

## Lesson Study: What do Pre-Service Teachers Tell?

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### ABSTRACT

Education topics and talks on pre-service teacher training program and Lesson Study have individually been discussed and appeared in many journals among disciplines. However, the empirical studies on the issue about the connection between them and how they can relate and benefit one another are limited and rarely done. This study aims at investigating pre-service English teachers' perspectives towards Lesson Study, particularly in terms of their knowledge, experience, and plan for it. This study involved seventeen pre-service teachers (PST) in a teacher education faculty in Indonesia who participated as the research subject. Empirical data were collected through interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Data analysis used a descriptive qualitative method. Results of the study showed that: (1) In terms of knowledge about Lesson Study, all PSTs have good knowledge about Lesson Study. In addition, they also show positive response towards Lesson Study, (2) In terms of experience with Lesson Study, most of the PSTs have had experiences with Lesson Study activities. The experiences mostly occurred when they were being directly involved in Lesson Study activities as students, (3) In terms of the plan to do Lesson Study, the majority of the PSTs are planning to take and do Lesson Study in the future, especially when they become real teachers at schools.

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**Keywords:** pre-service teachers, professional development, lesson study

### 1. INTRODUCTION

There has been a wide definition of Pre-Service Teacher. It spreads from the narrowest point of view defines Pre-Service Teacher as those students participated in a pre-service training or education, a course or program of study which student teachers complete before they begin teaching (Richards & Schmidt, 2002) to a broader definition defining it as simply students admitted to an education program. Literally, pre-service teacher is related to a period before a person takes a job that requires training, especially in teaching (Oxford, 2016).

Being a Pre-Service Teacher (PST) during the pre-service training session has been considered as one the important phases in the professional life of a teacher. It is because, during this period of time, a teacher learns knowledge and ways to become a professional teacher before she is officially declared as a real teacher. It is like the first step in a teacher's endeavour to develop their professional skills. During this first phase, a teacher learns all things related to ways of how to be a professional teacher – from making preparation to ending a lesson. Stuff a pre-service teacher learns comprise lesson plan development, media development, material development, assessment, and of course, the practice teaching which is the heart of a pre-service training. During the practice teaching, a pre-service teacher learns various methods of teaching and learning. In other words, what a pre-service teacher learns during a preservice training is all related to ways of developing professionalism as a teacher or what is commonly called as teacher professional development.

Professional development is formal in-service training to upgrade the content knowledge and pedagogical skills of teachers. It is widely viewed as an important means of improving teaching and learning (Quint, 2011). Just as other professionals have opportunities to learn through examining case studies, learning best practices, and participating in internships, teacher professional development (pre-service training) allows teacher candidates the time to apply their learning theory in the context of teaching in a real classroom. A good teacher professional development is ongoing, experiential, collaborative, and connected to and derived from working with students and understanding their culture.

Highlighting the characteristics of a good professional development (pre-service training), which is ongoing, experiential, collaborative, and connected to and derived from working with students leads

directly to the concept of Lesson Study. Why Lesson Study? It is because Lesson Study emphasizes its concerns on collaboration in which a triad of teachers work together to target an identified area for development in the students' learning. Under this collaboration, participants collaboratively research, plan, teach and observe a series of lessons, using ongoing discussion, reflection, and expert input to track and refine the plan (Dudley, 2011). This brief but very clear explanation shows that there is a strong relevance between pre-service training and Lesson Study. The question now is, how far preservice teachers, which is the outcome of pre-service training, go through with Lesson Study? It is an intriguing inquiry worth a study.

This paper, therefore, tries to report and discuss how seventeen Pre-Service Teachers (PST) in a teacher education faculty in Indonesia describe how far they have gone through with Lesson Study, particularly in terms of their knowledge, experience, and plan about Lesson Study.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The study was done in English Education Departement, Faculty of Education, Ahmad Dahlan University Yogyakarta Indonesia. It took place in April 2017. The study involved seventeen Pre-Service Teacher (PST) respondents. These PST respondents were selected based on those who have taken Practice Teaching 1 (Basic), and Practice Teaching 2 (Advanced) courses in the department. Furthermore, these PST respondents were considered to have experienced being the preservice teachers at real schools during their periods of School Practice Teaching in the two courses. Among these seventeen PST respondents, there were three males and fourteen females. This ratio is fairly representative of the usual gender ratios in such classes in Indonesian faculty of education, from my observation. To protect the respondents' privacy, it was used pseudonyms. The brief data of the PST respondents is provided in the Appendix section.

Methodologically the study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. To collect the data, questionnaires and interviews were utilized. The questionnaire comprised five open questions focused on three main topics i.e. knowledge about Lesson Study, experience with Lesson Study, and Plan for Lesson Study. For the questionnaires, all PST respondents were asked to answer all questions. Meanwhile, the participants in the interview section included twelve PST participants only. The interview was basically used as a cross-reference and a clarification tool to the responses obtained from the questionnaires.

## 3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 3.1. PST's Knowledge on Lesson Study

This first section discusses the PST respondents' knowledge about Lesson Study. There were two questions given to reveal the data on this. The first question was short and straight to the point asking the PST about their background knowledge on Lesson Study. Given a question as "*Do you know Lesson Study?*", the majority of the PSTs answered that they did not know it. Figure 1 shows the data collected from the questionnaires.

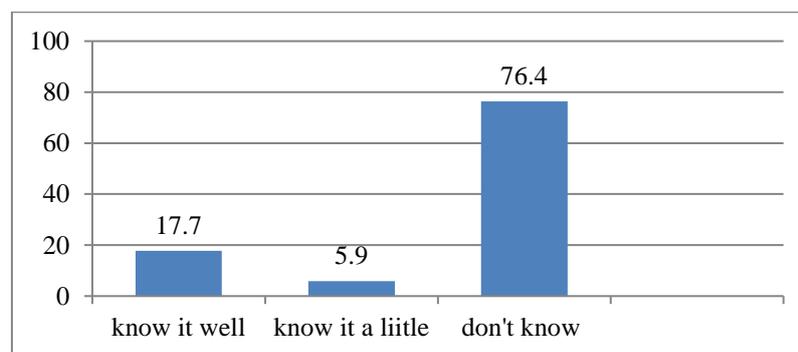


Figure 1. PST's knowledge about Lesson Study

The data in Figure 1 illustrate that a high majority of the PSTs do not know about Lesson Study. This is shown through the high percentage of this group, which is 76,4%. In contrast, there were only three PSTs who know about Lesson Study, which is approximately reaching 17,7%. Interestingly, there was one PST (5,9%) who thought she knew about Lesson Study, but she knew it only a little.

The interview data also lean towards the answer that most of the PSTs do not have enough knowledge on Lesson Study. The interview data reveal that most of the PSTs are not familiar with the term Lesson Study. Moreover, they only knew about it at the time when the study was conducted. Being asked what he knew about Lesson Study, Kris (PST 14) said:

“I don't know about Lesson Study. What I'm more familiar with is Lesson Plan. Is Lesson Study the same as Lesson Plan?” (Kris, PST 14).

Similar answer was given by Cesti (PST 11). For the same question as given to Kris, Cesti responded that she knew nothing about Lesson Study. Safti (PST 6), Galuh (PST 3), Resta (PST 5) and the other 8 PSTs gave the same answer that they did not know about Lesson Study.

Meanwhile, for the three PSTs who gave answer that they knew about Lesson Study, it is obvious that they indeed knew about it already. It is because they were able to give a brief and correct answer when asked what they knew about Lesson Study. These three PSTs seemed to get familiar with Lesson Study's term and concept. They explained that Lesson Study is essentially a kind of collaborative activity or training among teachers to improve the quality of learning and teaching. One of these PST, Dewi (PST 2) defined Lesson Study as the following:

..... What I know about Lesson Study is that it is a sort of training model given to educators or teachers by conducting collaborative and continuous learning based on the collegial and mutual collaboration to improve the learning community (Dewi, PST 2).

Haris (PST 12) gave a more detailed answer to the concept of Lesson Study he knew. He seemed to have read sufficiently so that he even knew from where Lesson Study is. He explained what Lesson Study is as the following:

..... Based on some readings I get, Lesson Study is kind of system used by Japanese teachers to help know the effectiveness of their teaching performance so that they can improve their teaching quality (Haris, PST 12).

To get in depth data, following the given question what the PSTs knew about Lesson Study, the PST respondents were asked why they gave such an answer as Yes, they knew or No, they did not know about Lesson Study. Among 13 PSTs who did not know about Lesson Study gave two different answers. 10 PSTs answered that they knew nothing about Lesson Study because they had never been given an explanation about it or that nobody gave them enough information about it. However, unlike the majority of the PSTs who tended to blame it on others for their lacking the information about Lesson Study, there were three PSTs (PST 13 (Anggi), PST 6 (Safti), and PST 14 (Kris)) who gave a quite different answer of why they did not know about Lesson Study yet. These three PSTs seemed to be more reflective by saying that they lacked information about Lesson Study because they did not read a lot and they did not explore knowledge sufficiently yet. The answers of these three PSTs taken from the questionnaires are given as follows:

..... I don't study about it enough, so I don't know about it (Haris, PST 12).

..... I don't read a lot, so I know very little about it (Linda, PST 1).

..... I don't read and learn about Lesson Study well, so I lack info about it (Anggi, PST 13).

After being given the first two questions about their knowledge of Lesson Study, all PST respondents were given time to either independently or collaboratively seek as much information as possible about Lesson Study. To help the information finding process, the PST respondents were allowed to access internet and books. They were given around 30 minutes to do it. In addition, they were free to

write or speak in Indonesian and/or English as they were comfortable to do so. After 30 minutes was over, the PST respondents were asked to write their answers to the question “*What do you know about Lesson Study?*”. Given the fact that they just accessed and read various sources of Lesson Study, which thus made them understand the concept of Lesson Study better, all PST teachers were able to answer the question correctly this time. One sample of the answers given by one of the respondents is shown below:

..... An activity done by a group of teachers teaching one same subject. The aim of Lesson Study is to improve the learning quality. These teachers may come from the same or different schools, but they teach one same subject. As Lesson Study is done in groups, so everything is managed dan run as a team, from the planning to the assessment (Kris, PST 14).

Haris (PST 12) even went further as he was able to get quite detailed information about Lesson Study. While most of their friends only gave definition about Lesson Study, Haris completed his answer with steps of doing Lesson Study. The excerpt of Haris’s answer is as follows:

..... Lesson Study is originally practised and developed in Japan. There are seven steps in Lesson Study. These seven steps are developing learning instruments, observation, reflection, and revision of the planning done continuously (Haris, PST 12).

In relation to the process of finding information done by the PSTs, there is one point somehow, which is interesting to discuss, i.e. what way these PSTs chose and utilized to help them get the access to the information. From the interviews, it was revealed that in finding information about Lesson Study, most of the PSTs chose to use the internet. It is obvious and just relevant for the PST respondents to do so, as internet indeed could provide them easy and fast access to the current and authentic materials in the issue being studied. In addition, the internet allows them to progress at their pace and needs (Florin, 2014).

### 3.2 PST’s Experience with Lesson Study

The part is the second section of the discussion which is concerned with PST’s experience with Lesson Study. After gaining information about the background knowledge of the PSTs towards Lesson Study i.e. how far PSTs know about Lesson Study, it is important to forward to another relevant issue and dig sufficient information on it so that the discussion on Lesson Study among PSTs is deep and thorough. The second concern discussed in this section is about the experience PSTs have with Lesson Study. To reveal data on this, the PST respondents were given one question “*What kind of experience do you have with Lesson Study?*”. Based on the analysis of the collected data, it showed that some respondents (7 out of 17 – 41,1%) were still confused with the question as they gave irrelevant answer i.e. instead of the elaboration about the experience they ever had with Lesson Study, they gave definition and explanation about Lesson Study and its advantages. 5 out of 17 (29,4%) respondents wrote that they had experience with Lesson Study as they often saw teachers at the schools where they did the practice teaching did it. However, when analyzed further, it seemed that these PSTs mislabeled Lesson Study with weekly regular school teacher’s meeting. They wrongly mixed the concept of Lesson Study and Teacher’s meeting. Meanwhile, 3 out of 17 (17,7%) respondents gave a clear answer that during their practice teaching at schools they had never seen such a Lesson Study practice and 1 PST did not give any answer. Fortunately, there was 1 PST who answered that she witnessed and experienced the practice of Lesson Study in the school she did the practice teaching session. The overall data are depicted in Figure 2 below:

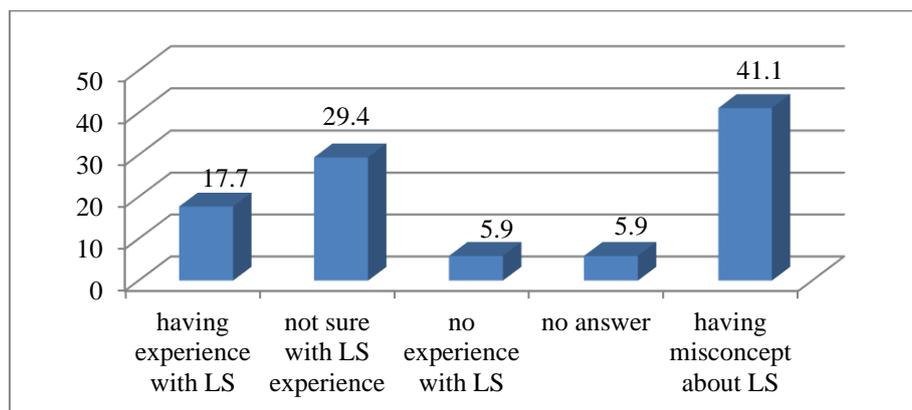


Figure 2. PST's experience with Lesson Study

Despite the unsatisfactory result of the questionnaires above, the result of the interview session showed a bit different information. From the interviews, it was clear that, in fact, there were more of the PSTs who have experiences with Lesson Study. The difference in this point occurred because when answering the question of the questionnaires in a written way, the PST respondents were not so sure with the experience they had so that they gave a bit different answers. Meanwhile, as the communication during the interview flew more smoothly and enjoyable in which they could make confirmation and even give questions for any unclear things, answers the PST respondents gave tended to be more relevant and detailed.

In response to the interview question about the experience with Lesson Study she had, Cesti (PST 11) explained that she had experienced Lesson Study. It was when she was a student of high school, she remembered that her English class held Lesson Study in which her teacher became the model teacher and there were some other teachers coming and observing the class. As a student, she was happy with Lesson Study as it brought about good things to the way the teacher taught the class. The following interview excerpt detailed the point:

..... "The effect of Lesson Study? Mmmm ... I was happy with Lesson Study. It was because when there was Lesson Study, I saw that the teacher tended to be more creative and serious with the class. She made some good changes during and after Lesson Study was done, like she always used more interesting media - she even used more than one types of media. She also prepared worksheet for us ... and gave us rewards and surprises. As a result, we became more serious during the class ha haa" ... (Cesti, PST 11).

The interview data from Galuh (PST 3), Restu (PST 15), Nur (PST 10), Resta (PST 5), and Siska (PST 9) also echo similar opinions. The only difference is that these PST respondents experienced Lesson Study when they were in their second semester of their college. Their view about the effect of lesson Study on the class is the same as what Galuh (PST 3) explained. The following interview excerpt depicts how these PSTs view Lesson Study effect:

..... "We support Lesson Study too, because we witnessed ourselves how the lecturer became different, in a good way, with the class. Before Lesson Study, the lecturer taught us monotonously in which she explained the material without enough media use and then gave us exercises to do, quite boring. That made us bored. But it changed when there was Lesson Study where the lecturer became the model and some other lecturers came to our class and did observation during the lesson. During some observation done, the lecturer always used media .... LCD projector and some paper based media. We're happy with that and did not feel bored. Our lecturer also made us active through some various learning methods like jigsaw and Gallery walk, etc. Before Lesson Study, it was very rarely for the lecturer to have variety in the learning methods. In short, the class became active and vivid. So, we hope Lesson Study is done more often by other lecturers too" (Restu, PST 15).

As a student, when Lesson Study was taking place, she felt a bit different atmosphere in the class. As she said during the interview session:

..... “Different!. When the Lesson Study took place, it felt different. The class became rather tensed and serious, but it’s good. There were some other teachers, some we knew but some we did not know, coming and sitting in the back rows. They looked like doing some observation as they held and filled in some documents and check list while observing our teacher. They took some photos, too. Overall, the class felt more serious when there was Lesson Study ... but serious in a good way” ... (Cesti, PST 11).

Similar to Cesti (PST 11), Galuh (PST 3) and Restu (PST 15) also experienced the similar feeling when their class holding Lesson Study. As Galuh (PST 3) noted during the interview session:

..... “Yes, we agree with Cesti. When our class held a Lesson Study, the classroom atmosphere felt different, especially the lecturer. The lecturer looked a bit nervous in the class ..... but she seemed to prepare the lesson much better than when there was no Lesson Study session. We predicted it was because there were some visiting lecturers that day. But overall we like the idea of Lesson Study as it gave us better effect” (Galuh, PST 3).

Based on the interview results, it is clear that there are PTSs who have experiences with Lesson Study. With these experiences, they were involved directly as students. Even though their roles were mere students, it does not mean that they did not get the lesson they learned from the experience. Still, they could see, feel and even analyze many good effects of being involved in Lesson Study. Among the learned lessons from the Lesson Study they were in, they found out that Lesson Study could improve the quality of the classroom. From the students’ side, they could see and feel how Lesson Study had been triggered the students, including them, to become more serious and pay more attention to the lesson. Furthermore, from the teacher’s side, they could be recognized that Lesson Study had encouraged and caused teachers to be better prepared, which eventually made the teaching be better as well. This result empirically affirms the value of Lesson Study. As what had been shown through Chikamori, Ono, & Rogan’s (2013) research results which concluded that Lesson Study has a short-term effect on the improvement of a particular lesson, and it also has a long-term impact on the development of teacher professionalism.

### 3.3 PST’s Plan of Lesson Study

This section discusses the last point of the paper, which is PST’s plan of Lesson Study. Placing this concern as the last series after PSTs make some reflections of their Lesson Study knowledge and experiences discussed previously is just relevant as reflections are important as the basic step in making meaning of education. In educational contexts, reflection is of high value as through reflection teachers are supposed to stop and think of their actions by considering the values of practices and theories which underline their actions. This is to ensure that teachers, especially novice teachers, engage themselves for continual learning in educational context (Kuswandono, 2014). Due to this, PSTs need to be able to make reflections as Walkington (2005) underlines “reflective practice is promoted as crucial and its development is the responsibility of all teacher educators – both at university and in the schools.” In short, reflections play a crucial role in a teacher’s life (Cooper & Olson, 1996; Kuswandono, 2014).

After making reflections on their knowledge and experiences of Lesson Study, PSTs are supposed to be able to make further plans or actions, which are based on the reflections results. Because of this point, in this study, the last concern discussed is “*what plans PSTs make in relation to Lesson Study*”. To get data on this, all PSTs were asked to write down their answers on the provided space of the questionnaires.

Based on the questionnaires results, the majority of the PSTs (16 out of 17) are planning to do Lesson Study and only 1 PST who answered she is not planning to do any Lesson Study practice. This data signal a good thing as it implies that these PSTs have a positive perspective towards Lesson Study as one of the ways to help improve their quality as a teacher, and thus decide to do it in the future.

What is interesting to discuss is about when and with whom they think they will do Lesson Study they are planning. Figure 3 gives a visual representation of the data collected from the questionnaires.

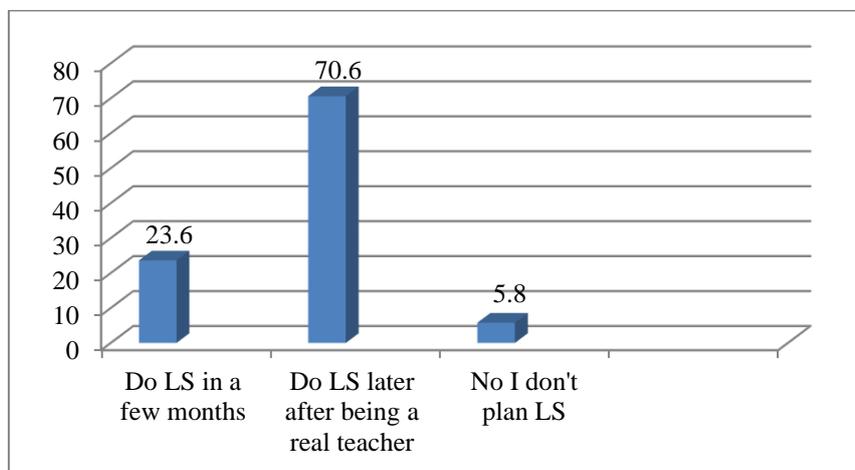


Figure 3. PST's Plan of Lesson Study

Based on Figure 3, it is clear that most of the PSTs (70,6%) think that they will be able to do Lesson Study only later when they are the real teachers of schools. Meanwhile, some PSTs (23,6%) think differently in which they see the possibility to apply Lesson Study in the near future – in a few months when they do Applied Practice Teaching program in some schools with their friends.

Exploring deeper through interviews, it is revealed that the reason why most of the PSTs chose to plan Lesson Study later when they graduate from college and become real teachers in schools is because they see Lesson Study as school system bound so that they can not do it in their own willingness. As noted via the interview with Siska (PST 9):

..... To do Lesson Study, we an't do it alone, right? To do it, it needs other teachers of the same subject, and it will not be easy as teachers have different schedules and activities. So, to do Lesson Study is good but it needs planning and a kind of support and regulation .... so, I don't think we can't do it easily and anytime we wish. That's why I think I will be able to do it later in my future when I'm a real real teacher of a school (Siska, PST 9).

Meanwhile, for 3 PSTs who answered that they will likely do Lesson Study in a few months, one of them, Safti (PST 6) said, through the interview, the following explanation:

..... I see Lesson Study is a very good way to help improve our copetence as a teacher. So, as simple as that I can't wait to look for an occasion to do it. ....Mmm, and as we are going to do applied practice teaching soon, in July I guess, I see it as a chance for us. Why so? It's because in that practice teaching program we will practice teaching for real, I mean we really practise being a teacher in front of the class ha haa ....so, we can apply Lesson Study with my friends ... as you know, there are usually some students of the same department assigned to one same school. So, I will just invite my friends of the same department and school location to plan and do Lesson Study together. It will be fun I think (Safti, PST 6).

Surprisingly, these 3 PSTs who are planning to do Lesson Study during their practice teaching were those who were described as reflective PSTs in section 1 previously discussed. This information is surprisingly interesting as it shows that there might be a correlation between reflective competency and planning capability. In addition, this phenomenon might also lead to a notion that reflective competence contributes to the shaping PST's identity, especially in the stage of becoming a teacher (Kuswandono, 2014). It needs further research, still.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to describe the voices of Pre-Service Teachers (PST) about Lesson Study. Focused on the three main concerns, the results of the study show that: (1) In terms of knowledge about Lesson Study, after being given a chance to explore about Lesson Study independently, PSTs have good knowledge about Lesson Study. Moreover, they also have a positive response towards Lesson Study. (2) In terms of experience with Lesson Study, most of the PSTs have experience with Lesson Study activities. The experience they have is being directly involved in Lesson Study as students. Surprisingly, even though they were serving as students, they were able to see, feel, and even analyze how Lesson Study worked. This kind of Lesson Study experience has caused these PSTs to have a positive image towards Lesson Study, which then encourages them to plan to do Lesson Study. (3) In terms of the plan to do Lesson Study, the majority of the PSTs are planning to do Lesson Study. The difference is only about the time when they will likely do it. Some PSTs are planning to do it soon during their practice teaching program while most of the PSTs plan to do it later when they become real teachers at schools.

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