

Ethnography & Participant Observation Approaches in Lesson Study

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Introduction

Many scholars have recently suggested articulating a qualitative or ethnographic approach for teacher education and teachers' professional development (e.g., Frank & Uy, 2004; Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2002; Denyer, et al, 2001; Frank, 1999). The purpose of ethnographic and sociolinguistic observation is to understand teaching from the perspective of the practitioner and to uncover the social practices of the members of the classroom (Frank & Uy, 2004: 270).

Japanese Vision

For most Japanese teachers, learning and teaching is collaborative work and the best training is where ideas and experiences are shared and reflection is accomplished through observation and discussion in small groups and networks. This is because teachers are able to think deeply about their educational experiences and efforts through exchange and understanding with other teachers.

Spirit of Lesson Study

- Collaborative activities
- Share experiences
- Reflect on action
- Kaizen (improvement)
- Learning from each other
- Acquire professional knowledge
- Continuous change
- A quality circle(Plan-Do-Check-Action)

Purpose of this Research

I examine how ethnography field notes and participant observation in lesson study process help teachers to understand the diverse range of talents and abilities of their students. Especially, I focus on how ethnography field notes and reflective papers help teachers to change their assumptions about student and leadership for learning during lesson study.

Data Collection

I employed several case studies for data collection and a qualitative approach for teaching analysis. I tried to analysis the schools way of using ethnography notes and participant observation to think about new and creative perspectives for research on classroom activities. I also examined teachers' reflective papers, learning journal notes and school documents such as reports on lesson study, its historical background and approach.

Ethnography Notes

- Shidoan→(Plan)指導案
- Karte/Zaseki Hyou→(Plan-Do)座席表
- Zaseki jugyouan→(Plan-Do-Check)座席指導案

Shidoan



Figure 18. The Japanese lesson plan. (continued) Sigler, Fernandez & Yoshida, 1996

Planning Lesson(i→I) A(Individual)→B(Group)→C(Individual)

ここでは、単元の最終的到達点について述べる。到達点や到達目標の設定は学習者中心とする。これに対して到達目標を中心として、子どもが達成するために必要な知識や技能を、より子どもの発達に即した観点から設定する。

Individual

Individual → **Group** → **Individual**

この単元では、子どもが主体的に学習し、自ら考え、自ら表現し、自ら行動し、自ら責任をもち、自ら成長することを目指す。この単元を通して、子どもが主体的に学習し、自ら考え、自ら表現し、自ら行動し、自ら責任をもち、自ら成長することを目指す。

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Check Point in Lesson Plan

- Nominating students and reacting to their behavior
- Attending to individual needs of students
- Examining how the teacher adapt the lesson to the time available?
- Choosing appropriate teaching strategies
- Leading the progress of the lesson
- Evaluating the teacher and students activities for solving problems

Shidoan Shinshiro Elementary School Case

Unit Plan

Lesson Plan

Zaseki Hyou

Handwritten notes and lesson plans for Ando Elementary School.

Handwritten notes: *じつをたのしむ時、どんなことを考えているのか?*

Lesson plan entries:

- 34 高杉 悠希
- 44 朝日 輝人
- 54 西谷 悠希
- 64 西谷 悠希
- 35 伊藤 悠希
- 45 朝日 輝人
- 55 大野 悠希
- 65 西谷 悠希
- 36 朝日 輝人
- 46 朝日 輝人
- 56 朝日 輝人
- 66 朝日 輝人

Ando Elementary School Case

The teachers of Ando Elementary School acquire professional skills through participant observation, journal and ethnography field notes, critical reflection on action and collaborative research on classroom activities. In the school, lesson study is delivered based on a specific unit plan which is developed based on database of students in school, teachers' ethnography field notes and content of subject matters. The basic purpose of the unit plan is pay attention to students' mutual relationships and interaction based on the subject matters. Each unit plan involves one or several lesson plan.

Zaseki jugyoutan

Zaseki jugyoutan

Why Zaseki jugyoutan?!

They make database for each student in school and provide mutual relationships among students in classroom activities as a proposal for lesson study which is called *zaseki jugyoutan*. It means the way which teachers make connect and interact between students during several lessons and different subject matters. This proposal has strong impact to make peer group of students in each subject matter and help teachers to understand each student needs and abilities.

Jugyouan & Lesson Study→From Teacher to Student

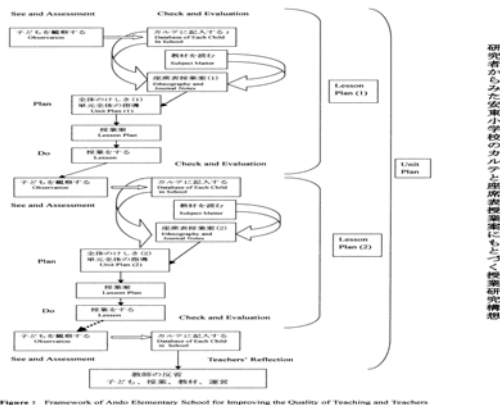
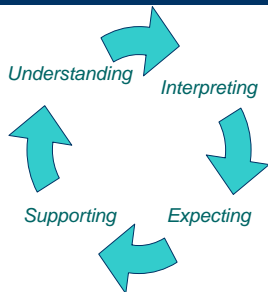


Figure 1 Framework of Ando Elementary School for Improving the Quality of Teaching and Teachers

The School's Framework

As I observed, the School has already developed a framework for improving the quality of teaching and deep understanding of each student needs. The framework shows the process of lesson study which is emphasis on the issue of individual difference of student in each subject matters, interaction of student in classroom and collaborative research on the teaching-learning process among teachers in school.

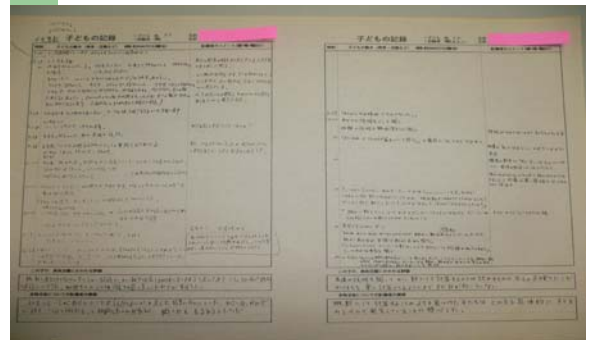
Ethnography as Main Approach

The main particular of this model of lesson study is that start from observing and assessment. They review of database of each student in school and previous ethnography and journal notes, with consideration of subject matter and purpose of their collaborative research. Then, they make a unit plan cooperatively which has diagram of several lesson plans. Finally, they implement this plan and evaluate and reflect upon the outcomes of lesson study in terms of understanding each student needs, enhancing learning through growing shared interaction of students and improving their teaching. By all indications, this model is recently popular and highly valued by Japanese teachers at elementary school level. This kind of quality circle is flexible and emphasis more on each student talents and abilities, teachers' ethnography notes and reflective papers, shared sense of what is important in school, and shared commitment to help students learning.

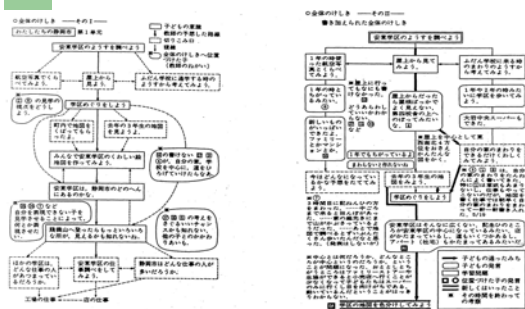
Participant Observation

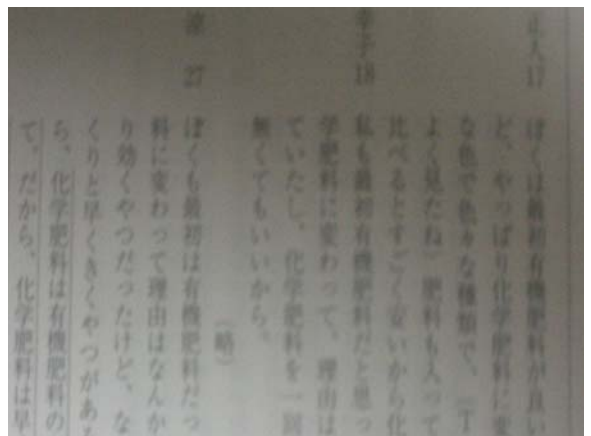
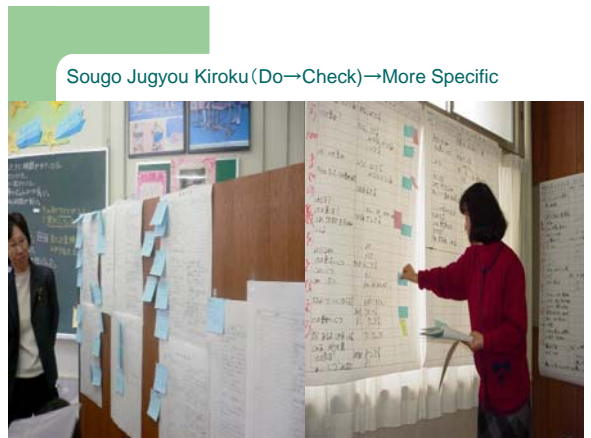
- Revising Lesson (Plan A→Plan B)→More Child-Centered
- Sougo Jugyou Kiroku (Do→Check)→More Specific
- Jugyou Kiroku (Do→Check →Action)→More Detail
- Revising Curriculum(Plan→Do→ Check→ Action) → More Collaborative

Revising Lesson (Plan A→Plan B)→More Child-Centered



Revising Lesson (Plan A→Plan B)





【資料6】平成15年6月 1年生「正の数・負の数」

No	発言者	発言内容
15	授業者	3点の人。おう、よく覚えてたな。2点の人。はい手をおろして。漢字間違わないの。はいそれでは昨日の続きからやります。昨日、三つ以上の数の乗法、除法というのをやりましたね。二つだけじゃなくて三つとか四つとかあって、それからかけるだけじゃなくて割るがあって、そしてさらに、 $\frac{1}{2}$ や $\frac{1}{3}$ が数らばつてくるよ。
16	授業者	教科書43ページです。まああつとるけど教科書は見えない。三つもあります。×と÷があります。-の記号があります。ノート開いてない奴がいます。まず最初になければいけないことは何でしたか。はいCさん。
17	C	割り算をかけ算にする。
18	授業者	そうだね。割り算をかけ算に直す。割り算とかかけ算のことをかっこよく言うともう一回村山君。割り算とかかけ算にはかっこいい言い方があったでしょ。
19	C	ああ、あのね、かけ算が乗法、割り算が除法。
20	授業者	そうだね。除法を乗法に直します。

【資料7】平成17年5月3年生「平方根」

105	授業者	逆に、2乗して16になる数、2乗して16になる数は何ですか、と聞かれたら、4と-4ということになります。これを16の平方根と言います。
106	授業者	つまり、2乗してaになる数をaの平方根、といいます。
107	授業者	では、ひとつ例を示しますね。例の1、16の平方根、これはもう、今やったばかりの4と-4ですが、例えば36の平方根は、中村君、36の平方根は何ですか。
108	生徒	6と-6
109	授業者	そうですね、6と-6の2つがあります。9分の4の平方根、どうでしょう。2乗し

Revising Curriculum(Plan→Do→ Check→ Action) → More Collaborative



Kuno, 2005

The Impact of Our Approaches

I examined the effect of ethnography field notes and participant observation on the teachers' assumptions about students and leadership for learning. My analysis of the data from various perspective and viewpoints provides insight into the professional development of teachers who participated in lesson study process. As some of my research finding, lesson study supports teachers to create "a school that learns" through:

From Student Perspective → Mutual Relationship & Interaction

- Develop students' mutual relationships and interaction based on the subject matter;
- Provide an learning environment in school which each student feel welcome;
- Facilitate more student-student interaction (such as: peer group, seatwork, team learning & ...);

From Teacher Perspective → Participant Observation

- Develop teachers' competence to do collaborative research on lessons, observe their colleagues' classes, interpret of students communication in teaching and learning process in detail;
- Provide opportunities for teachers to discuss and learn in peer group, ethnography and journal notes, participant observation, writing reflective papers and using field notes for reaching every students learning and improving teaching;
- Observe students individually and carefully in the teaching-learning process;

From Teaching Perspective → Learning-Centered Education

- Make database of each student in school and try to review, analysis, and evaluate the data for make unite and lesson plans;
- Focus on the real needs of each student;
- Guidance of each student for applying problem solving approach;
- Try to move from teaching to leading and learning;

From Learning Perspective → Enhance Learning

- Change assumption of teachers about student through interpretation of student-student and teacher-student communication;
- Support school as a learning organization;
- Change role of teachers and enrich learning through managing environment for more interaction of students and teachers;
- Build a culture of learning and leading through collaboration, participation and shared reflection.

Conclusion1

Japanese teachers do a great deal of observing classroom practices and students activities and reflecting on their own thinking, planning, acting, decision-making, assumptions about student, and mental model.

In the teaching and learning process they prepare various alternatives based on their learning journal, reflective papers, ethnography field notes and database of students in school as well as classroom activities. They are always using ethnography and journal notes to think about new and creative perspectives for classroom activities and reaching every student's learning.

Conclusion2

The Japanese approaches in lesson study for improving the quality of teaching and teachers and enhancing learning has an effective role as driving force for school change.

They changed their assumptions about students' responsibilities and teachers' roles. Japanese Teachers have recently found an alternative approach to use ethnography field notes as evidence for their interpretation of what students were doing and what teacher should be doing in classroom.

Conclusion3

As I found, teachers who use ethnography and journal field notes in *lesson study* process were able to create and apply an alternative approach in classroom management and **learning-centered education** as a strategic view of education.

Ethnography & participant observation approaches support teachers to focus on the drivers of student learning, the real needs of students and leadership for learning.

Conclusion4

Applying "Lesson Study" and creating a "Learning School" **as a culture** look for reframing school, developing teacher competence and enhancing student learning. I think our ethnography & participant observation approaches bring an opportunity for teachers,

- to work together effectively
- to share their experiences friendly
- to reflect on their own action directly and
- to learn from each other honestly.

Thank you