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## When travelling ideas meet local contexts Norwegian teachers trying out ‘lesson study’

### ► About the author ► Key words

In the fields of school reform and teacher development, certain ‘globally travelling ideas’ have become significant. This article reports on a study of a small sample of Norwegian teachers trying out the Lesson Study (LS) idea that aimed to explore what happens when globally travelling reform ideas are enacted in local contexts. Specifically, the study considered the groups’ analyses of their jointly planned and video-taped research lessons. Our research question is: What do the teachers talk about when they are asked to collaborate in their analysis of their jointly planned research lesson; and what does this reveal about the pre-existing norms of collaboration? The themes the teachers are discussing, are: (I) pupils’ task completion, (II) pupils’ behaviour, (III) teachers’ performance and (IV) the pupils and they themselves as professionals. In this study, it became evident that the participants’ lack of experience in collaboration or in using the LS had an impact on the analysis of their research lessons. The results are viewed in the light of the mediating role that local cultures of schooling and professionalism cast on the enactment of travelling ideas; specifically on the forms of collaboration among teachers.

### Introduction

Lesson Study (LS) has been implemented in several countries in various parts of the world as an approach to support teachers’ professional development and thereby improve pupils’ learning outcomes (Lewis, 2000; Lee, 2008; Murata, 2010). It is not a new phenomenon that educators are interested in borrowing ideas that they think may improve their own education system (Phillips, 2005). Through international agreements (such as the Bologna process) and international tests (e.g., PISA) different national school systems are coordinated and compared. Teaching in a globalized world leads to an on-going discussion of the different school systems, teachers’ professional development and teaching in various countries.

Global ideas which travel are transforming national education systems around the world (Seddon, Ozga & Levin, 2013) as new frameworks are being introduced into local schools that have implications for school owners (local and national state organisations as well as private providers), school leaders and teachers. However, these frequent education reforms do not necessarily change what happens in the classroom; teaching practice may have become entrenched in existing cultural norms of teaching and the ideals of teacher professionalism (Seddon et al., 2013). The neo-liberal tradition of importing standardised educational programmes or models are critiqued by many, as they try to improve teaching standards with little or no attention to the home context (Phillips and Ochs, 2003; Murata, 2010; Trippestad, 2016).

LS provides teachers with the opportunity to collaborate in planning a research lesson designed to reach a specific educational goal. One of the teachers implements the teaching session, the others collect data about different aspects of the lesson by observation and filming. After the lesson implementation, the teachers analyse the lesson and videotapes to determine whether the goal has been achieved and discuss further issues related to the teaching that had taken place (Lewis, 2002). Saito and Atencio (2013) emphasize that the LS model involves intensive dissection of the jointly planned lesson. This implies that teacher collaboration is strongly linked to the effective result of using LS (Lewis, 2000; Easton 2009; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007).

The aim of this article is to contribute to the discussion on the consequences of transforming a global educational idea into a local Norwegian context. The article considers the challenges related to collaborative learning that were encountered when a sample of Norwegian teachers tried out the LS approach. More specifically, the research question was: What do the teachers talk about when they are asked to collaborate in their analysis of their jointly planned research lesson; and what does this reveal about the pre-existing norms of collaboration?

## **The Lesson Study model**

LS is a globally significant professional development model, the aim of which is to improve teaching practice (Cerbin & Kopp, 2006). LS is a research-based model that centres on a research lesson as a means for groups of teachers to study questions concerning their own teaching (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998). The teachers design the lesson as a group, and one of them teaches it. Those who do not teach the lesson gather observational data. Then the teachers interpret the data in order to enhance learning. The LS is about both improving the planning prior to a lesson, and building strategies for instruction to improve pupils' learning (Lewis, Perry & Hurd, 2004).

### **LS: A worldwide model**

LS originated in Japan, has been practised since the 19th century and is now an accepted part of teachers' everyday practice there (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Lewis, 2000; Fernandez, 2002; Murata, 2010). Stigler and Hiebert (1999) brought LS to the attention of a broader audience with their book *The Teaching Gap*. Since then, LS has spread to the USA (Fernandez, Cannon & Chokshi, 2003; Lewis, Perry & Hurd, 2004; Cerbin & Kopp, 2006; Perry & Lewis, 2008; Parks, 2009; Murata, 2010), Israel (Robinson & Leikin, 2012), other Asian countries (Saito, Harun, Kuboki & Tachibana, 2006; Lee, 2008), South-Africa (Ono & Ferreira, 2010) and to Australia (Sam, White & Mon, 2005). There is an increasing use of LS as well as research on LS in many European countries (Davis & Dunnill, 2008; Dudley, 2013; Hallås & Grimsæth, 2016).

Internationally, most of the research to date has concentrated on LS as a model for improving pupils' learning in various subjects. In particular, many researchers have focused on mathematics teaching and learning (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Sam, White & Mon, 2005; Saito et al., 2006; Parks, 2009; Ono & Ferreira, 2010; Gunnarsdóttir & Pálsdóttir, 2016). In the Nordic countries, we register an increased use of LS in teaching practice as part of teacher education (Gunnarsdóttir & Pálsdóttir, 2016; Juhler & Håland, 2016; Larssen & Drew, 2016).

## **Borrowing policies, models or tools: reflection and collaboration in cultural contexts**

Critical reflection on one's own knowledge and practice will always be essential whatever the culture (Schön, 1983), and may therefore be understood as a universal attribute of professional learning. Eraut (1994) emphasizes the fact that in professional life there is limited time for deliberation, and consequently a strong tendency to perpetuate an already established mindset. To overcome this tendency, he maintains that it is essential to consult or involve others. This implies collaboration.

In addition, according to Murata (2010), it is more effective to study and develop one's own practice as a basis for professional development, than to adopt new pedagogical ideas as a starting point. Nevertheless, global pedagogical ideas are transforming national education systems (Seddon, Ozga & Levin, 2013), and there are many educational ideas moving from country to country; however, these do not always gain a foothold in the new culture. An educational idea is always born and nurtured in a specific context; the degree to which 'borrowed' or 'travelling' ideas are adopted or adapted in a country will therefore depend on that country's contextual and cultural factors (Phillips & Ochs, 2003). In Norway, the LS model has been recommended as one of several in the development of the lower secondary school. This national priority is commissioned by The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2014).

Since the LS model was developed in Japan, it is based upon the cultures of schoolwork and teacher professionalism that have evolved there. According to Lewis and Tsuchida (1998), collaboration is common practice for Japanese teachers. When borrowing a model, as LS, it is essential that the local school cultures concerning the quality in collaboration should be taken into consideration (Grimsæth & Hallås, 2015; Grimsæth, Hallås & Holthe, 2016).

### **LS and teacher collaboration in different contexts**

International research on LS shows that the way teachers collaborate and how they talk is crucial for the LS outcomes (Perry & Lewis, 2008; Dudley, 2013). Both Murata (2010) and Kullberg (2016) claim that understanding will be formed and can be changed through dialogue, and changes in teaching practice can be facilitated through analysing performed practice. Fernández (2010) maintains that one of the important topics in professional development in the LS model is the fact that active learning among teachers involves, among other things, a meaningful discussion. The maintenance of a continuous reflection process is an important aspect in professional development (Rønnestad, 2008).

Fernandez (2002) found in her LS research in the USA that participants were not able "to move beyond the simply looking at their teaching to seeing what is of value in this teaching to them as learners" (p. 400). Another issue was raised by Junge (2012), whose study revealed that teachers' talk had certain characteristics that limited their learning potential; what they talked about was what happened in class and it was more descriptive than explorative. Similarly, Parks (2009) concluded that talking about a pedagogical issue does not necessarily involve analysis or critique of one's own practice since collaborative groups can resist a deeper analysis and discourse about what is going on; thereby excluding innovation.

Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi (2003) emphasize that, if teachers are to benefit from LS, they first "need to learn how to apply critical lenses to their examination of lessons" (p. 171). In order to learn this, the LS model includes teacher discussions after the research lesson to examine the evidence related to the learning goals and to reflect on how the lesson was executed (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Dudley, 2014).

Another issue here is the fact that the LS model requires the teachers to develop a research-oriented approach and an inquisitive attitude (Dudley, 2014). Robinson and Leikin (2012) argue that collaborative 'noticing' and awareness, together with brainstorming, are core mechanisms for teacher's positive change of attitude. In her research on the introduction of LS in the USA, Fernandez (2002) found that American teachers had to "overcome the fear of making one's teaching public" (p. 398), and they needed the necessary skills to "adopt a research stance" (p. 400) so they would be able to pose "rich, researchable questions", "specify the type of evidence to be collected" and "interpret and generalize results" (p. 400). Explorative discussions, reflection, interpretation and professional correctives formulated in a supportive way may culminate in a decision regarding the quality of the outcome. Existing research suggests, therefore, that there is a need to examine in what respects and how collaboration using LS can make a difference (Fernandez, Cannon, & Chokshi, 2003; Munthe & Postholm, 2012). Robinson and Leikin (2012) stress that the implementation of LS in various countries requires further examination, especially with regard to how the norms and cultures in teachers' communities of practice influence the outcome of LS.

## Teacher collaboration in Norway

Collaboration in Norwegian schools takes quite a different form from that found in Japanese schools. It is generally a matter of coordination, planning and practical arrangements (Raaen & Aamodt, 2010; Munthe, Bjuland & Helgevold, 2016). According to Vibe, Aamodt and Carlsten (2009), the collegial dialogue that concentrates on professional correctives which could improve teaching quality is not well-developed in Norway. They also found that the school culture in Norway did not emphasize teachers exchanging feedback, and that there was limited focus on the quality of the teaching. During the last decade, the school authorities have increasingly maintained that schools are "knowledge organisations" and that collaboration is strongly linked to the school as "a learning organisation" (Education- and Research Ministry, 2004). In 2014 The Ministry of Education and Research in Norway (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2014) announced a "competence development" initiative for secondary school teachers; the aim is to develop teaching and collaboration skills (and thereby general knowledge, attitudes, and learning for pupils). Therefore, developing the teachers' collaboration skills is now an ongoing project in all primary and secondary schools in Norway.

However, it is not easy to move from a pattern of individual, often isolated, practice to one of collaborative practice. This process requires an open, supportive form of communication (Argyris, 1990). It involves a shift in the participants' attitudes and modes of communication and collaboration to incorporate critical thinking and reflection, and this process is very complex and challenging (Argyris, 1990). This process of change may take years in Norway, as it has elsewhere (Schön, 1983; Hargreaves, 1996; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Ono & Ferreira, 2010).

The norms of collaboration among Norwegian teachers may indicate the norms of habitual/ cultural ways of speaking, thinking and teaching in Norwegian schools or, in other words, the Norwegian school culture. In this article we focus on what happens when the travelling global model LS meets a Norwegian local context. How the teachers collaborate is shaped by their participation in Norwegian school culture, but here we choose to discuss the influence of their methods of collaboration, as it is an important part of LS.

The limited research available on collaboration in Norwegian schools indicates that the idea of collaboration is circulating at all levels in the education system, although the issue of implementation remains a hurdle. We know little about how the quality in collaboration influences the results in teachers' practice. LS, as a model based on collaboration to improve both teaching and learning, may be of value to investigations conducted in Norway, as long as studies show that it has been an expedient model in different cultures and school systems. This study was designed to explore this issue.

## Methodology and design

### Research question

Our guiding research question was:

What do the teachers talk about when they are asked to collaborate in the analysis of their jointly planned research lesson; and what does this reveal about the pre-existing norms of collaboration?

### Participants

The participants in this study were teachers (N=14) at four different elementary/primary schools, located in two municipalities in western Norway. The schools have been called Veland, Oren, Skagen and Myren. There were five teacher groups, each consisting of 2-4 teachers representing different grades; the participants at Myren school were divided into two groups (Myren1 and Myren2). Table 1 provides an overview of the groups.

**Table 1: Participating teachers from four schools**

Schools (and municipality)	Teachers	Gender	Grade taught
Veland (municipality1)	Rikke	F	First grade
	Brit	F	
Oren (municipality2)	Anne	F	Composite classes: Fifth and sixth grades
	Tom	M	
Skagen (municipality2)	Mona	F	Composite classes: Sixth and seventh grades
	Mia	F	
	Jens	M	
Myren1(municipality2)	June	F	Fifth grade
	Dina	F	
	Tora	F	
Myren2(municipality2)	Eva	F	Composite classes: Third and fourth grades
	Hanna	F	
	Ina	F	
	Maja	F	

### Recruitment of participants

There was a difference in the way the four schools were recruited.

Municipality 1: Veland: The teachers themselves contacted the researchers in October 2011 expressing a desire to develop their professionalism as educators and their teaching practices. The researchers accepted the invitation, visited the school, signed a research agreement regarding confidentiality (incorporating appropriate ethical guidelines) and introduced them to the LS model.

Municipality 2: Oren, Skagen and Myren (1 and 2): The school authorities and the school leaders had already established contact with one of the researchers, who advised them of the opportunity for further collaboration in September 2012. The researcher was then invited to a meeting at

which she introduced the LS model to the school leaders. After this first meeting, the three school leaders and the teachers agreed to participate in the research project, signing the same research agreement as Veland and following the same ethical guidelines.

From this point onward, all of the participating schools followed the same procedure.

### Data collection with video-recordings and field notes.

Before starting data collection, an introductory session was held for each group in which the participants were introduced to methods for developing their own teaching practice through collaboration. The groups were also introduced to LS as a model for developing collaboration and teacher practice. General theory and practical examples about LS were presented and discussed. After the introduction, the groups all decided to develop an intervention using LS.

Each teacher group identified a problem that they had experienced in their teaching practice that would be the focal point for their research lesson, as shown in table 2:

**Table 2: The teacher groups' own chosen topic for their research lesson**

Veland:	How to get pupils through the locker rooms and into the classroom more quickly.
Oren:	How to improve pupils' efficiency and behaviour in the transition between the locker room and classroom and between the learning activities.
Skagen:	How to get the pupils to understand and work with the model of "assessment for learning".
Myren 1:	How to motivate a pupil with excellent capabilities to work harder.
Myren 2:	How to improve pupils' efficiency in the transition between learning activities.

The teacher groups' own chosen topic for their research lesson was developed to increase pupils' learning. Based on the topic for the research lesson, the teachers collectively made a detailed plan for a lesson and decided who was to be the observed teacher. Then the research lesson was implemented. Those not teaching, as well as the researchers, were present in the classroom; observing, making notes and filming the research lesson. When the teacher groups gathered to analyse their research lesson, we as researchers started the process of data collection for this study. We chose to collect our data using participant observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). We had participated in the implementation of LS using digital video, and therefore as researchers we continued as participant observers during the data collection phase. We were mostly listening to the teachers' analyses of their research lesson, though in those situations, we became aware that the teachers were touching upon some issues of relevance for our research; we challenged them to explore these issues.

## Data analysis

We chose to investigate what the teachers talked about when discussing their research lesson by analysing the teachers' talk in the analysis phase of the LS process. Digital video recordings were examined using a content analysis approach (Mason, 1996) to identify the themes the teachers talked about. In other words, our analytic focus was on the content of the interactions rather than analysing the discussions linguistically as interactional events. The filmed material from the lesson-analysis sessions was first transcribed by the two researchers together, sitting by the same computer, looking at and listening to the recorded data. After the transcription, the schools and teachers were anonymized. The data analysis process involved reading and rereading the transcripts for each teacher group in order to become familiar with the material and to obtain a first impression of the data. Independently, the researchers then noted keywords in the transcriptions from each teacher group. If there was a disagreement regarding a keyword, we reread our transcriptions, discussed our findings and either included or excluded the keyword. Based on keyword frequency, we identified the themes that seemed to preoccupy the teachers in their discussions. Thus, we developed themes and revised them repeatedly to ensure consistency. According to Hsieh & Shannon (2005), this conventional content analysis is used in studies aiming to describe and understand a phenomenon better.

In the next phase, the transcripts were scanned to identify representative quotations for the various themes. The quotations were then grouped according to theme (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The following themes were identified in the teachers' discussions: *the pupils' task completion, the pupils' behaviour, the teacher's performance, and what the teachers said about the pupils and about themselves as professionals*. In our concluding discussion, there was a dual focus on issues such as the appropriateness of the data categorization for highlighting the themes and the clarity of their expression.

Of course, the study's small sample involves limitations in terms of representativeness and generalizability. However, our purpose in conducting this study was to generate some critical insights into what happens when LS, as an example of a globally travelling 'good idea' (in teacher professional development), is taken up in a very different culture to the one in which it has developed historically. By focusing on the substance of the discussions between teachers in the collaborative

analysis phase of LS, we present a challenge to this advocacy. The potential contribution of this study is, therefore, not only to make some cautionary observations about what has been referred to as “travelling ideas” (Seddon, Ozga & Levin, 2013) and the assumption that all good ideas travel in the same way but to suggest how collaboration as an aspect of teacher professionalism is significant and can be developed.

## Findings

The study findings are based on the teachers’ analysis phase of their own research lesson. The findings are the results of our research question, which was: What do the teachers talk about when they are asked to collaborate in the analysis of their jointly planned research lesson; and what does this reveal about the pre-existing norms for collaboration? We were interested in what the teachers talked about when they were dissecting their lessons because it might reveal something about which themes they chose and which they overlooked. These themes will also reveal the national and local culture with regard to what teachers prefer to discuss, or consider appropriate topics for discussion, and thereby their way of collaboration.

In the following, we first present our findings and then analyse and discuss these in the Discussion section.

## Themes

Our qualitative content analysis of each teacher group’s discussion about their own research lessons resulted in the identification of four themes related to what preoccupied the teachers. We present the four themes by giving examples of statements from the participating teachers. The quotes are taken out of context, but are representative for the various themes.

### Theme1: Pupils’ task completion

The teacher groups talked mostly about whether the pupils completed the assigned tasks. The teachers’ focus was on doing, not necessarily learning. For example, the following exchange took place in the session at Myren1:

June: He did precisely what he was supposed to do. It went very well.

Dina: He worked for 30 minutes.

Tora: That is impressive. It is a long time since I have seen that.

The following is another statement on what the pupils are doing or not doing from the Myren2 group:

Eva: He did not read.

This exchange took place between two of the teachers from the Myren2 group:

Ina: I see they are doing (the tasks) as they are told.

Eva: And they are extremely good at listening (what they were supposed to do).

The final example addresses the problem that the pupils did not work efficiently:

Rikke (Veland): They spent a lot of time.

The teachers described what the pupils were doing and they seemed satisfied with the pupils’ completion of their tasks. Other than the issue of the time pupils took to complete the tasks, there was no discussion on learning. However, it may be difficult to judge precisely what pupils have learnt before they have been assessed. One interpretation of this is that a form of informal assessment was perhaps ongoing as the teachers had been present in the lesson. They seemed

to presume that learning had taken place if the students completed the task; for example, in one of the lessons, the pupils were to draw a smiley-face when they had read and understood a sentence. However, the teachers had no evidence that the pupils had actually understood and were able to use the new expressions. It may indicate that the teachers believed fulfilling the assigned tasks always involved learning.

## **Theme 2: Pupils' behaviour**

As in the previous theme, the teachers talked about what the pupils were doing, but in this case the topic was unacceptable behaviour. When the pupils were not concentrating on completing their work, but rather chatting and wandering around, it can easily be interpreted as ignoring the teachers' plan for the lesson. The following quotes illustrate this theme.

The first example is an exchange:

Mona (Skagen): The pupils have difficulties in cooperation. They cannot concentrate either.

Jens (Skagen): They never listen.

The second is a statement:

Brit (Veland): They are standing in the corridor chatting, they will not move on into the classroom.

In the course of their analyses, the teachers often referred to undesirable behaviour that had happened in other lessons, as the following examples illustrate:

June (Myren1): Usually, he spends a lot of time sharpening his pencil and wandering around.

Eva (Myren2): Usually they come up to me while I am introducing what they are supposed to start working on. They interrupt me to ask if they can have something to drink, or they need to go to the loo and so on.

On the other hand, the teachers also observed and commented when the pupils had improved their behaviour, as the following extract from Myren2 reveals:

Hanna: There was a difference today; she was quiet and positive (when) entering the classroom.

A second quote from Myren2 also reports that the pupils behaved better in the LS lesson:

Eva: The pupils are very good when changing from one workstation to another. They do not delay, they move on.

The teachers seemed extremely concerned about the issue of how to achieve a quiet lesson - which they considered an indication that the pupils are engaged in completing the assigned tasks. In addition to commenting on the situation they were observing, they referred to past situations to highlight the fact that improved pupil behaviour is the key to a good lesson.

## **Theme 3: Teacher performance**

The teachers who taught the research lessons commented in their analyses on their teaching performance in the research lesson. The performing teachers could say something positive about themselves as teachers, as the following examples illustrate:

Anne (Oren): I succeeded in giving clear messages. The pupils listened to me; it is not always I see that they are looking at me.



And, the teachers admitted there may be something that needs to change, as this example illustrates:

Mona (Skagen): Maybe I had too much information in a short time.

Apparently, they sometimes had an awakening when observing themselves as they perform a lesson, but nothing about consequences:

Rikke (Veland): Usually we do not really see ourselves; we walk around with a blinkered attitude.

The following are some typical observers' comments (always positive) on a colleague's performance during the lesson:

Mia (Skagen): Good, you explained the criteria.

Tom (Oren): An informative and ok lesson.

Rikke (Veland): Your lesson was good.

Only one of the teachers offered a comment in response to a challenge from one of the researchers about giving advice on possible improvements to a colleague:

Jens (Skagen): If I should give feedback to a colleague, I wouldn't say it was bad, I say "you were good".

In our results, we did not find that the teachers were critical of the content chosen for the lesson (Table 2) or the teacher's performance, nor did we find that they suggested any improvements. When analysing the way the research lesson had been implemented in the classroom, the teachers no longer spoke of "we" as owners of the plan, but of "you", referring to the performing teacher. This may indicate that they looked upon the performing teacher as the one responsible for the lesson and the plan being carried out. However, the most essential feature of LS is that the teachers as a group collaborate on the plan, so they are all responsible for the lesson.

#### **Theme 4: About pupils and about themselves as professionals**

In this section, some examples are provided of teachers' communication about their pupils and about themselves as professionals. The teachers' statements varied depending on whom they were talking about, as the following discussion extracts indicate.

##### ***About pupils:***

The following statements are related to pupils' competence or characteristics.

Mia (Skagen): They think they know it. They cannot explain it.

Anne (Oren): The pupils have a problem with cooperation; they have a problem with concentrating.

Rikke (Veland): None of them has cleared up. I think it has to do with their personalities.

Brit (Veland): They are not at all effective.

Based on what the teachers said, it is possible to interpret their statements about the pupils in a negative way. This happened when the pupils did not complete or manage the tasks.

##### ***About themselves as professionals:***

When the teachers were analysing their research lesson, their statements can be interpreted as indicating that they talked about themselves in a positive way. Some of them express how they feel in general as a performing teacher:

Rikke (Veland): I feel comfortable in my position as a teacher.

June (Myren 1): I always ensure peace and order in the classroom.

Even when we as researchers sometimes asked the teachers to add something more or to offer ideas about possible improvements, there were no answers. The following comment could have been the beginning of a deeper analysis of themselves as professionals, but it stops:

Brit (Veland): Looking at myself performing the lesson, makes me more aware of myself.  
Researcher 1: How?

Brit (Veland): ? (No answer)

The following is another example:

Jens (Skagen): We see ourselves more clearly on film. Researcher 1: What can that lead to?

Jens (Skagen): Do you mean I should think about that? (He says no more.)

Based on these quotes, it seemed obvious that something should have been done differently. However, they did not comment on this immediately afterwards.

Some went on to talk about better performance on an earlier occasion, or what they did elsewhere, here is an example:

Tora (Myren1): In 7th grade, I used to do it so - I don't understand why I didn't do that here.

In the analysis process in LS, the teachers should be able to reflect upon the planning, implementation and evaluation of their lesson. The transcript analysis revealed that what the teachers said about themselves was positive, without any suggestions for the improvement of their own professional role. However, the research says nothing about whether the teachers improved their practice.

## Discussion

This article investigates what five teacher groups from four Norwegian schools talked about when they were collaborating in their analysis of their jointly planned research lesson.

In the past few decades, Norwegian teachers have experienced many reforms. In recent years, Norwegian teachers have been working to cultivate good behaviour in classrooms and to promote pupils' concentration on the tasks to be done (Education and Research Ministry, 2004). In relation to the first two themes in our analysis, *pupil tasks completions and pupil behaviour*, the teachers talked about what the pupils did or did not do. The teachers' research questions can be linked to the concept of class management; get students to concentrate on schoolwork, not wasting valuable time. The participating teachers reflected very little on the impact their plan and teaching had on the pupils' learning. The main claim of LS as an approach is that it can develop teaching competence and thereby enhance pupils' learning. It seems as if the teachers were most concerned about the pupils fulfilling their tasks, and they did not seem to see any link between this and the lesson plan or how the plan was actually implemented. Pupils' activities are of considerable significance. But, as Lewis (2002) stresses, it is most important that pupils' tasks are relevant for the learning goal. According to Phillips and Ochs (2003), the degree to which a 'travelling idea' is adopted will depend on the contextual factors. The teacher groups participating in our study chose their specific goal for their research lesson in accordance with their needs in their own local context, which was to cultivate good behaviour and thereby get the pupils to complete their tasks. There is an emerging consensus that the best learning opportunities are teacher driven, related to their own practice and reflection (Saito & Atensio, 2013). It seems as if the teachers in our study have to cultivate the way they perform the latter; that is, being more reflective.

The third analytic theme was *teacher performance*. When talking about themselves as performers in the classroom, the teachers appeared to be self-confident. A few times, they excused themselves and explained how well they had done it on other occasions, instead of discussing the lesson. When giving feedback to the colleague who had carried out the research lesson, they offered encouraging but general comments such as “you were good”. They did not make any suggestions regarding how to improve teaching quality. This lack of reflection on one’s own and one’s colleagues’ lessons appears to be in tacit agreement, which defines criticism as unacceptable. Teachers observing a video of a lesson in which they were performing are generally more emotionally involved than other teachers observing the same lesson (Kleinknecht & Schneider, 2013). Saito and Atencio (2013) stressed that LS may challenge the teachers’ relations and identities. Identities are formed by culture, shaping minds that provide us with a toolkit by which we construct our conceptions of ourselves (Bruner, 1996). However, as Perry and Lewis (2008) pointed out after pioneering LS in the USA, teachers need to establish a professional culture that can address conflicting ideas. The ability to offer constructive comments is an important skill.

Munthe and Postholm (2012) say that what Norwegian teachers need most is time in school to think and reflect on their own practices; they need time to be challenged and to investigate their own teaching practices. The LS model, based as it is on participation and collective learning, is the antithesis of approaches that support the individual teacher operating in the private classroom. However, it takes time to develop an attitude of shared and collective responsibility for teacher professionalism (Creemers, Kyriakides & Antoniou, 2013). In addition, as Eraut (1994) emphasizes, in professional life there is limited time for deliberation and therefore a tendency to perpetuate an already established mindset. Perry and Lewis (2008) report that their case work on LS in a US school district demonstrated that change takes time; in the 7th year of the project the teachers were still developing their LS skills. The educational discourse and pedagogical culture has a great impact on whether or not the outcome is successful and the idea adopted (Schön, 1983). Schön (1983) emphasizes that critical reflection is essential, whatever the culture, to develop professional practice.

According to Saito and Atencio (2013), we must pay much more attention to issues such as social interactions and group dynamics when the LS model is introduced to teachers in a new and distinct culture. Changes in the social structure may include changes in social relations that affect individuals (Ellis, McNicholl, Blake & McNally, 2014). What is required for this model to succeed is collaborative work in trusting environments which allow teachers to take risks, and most importantly, to address and discuss dilemmas in their own practice (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). The LS model may provide the necessary opportunity to expand teachers’ reflective and meta-cognitive skills in order to investigate their own lessons and pupils’ learning. LS is a model that may contribute to developing teachers’ skills in posing rich, researchable questions; and to facilitating their reflections on how lessons have been executed (Fernandez, 2002; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998). In collaboration, the dialogue partners’ role is to listen and support professional development (Smith, 2010). But on the evidence of our research in these Norwegian schools, this potential is not yet being realized, maybe because the teachers lack experience in using the LS model.

The fourth theme is about what the teachers said *about the pupils and themselves as professionals*. If the pupils did not do their tasks or did not behave well, the teachers’ statements can be interpreted as referring to the pupils in a negative way or assigning them negative attributes. They easily saw what the pupils were lacking, but they did not combine the pupils’ results with their own practices. The teacher groups lacked the ability to reflect upon the opportunities they saw for the pupils’ progress (and thereby for their own teaching). Their comments were descriptive, not explorative. Lack of skill in constructive collaboration may also have influenced the way in which the teachers in our study talked about themselves as professionals: in a positive way, without any weaknesses or suggestions for professional development. The study findings may indicate that reflection through collaboration in the LS process can be decisive for the outcome of the LS process. Hargreaves (1996) stressed that collaboration is essential for reflection and for incorporating divergent views in the study of one’s own practice. Lee (2008) identified a pitfall in the LS model: teachers have not necessarily developed the requisite skill in giving constructive criticism in the feedback on an observed lesson. In addition, as Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi (2003) stress, teachers need to learn to apply critical lenses when examining their research lesson. At the same time, they should be looking for what is of value in the teaching for them as learners (Fernandez, 2002).

Our study indicates that a meta-perspective; that is, seeing how collaboration, communication and reflection influence the whole, was never taken into consideration when the teachers talked about the pupils or themselves as professionals. The teachers were influenced by a pre-existing cultural setting which had an impact on what they talked about and how (Bruner, 1996). They need time to develop the ability to reflect critically on the research lessons, to share their personal reflections, to reach a consensus based on shared reflections, and to select and develop concrete alternatives. Argyris (1990) and Schön (1983) emphasize that collective reflection is essential for the development of professional practice, and Fullan (2010) concretizes this in a premise: Teachers have to discuss and reflect on the issue; i.e. what is good teaching practice.

The content of the LS conversations might also reflect the topics the teachers chose for their research lesson. The topics included the theme 'class leading' which pointed to the teachers themselves, not only on how the pupils behaved. Another influence may be the newness of the LS. Perhaps they were not necessarily trained in collaborating in this way, for example observing colleagues at work. Changing collaboration attitudes take time.

## Conclusion

In critically examining what happens when a globally travelling 'good idea' is taken up in a new cultural context, this article has reported on a study of what happened when some Norwegian teachers tried out the LS idea. We have suggested that the underlying cultural differences in teacher professionalism surrounding the concept of collaboration are significant and merit much further consideration. It was not only a question of the teachers' relative unfamiliarity with the technical process of the LS model. This study indicates that a pre-existing collaborative school culture has consequences for the outcome of the LS. In the long run, the LS model may make an important contribution to the development of professional collaboration among Norwegian teachers, for example using LS in all teacher training programmes. With regard to the implementation of LS as a model, the typical pattern for collaboration pre-existing in the culture needs to be considered, as well as the time allocated for collaboration, or for improving collaboration.

LS is a powerful idea, the aim of which is to develop one's own teacher practice and thereby pupils' learning. But "travelling ideas" – good ideas imported from other cultures - will not necessarily lead immediately to good practice in another culture. In this article we have highlighted that the concept of collaboration as part of the LS-model is of crucial importance for the direction and quality of professional development and teacher professionalism, as well as the longer timescales needed for genuine change in collaboration in practices to emerge.

## Human subjects Approval Statement

The Data Protection Office for Research in Norway was contacted; no sensitive personal data was collected.

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#### Key words

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