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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Teachers' Perception of Professional Development through Lesson Study to Implement the Vietnamese General Education Program 2028

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**| ABSTRACT**

Professional development through lesson study is a teacher training model that is widely applied around the world. This exploratory research was conducted to understand teachers' perceptions of professional development through lesson study to implement the general education program 2018 at lower secondary schools in Thai Nguyen City, a northern city in Vietnam. 90 English teachers from 37 lower secondary schools in Thai Nguyen City were chosen as the subjects of this study. Questionnaires and interviews were employed as the two data collection instruments to collect information about teachers' perceptions of professional development through lesson study. The data collected was analyzed quantitatively using Microsoft Excel to calculate the percentages and qualitatively using the conceptual content analysis method, then the data was familiarized, coded and analyzed. The research findings reveal that while teachers recognize the benefits of lesson study for professional development, its implementation at Thai Nguyen lower secondary schools has been limited in both frequency and attention. Most teachers agreed that lesson study significantly improves lesson planning quality and enhances teachers' knowledge, which in turn positively impacts students' achievement. These findings were consistent across both the online questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. However, challenges were also identified, including a lack of understanding of the lesson study process due to time constraints and limited knowledge. Additionally, many teachers prefer working in isolation, making it difficult to organize collaborative groups. These challenges were echoed in both the quantitative and qualitative data, highlighting key areas for improvement in fostering a more collaborative and supportive professional development environment for teachers in Thai Nguyen City.

**| KEYWORDS**

Professional development, lesson study, teachers' perceptions

**| ARTICLE INFORMATION**

**RECEIVED:** 18 November 2024

**PUBLISHED:** 30 November 2024

**DOI:** 10.32996/jeltal.2024.6.4.19

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### 1. Introduction

Professional Development (PD) in education refers to various activities designed to enhance the skills, knowledge, and effectiveness of educators. Education is an ongoing process, and PD helps teachers stay current, improve their abilities, and feel more fulfilled in their roles. For school administrators, promoting PD is essential not only for achieving better student outcomes but also for supporting teachers' professional growth. In particular, English teachers must constantly work on improving their language and teaching skills.

According to Gartia and Sharma (2013), Continuing Professional Development (CPD) involves activities that meet teachers' needs, as well as broader school improvement and accreditation requirements. Well-designed CPD programs enable teachers to update their knowledge, enhance their teaching practices, and achieve higher standards in education (Pritchard & Marshall, 2002). CPD is vital for teacher success and ongoing development (The Bureau of International Cooperation, 2005).

In Vietnam, PD for English teachers is a major concern. The country has integrated lesson study into professional activities to improve lesson planning and teacher development. According to Official Dispatch 1315/BGDĐT-GDTH (2020), professional development through lesson study includes creating illustrative lessons, conducting teaching demonstrations, analyzing lessons, and applying the results to daily teaching.

The goal of the General Education Program, as outlined in Official Dispatch 1315/BGDĐT-GDTH (2022), is to improve professional standards and foster a positive learning environment for primary school teachers.

Lesson Study is gaining attention as a model for teacher development, but research on its application in English language teaching at lower secondary schools is limited. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Lesson Study (LS) for PD in Thai Nguyen city, focusing on improving English teachers' skills and teaching practices.

PD encompasses activities that enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and teaching strategies, and lesson study serves as a key approach to achieving these goals. This study explores the effectiveness of PD through LS in English teaching at lower secondary schools in Thai Nguyen city, a topic that has not been widely researched.

## **2. Research methods**

The study has answered the following research questions:

- (i). What is the reality of professional development through lesson study at lower secondary schools in Thai Nguyen city?
- (ii). What are the teachers' perceptions on the benefits of lesson study in improving professional development in Thai Nguyen city?
- (iii). What are the teachers' perceptions of the challenges that teachers of English at Thai Nguyen city face in their professional development through lesson study?

Ninety English teachers from lower secondary schools in Thai Nguyen City participated in this study in the academic year 2023-2024. The participants included 6 male and 84 female teachers, aged between 24 and 55, with the majority having over 20 years of experience teaching English. The study used a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine teachers' perceptions of professional development (PD) through Lesson Study (LS) to implement the General Education Program 2018. The study adopted an action research design, following the cyclic process of Lesson Study adapted in the current study is described in Lesson Study: Facilitator Guide (Leong et al., 2021), representing an ongoing procedure consisting of multiple stages, encompassing: (1) Study and Plan, (2) Teach, Observe, and Debrief, (3) Revise and Reteach, (4) Reflect and Report. Initially, the current state of professional development and teaching practices was assessed through questionnaires to identify teachers' attitudes a perceptions on the benefits and challenges they faced in their professional development through Lesson Study.

To begin, the current situation of PD through LS in Thai Nguyen's lower secondary schools was examined using a questionnaire to identify the teachers' attitudes, benefits and challenges with the Lesson Study process. Teachers participated in collaborative activities where they planned lessons together, taught, observed each other's classes, and reflected on the outcomes. Afterward, they were invited to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the LS cycle and how it supported their professional development.

Questionnaires and interviews were used as the primary instrument to gather data about the teachers' perceptions, including their views on the benefits and challenges of PD through LS. The survey consisted of four sections: personal information, the current situation of PD through LS, teachers' perceptions of the benefits of LS, and teachers' perceptions of the challenges encountered in the LS process. A follow-up interview was conducted with a subset of 10 teachers to gain deeper insights into their experiences with LS. The questionnaires and interviews were analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns related to teacher collaboration, lesson planning, and reflective practices.

## **3. Results**

This section reported the results obtained from two data sources: an online web-based questionnaire in the form of Google Forms and a group focus interview.

The data collected from the online web-based questionnaires on teachers' perspectives on PD through LS to implement the general education program 2018 at Thai Nguyen lower secondary schools is discussed in detail within the following subsections: Realities, benefits and challenges of PD through LS.

### 3.1. The reality of PD through LS at lower secondary schools in Thai Nguyen city

Table 4.1 below shows the reality of PD through LS at lower secondary schools in Thai Nguyen city.

(SD, D, NT, A and SA stand for Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree)

The reality of PD through LS	SD 1	D 2	NT 3	A 4	SA 5
There are some teachers who are not really interested in PD through LS	5.6%	11.1%	28.8%	48.9%	5.6%
The number of times PD organized in the direction of LS are few.	4.4%	23.3%	17.9%	50%	4.4%

Table 4.1. The reality of professional development through lesson study

The survey of 90 English teachers in Thai Nguyen City revealed two main issues with professional development (PD) through Lesson Study (LS). First, many teachers showed a lack of interest, with 5.6% strongly disagreeing and 11.1% disagreeing that LS was engaging, although 48.9% agreed. Second, the frequency of LS-related PD activities was low, with half of the teachers (50%) agreeing that sessions were infrequent.

Feedback from teachers indicated that while LS was seen as important, its implementation was often limited. Teachers felt PD opportunities were scarce and lacked depth, often not addressing real classroom needs. Many teachers suggested more practical discussions and better resources to support teaching. Interview results showed mixed views, with some teachers calling for deeper and more systematic LS activities, while others appreciated peer observations and shared experiences. Despite positive perceptions, there was a clear need for more focused and consistent PD through LS to improve teaching practices.

### 3.2. The teachers' perceptions of the benefits of LS in improving the PD in Thai Nguyen city

Table 4.2 below shows the benefits of LS in improving the PD in Thai Nguyen city.

The benefits of LS in improving the PD in Thai Nguyen city	SD 1	D 2	NT 3	A 4	SA 5
8. Lesson study supports teachers in expanding their pedagogical skills.	4.4%	0%	3.3%	59%	33.3%
9. Lesson study supports teachers in expanding their content understanding.	3.3%	0%	2.2%	60%	34.5%
10. Lesson study enables teachers to share the experiences that they have during the lesson study process with the other members of the team.	2.2%	1.1%	2.2%	57.8%	36.7%
11. Lesson study helps teachers improve and hone their observational abilities.	2.2%	1.1%	4.4%	59%	33.3%
12. When one member of the team conducts a lesson, the other members watch to gather pertinent information for the session's analysis and development in lesson study.	2.2%	0%	6.7%	63.3%	27.8%
13. Lesson study helps educators build trusting relationships with one another.	2.2%	1.1%	4.4%	64.4%	27.9%
14. Lesson study leads to improve quality of lesson plans.	2.2%	0%	1.1%	63.4%	33.3%
15. Lesson study can break the culture of isolation by eliminating the feelings of loneliness experienced by teachers.	2.2%	0%	11.1%	62.3%	24.4%

<b>The benefits of LS in improving the PD in Thai Nguyen city</b>	SD 1	D 2	NT 3	A 4	SA 5
16. Teachers' knowledge improves after participating in professional development.	2.2	0%	0%	68.9%	28.9%
17. Teachers' knowledge improves after participating in improvements in pupils' achievement'.	2.2%	1.1%	1.1%	67.8%	27.8%
18. Teachers' attitudes and beliefs are changed thanks to the participation of professional development.	2.2%	0%	2.2%	62.3%	33.3%

*Table 4.2. The benefits of LS in improving the PD*

The survey of 90 English teachers in Thai Nguyen City revealed several key benefits of Lesson Study (LS) for professional development (PD). Most teachers (92.3%) agreed that LS enhanced their pedagogical skills, and 94.5% recognized its contribution to improving their understanding of the subject matter. LS was also seen as an effective tool for promoting collaboration and sharing teaching strategies (94.5%), enhancing observational skills (92.3%), and fostering positive relationships among educators (92.3%). Furthermore, 96.7% of teachers felt that LS improved lesson planning quality, while 95.6% noted a positive shift in their professional attitudes as a result of engaging in LS.

In interviews, teachers generally agreed on the benefits of LS, particularly in improving collaboration, teaching skills, and understanding students. S1A, S2A, and S3A highlighted the collaborative nature of LS, with S1A noting that LS allowed teachers to share views and build confidence, and S3A emphasizing its role in understanding teaching content and student characteristics. S4A recognized the PD benefits of LS, particularly with the 2018 education reforms, while S5A pointed out that some teachers didn't fully grasp the benefits, limiting its effectiveness.

In the second round of interviews, teachers further emphasized the collaborative nature of LS and its impact on teaching. S1B and S2B noted that LS fostered a deeper understanding and mutual learning, while S3B highlighted its alignment with the 2018 education reforms. S5B observed that LS particularly benefited younger teachers by improving their subject knowledge and teaching methods, serving as a key part of their self-improvement and professional development.

**3.3. The teachers' perceptions of the challenges that teachers of English at Thai Nguyen city face in their PD through LS.**

Table 4.3 below shows the challenges that teachers of English at Thai Nguyen city face in their PD through LS.

<b>The challenges that teachers of English at Thai Nguyen city face in their PD through LS.</b>	SD 1	D 2	NT 3	A 4	SA 5
19. Teachers who engage in lesson study believe they don't fully comprehend the lesson study process.	3.3%	23.3%	36.7%	30%	6.7%
20. Teachers are apprehensive about conducting public lessons because they have become accustomed to working in isolation and privately.	2.2%	27.8%	26.7%	41.1%	2.2%
21. There are time limits for teachers when implementing lesson study.	1.1%	12.2%	8.9%	72.2%	5.6%

*Table 4.3. The challenges of PD through LS.*

The survey of English teachers in Thai Nguyen City identified key challenges in professional development (PD) through Lesson Study (LS). Many teachers (36.7%) were unclear about the LS process, indicating a need for better guidance. Additionally, 41.1% felt uncomfortable with collaborative teaching, preferring individual work, and 72.2% cited time constraints as the biggest barrier to effective LS participation, highlighting the need for more dedicated time.

Interviews revealed further challenges. S1A and S5A emphasized the need for teachers to improve skills and technology use, while S2A and S4A pointed to logistical issues, superficial participation, and fear of peer criticism, especially among younger teachers. S3A noted a lack of deep understanding of LS and few demonstration lessons.

In the second round of interviews, teachers again highlighted the pressure to conform to teaching procedures and the time needed for LS. S1B and S4B mentioned the strain of peer evaluations, and S2B noted challenges like inadequate teaching

aids and large class sizes. S3B stressed the need to adapt to new curricula, and S5B identified scheduling conflicts between PD activities and teaching duties.

### 3.4. Suggestions for a solution by teachers

The researcher summarized teachers' suggestions to improve professional development (PD) through lesson study (LS). Teachers highlighted the need for more thematic workshops and seminars focused on practical teaching techniques, as well as opportunities to observe model lessons from experienced educators. They also emphasized the importance of continuous learning through PD sessions, collaborative exchanges, and access to educational resources to support their professional growth. Additionally, there was a call for specialized training in modern teaching methodologies, along with the availability of comprehensive teaching materials and adequate classroom resources. Teachers should be encouraged to engage in self-study, peer discussions, and research to improve their skills. Schools need to take an active role in planning, managing, and evaluating PD activities to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. Lastly, fostering a culture of continuous innovation and collaboration in PD will help teachers adapt to new challenges and enhance student learning.

## 4. Discussion

In Thai Nguyen city, the demographic profile of English teachers showed a predominantly female, older workforce with extensive educational backgrounds and teaching experience, contributing to a stable learning environment. However, professional development (PD) through lesson study (LS) faced challenges. Many teachers were not fully engaged in LS, and there was a perceived lack of opportunities for PD through LS. Open-ended survey responses highlighted issues such as limited opportunities, superficial implementation, inadequate resources, and the need for more practical approaches. Teachers expressed the need for more thematic workshops, model teaching sessions, and ongoing PD activities to improve the effectiveness of LS.

Interviews confirmed these concerns, noting that while LS offers benefits like enhanced collaboration and improved teaching skills, it requires refinement and deeper engagement. Teachers also faced challenges such as time constraints, unfamiliarity with the process, and discomfort with collaborative practices. To address these, targeted training, fostering a collaborative culture, and ensuring time for PD activities were seen as essential.

Comparison with similar studies in Vietnam and internationally showed common challenges, such as time limitations and logistical constraints. Teachers in both central Vietnam and Thai Nguyen expressed a preference for PD activities that are practical and focused on collaboration, such as observing peers and participating in teacher networks. Internationally, research from Japan and the U.S. echoed these benefits of LS but also highlighted similar barriers like time commitment and administrative support.

Overall, while teachers in Thai Nguyen recognize the benefits of LS for PD, they face challenges in its implementation, mirroring issues found in other regions. Addressing these challenges through tailored strategies could enhance the effectiveness of LS globally.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, this study was conducted with the aim of investigating teachers' perceptions of PD through LS to implement the general education program 2018 at Thai Nguyen lower secondary schools with the employment of two data collection instruments - an online web-based questionnaire and semi-structured group focus interview. The findings of this study have demonstrated that the current reality of professional development through lesson study in secondary schools in Thai Nguyen city has not received much attention from teachers and the frequency of the organization. PD through LS was quite few. Nearly all teachers agreed with the two statements the researcher made earlier about the situation.

Regarding teachers' perceptions on the benefits of LS in improving the PD in Thai Nguyen city, it could be clearly seen that all the statements that the researcher made in online web-based questionnaires were all agreed upon by the teachers. The two statements with the highest percentage are respectively "Lesson study leads to improved quality of lesson plans" and "Teachers' knowledge improves after participating in improvements in pupils' achievement". It coincided with most of the comments made during the face-to-face interview.

Regarding teachers' perceptions of the challenges that teachers of English at Thai Nguyen city face in their PD through LS, teachers did not clearly understand the teaching process due to a lack of knowledge due to time and teachers are still hesitant to organize groups because they like to work in isolation, which was also a challenge for teachers with a fairly high number of votes. Besides the results from the direct interview, the majority of teachers also responded about these challenges.

The study highlighted the need for both administrators and teachers to take proactive steps to enhance PDt through LS. By increasing the accessibility and frequency of sessions, providing comprehensive guidance, fostering a collaborative culture, and actively engaging in professional development, stakeholders could work together to create a more effective and successful

PD experience. Through these efforts, teachers would be better equipped to improve their practices and ultimately benefit their students.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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