

# LESSON STUDY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR MATHEMATICS TEACHERS

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Ongoing professional learning is an essential part of development as a teacher since pre-service courses can only provide teachers with the skills and understandings necessary to begin their career. In New South Wales, Australia, the Department of Education began a program of professional learning based on the *Lesson Study* program of Japan. This report is an evaluation of the *Lesson Study* project and the writers believe its uniqueness comes from the fact that the program is self-contained within schools, whereas in other places, the adaptations have included the leadership of an external 'expert'. In New South Wales, the schools planned, implemented and evaluated their own work and progress.

*Lesson Study* is designed to assist teachers to both produce quality lesson plans and to gain a better understanding of student learning. From the beginning of 2003 over 150 schools were involved. The authors of this paper carried out an evaluation of the program in 2002.

The *Lesson Study* process involves a *Lesson Study* team, which is a small group of volunteer teachers coordinated by a volunteer team leader. The team meets regularly (1-2 periods a week) to plan, design, implement, evaluate and refine lessons for a unit of work selected by the teachers in the team.

The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) suggested that student learning would not improve to any great extent until teachers were given the opportunity and the support to further develop and increase the effectiveness of their teaching skills (Lokan, Ford & Greenwood, 1996). The *Lesson Study* program aims to do just that. This evaluation focussed on the 5 critical levels of professional development evaluation as proposed by Guskey (2000, p.2).

Surveys were completed by the team leaders and also by the other teachers both before embarking on the process and later. The analysis of these surveys and data from other sources indicated that the most valued parts of the process were the collegiality that developed, the greater motivation of the students and the value of visiting other classrooms. These are expanded in the full paper.

## References:

- Guskey, T.R.(2000). *Evaluating professional development*. California: Corwin Press.
- Lokan, J., Ford, P., & Greenwood, L. (1996). *Maths and Science on the line: Australian junior secondary students' performance in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study*. Camberwell, Victoria: Curriculum Corporation.