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Beyond Techniques: Understanding Facilitator Moves in Lesson Study and Teacher Professional Development

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Abstract

Lesson Study (LS) is widely recognised as a collaborative approach to teacher professional development in which teachers jointly investigate teaching and learning. While considerable attention has been given to the LS process and to teacher learning, less attention has been given to the moment-by-moment decisions made by facilitators as they support collaborative inquiry. This presentation examines how facilitators decide whether, when and how to intervene during LS and argues that facilitation involves considerably more than applying a repertoire of techniques.

Drawing on a self-study of seven years of professional practice, the presentation analyses experiences from more than 60 lesson studies conducted across school-based and funded professional development initiatives. Data were generated through reflective journals, discussions with critical friends, conversations with novice LS facilitators and feedback from participating teachers. An abductive analysis, informed by complementary theoretical perspectives on enactment, noticing, relational positioning and the regulation of support, was used to examine the reasoning underlying facilitator moves.

Four propositions emerged. First, facilitator moves begin with noticing before deciding, with listening functioning as a form of disciplined noticing. Second, facilitator moves reflect beliefs about teacher learning and the facilitator's role. Third, facilitator moves derive their meaning through relationships, with trust and familiarity shaping their enactment and interpretation. Fourth, facilitator moves involve balancing coaching and mentoring according to teachers' needs. Together, these propositions suggest that effective facilitation depends not simply on knowing what to do, but on developing the professional judgement required to determine what is needed, when and why.

Keywords: Facilitation; Facilitator Moves; Lesson Study; Professional Judgement; Teacher Professional Development