge, which reveals an asymmetry between the “West” and the “other” (cf. Takayama 2016). In this reflexive context, discourses of educational borrowing have been actualized in comparative policy studies.

Today, policy borrowing research shows two directions: analytical research and normative research (Steiner-Khamsi 2016). For the educational studies, it is important to notice that analytical research in education can also never be free from a certain normativity. On one hand, theories define the understanding of pedagogy, on the other hand, theories determine research methodology on certain pedagogy (cf. Herfter et al. 2019, forthcoming). This normativity in the educational studies is closely tied up with specific educational ideals, which are embedded in the local practice. Therefore, the normative aspect is critical for comparative education as educational science in analyzing policy dimensions of borrowing (cf. Sato 2018; Yamashita 2018).

Educational borrowing of Japanese Lesson Study could also be discussed in this setting, since it is rooted in the modernization process of education and spreads in the global discourses, politics and practices today. Lesson Study itself is a generic term for school-based, cooperative attempts for professional and teaching development among teachers. Its origin goes back to the foundation of the modern education in Japan at the end of the nineteenth century to establish the modern didactics from the West. Especially during the Taishô New Education Movement of the progressive education, the uniqueness and the individuality of each teacher, child and lesson were “discovered” and became a fundament of Lesson Study (cf. Sato 1998). After the Asian Pacific War, Lesson Study has developed in various grassroots movements among teachers and researchers in and beyond a school as a non-formal educational practice. Nowadays, this is also recommended and conducted in the formal education.

U.S. researchers introduced Lesson Study abroad in the 1990s, about a century after its establishment in Japan. There seemed to be two initial motives to focus on Lesson Study; on one hand as a “best practice” due to its innovative cooperation to improve teaching (Lewis 1994), on the other hand as an effective way to improve students’ achievement (Stiegler/ Hiebelt 1999). The second aspect is directly related to the interest in the exceeding results of Japanese students in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) abroad. For Japan, it became a positive trademark in the context of development assistance⁽²⁾.

Overall, Lesson Study abroad can be understood as educational borrowing within the Global North as well as lending of “best practice” to developing countries (Ono 2009: 70). In the latter discourse, borrowing countries would be seen as receiver of Lesson Study thoughts and practices and their own motives to introduce Lesson Study could be discussed to a certain degree. This paper focuses on Lesson Study in developing countries as active borrowing subjects.

Borrowing and lending Lesson Study in the development aid is understood as “soft” assistance, which can fit into local cultures and needs. Nevertheless, the implementation of Lesson Study is often evaluated with regard to the given procedure and “good practices” from (Japanese) Lesson Study (see quantitative

issues of evaluation in Matachi/ Kosaka 2017: 44-47). This suggests an inevitable normativity of Lesson Study and raises some questions: How do borrowing countries identify their education problems and define “good practices” at all? How do they try to tackle local educational challenges by Lesson Study? These questions are derived from the local context, while Lesson Study borrowing occurs in the global context.

Such consideration allows to examine the position of educational knowledge in the local and global discourse. As to the aforementioned asymmetry between the “West” and the “other”, Japanese Lesson Study is not necessarily a western, but a local practice developed by practitioners. It could contain some new balance of educational knowledge by analyzing how Lesson Study borrowing mirrors the global discourse structure in developing countries. In addition, this enables also comparative studies to explore local-indigenous cultures of human development or formation, which underlay political decisions (cf. Seki 1996). Educational borrowing reflects specific reception of foreign ideas in education reforms to tackle with local challenges.

To do so, this paper analyzes articles about the reception of Lesson Study in developing countries. In contrast to the research tradition of discussing educational lending in such context, this paper understands so-called target countries as borrowing subjects. There is certainly a very limited number of relevant articles, but they will show a specific discourse structure on educational borrowing. In the next section, an overview article and some country reports are examined from the viewpoint of introducing Lesson Study.

3. Discourse of Lesson Study Borrowing in Developing Countries

3.1. Overview-Article

Matachi and Kikuchi (2015) as well as Matachi and Kosaka (2017) sketch the introduction of Lesson Study in Japan’s development assistance. According to these authors, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has conducted the so-called Technical Cooperation (TC) in the basic education since 1994 and introduced Lesson Study in 27 countries. Lesson Study in the TC was developed through influential international slogans such as “Education for All” (in Jomtien in 1990) and “Education for Sustainable Development” (ESD) (Matachi/Kosaka 2017: 35).

In 2014, JICA conducted a questionnaire survey about Lesson Study projects, in which local stakeholders as counterpart experts (and Japanese partners) were surveyed in 13 countries (Matachi/ Kikuchi 2015: 92). Two questions from this survey are relevant to this paper: the goals at the moment of the introduction of Lesson Study (ibid.: 95) and its expected effects by counterpart experts (ibid.: 96). As to the first aspect, the improvement of teaching skills was agreed with by 76.9 % of all respondents, an extraordinary positive outcome. It was followed by the improvement of learner-centered lesson (53.8 %) and the implementation of proper practice procedure into the established system (46.2 %). As to the second aspect, the counterpart experts expected the improvement of content knowledge of teachers, more collegiality and improvement of teaching skills. The JICA reports evaluated the extent of the achievement and improvement of the project goals (cf. Matachi/Kosaka 2017: 39ff.).

In all these discourses, the goals and certain visions of improvement are clearly stated, often as measurable criteria. However, problems in education and their causes are not clarified, while these aspects might have basically inspired the introduction of Lesson Study. The global discourses such as the learner-centered approach or sustainable education are directly formulated as the goals of implementation of Lesson Study without referring to some local situation around education. To take a closer look at concrete educational situations in the local context, I’ll examine some country reports in more detail.

3.2. Case and Country Reports

As mentioned earlier, there are only a few articles that discuss the reception of Lesson Study in relation to educational borrowing. In this section, I explore reports and analyses from the Philippines, Indonesia and South Africa.

In the case of the Philippines' setting, Ebaeguín and Stephens (2013) argue that the challenge in the adaptation of Lesson Study is caused by the different mentalities between the Philippines and Japan. At the beginning of their discussion, the authors define Lesson Study as "a school-based collaborative professional development activity" (ibid.: 1) with a citation from U.S. authors (Stiegler/ Hiebert 1999). Ebaeguín and Stephens also state that Lesson Study is expected to provide "incremental but continuous improvement in teachers' teaching capacity" (Ebaeguín/ Stephens 2013: 1), by citing further U.S. discussants. In relation to this understanding, the authors recognize specific difficulties to implement Lesson Study in the Philippines. Nevertheless, the nature of Lesson Study is then identified with a working cycle of so-called "Plan-Do-See" to realize a long-term professional development and a collaborative activity (ibid.: 4ff.), which is familiar in English-speaking literatures. Since this cycle is well established in the international discourse, the implementation of Lesson Study would be normatively evaluated regarding to how far each step of this cycle was realized. Therefore, there would remain only a small space to discuss why the adaptation succeeds or fails. In this case, the different national culture of the Philippines and Japan is pointed out as a determinant factor of the adaptation according to Hofstede's dimensions of culture. Based on the national culture, possible strategies to implement Lesson Study are suggested.

Although an interest in improving students' performance is marked just in the first lines of the article (ibid.: 1), the authors don't examine, for example, students' performance or specific challenges in lessons and schools in the Philippines. Instead, the international performance assessment is cited to show good results of Japanese students. It stays still unclear why and how Lesson Study can contribute to the topic, but it seems to be a proper way to improve students' performance. This discourse structure suggests an understanding of an almost package transfer of a solid practice, which is based on a normative sight into *the* Lesson Study from Japan, although the authors examine different cultural dimensions between the Philippines (borrowing subject) and Japan (origin). Despite this incompatible attitude, Lesson Study is revealed as an adaptive tool for an educational reform.

A similar structure can be observed in the article from Indonesia as well (Suratno/ Kuno 2013). While the aim of the project is clearly expressed as "building the framework of professional learning community" in the case school (ibid.: 1), the reason why the community must be built and the case-original understanding of the professional learning community were not mentioned. The motivation to conduct Lesson Study was described in terms from the international discourse (e.g. "leadership") or the development aid (e.g. JICA's terminology). On the contrary, the working process along the so-called Lesson Study cycle (Plan-Do-See) is reported in more detail. These also suggest the existence of some package character of Lesson Study.

In the article about a South African case, challenges at the starting point are clearly expressed. Many teachers "had inadequate knowledge, skills and competences" and "relied on teacher talk and rote memory as the predominant mode of teaching and learning" (Ono/ Ferreira 2010: 65). The lack of the adequate teacher training is also criticized. To solve this serious situation especially in mathematics, sciences and technology, Lesson Study was introduced as a part of the JICA-project. This process is reported mainly as a political one between South Africa and Japan. Due to this argument, further motives of introducing Lesson Study were not examined. Lesson Study itself is defined as a possible practice to promote professional development in a

theoretical setting, but the causality between the problems and the solutions, of the contribution to the specific school situation in South Africa, is not explained. Instead of the introducing process, the conducted development of Lesson Study is reported in detail.

Based on the limited number and length of relevant articles, the analysis could only identify specific discourse patterns. In conclusion, educational borrowing of Lesson Study in developing countries will be characterized in the context of global education reforms.

4. Conclusion: Lesson Study in the Global Discourse and its Potentials for the Pedagogy of Diversity

Japanese Lesson Study spread abroad since the 1990s. This short essay explored the reception of Lesson Study as educational borrowing in developing countries. In this attempt, it is not easy to identify why Lesson Study must be just introduced to certain education reforms and to which problems it can contribute as solution. However, the aim of the introduction of Lesson Study is sharply expressed, for example, to foster professional development or to improve students' achievement.

It is remarkable that Lesson Study is seen as if it would be implemented as a “package” to achieve the reform goal. The clearly structured procedure of Lesson Study gives a normative understanding to the conducting process – the working cycle (Plan-Do-See) ought to be successfully completed as given. In relation to such normativity, it is also interesting that many of goal-relevant vocabularies such as learner-centered approach or leadership are taken from the international trend of educational reforms⁽³⁾. These terms and discourses were developed and sought especially since the 1990s in the context of Education for All, ESD or the key competency by OECD. Furthermore, the discourses were majorly cited and taken over from the U.S. perspectives, while Japanese Lesson Study is still recognized as the prototype. Lesson Study is thus introduced as a practical tool to achieve the given goal in the global trend. For this solid normativity in its implementation, it is hardly possible for Lesson Study to offer local practices some alternatives of the education knowledge in the global, “West”-oriented discourse.

In borrowing countries, the diversity of ethnic, language and religious constellation is often challenging for the formal education, which has been established in the foundation of modern nation states as culturally homogeneous “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983). Often, this historical and societal fundament does not correspond to borrowing countries. The universal validity of Japanese Lesson Study should be therefore questioned in different cultural settings. Indeed, to promote the pedagogy of diversity in borrowing countries, there could be a chance to learn from the history of Lesson Study. As mentioned in the section 2, during the Taishô New Education Movement, teachers' individual practice and narratives became a critical approach to individually reflect school and lesson practice and to foster individual students (cf. Sato 1998; Asai 2016). This historically established core of Lesson Study is overlooked in the discourse of Lesson Study as development measures. Freed from the normative implementation of Lesson Study in the global educational reform, it would actually enable individual borrowing practices to fit into the local context as to the cultural diversity.

Notes

- (1) To simplify the discussion, this essay adapts the singular notion of Lesson Study as a predominant term. Nevertheless, the author respects that different Lesson Studies are practiced based on different interests in different settings.
- (2) Schools for the Learning Community should also be pointed out as a further powerful direction of Lesson Study

(cf. Sato 2019). The direction contains affective reflection on teaching activity during the Taishô New Education Movement in the 1910s-20s, mainly in Asian countries. This article concentrates on Lesson Study in the development assistance.

- (3) A similar description of the goals has been also repeatedly observed in my attendances at the international annual conference of the World Association of Lesson Studies (WALS) for the last three years. While the goals of reform through introducing or improving Lesson Study were clearly formulated, each starting situation of a school problem was discussed only a little. In addition, a proper implementation of Lesson Study was proven to reach the given goal.

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