REVISTA KRONOS

Lesson Study as a Catalyst for Innovation in Ecuadorian English Classrooms: Teacher Experiences and Challenges

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ABSTRACT This study explores the implementation of Lesson Study (LS) as an innovative approach within the Ecuadorian educational context, where innovation is an emerging concept. With limited prior exposure to collaborative methodologies, many Ecuadorian teachers have yet to engage in practices that promote shared learning and professional growth. The researchers aim to investigate how LS, as a collaborative model, can foster innovation among educators by enhancing teamwork, shared responsibility, and a cooperative culture. Using a qualitative methodology rooted in narrative inquiry, two volunteer English teachers who participated in an LS workshop were interviewed in depth to capture their reflections and perceptions of LS as an innovative tool. The collected data were analyzed through content analysis, allowing themes and categories to emerge around the teachers' understanding of innovation and the role of technology in education. Key findings indicate that while technology is commonly viewed as a potential driver of innovation, the teachers also recognize that innovation can be achieved through new teaching approaches aside from technology. LS was perceived as a beneficial collaborative method that strengthens professional relationships and introduces sustainable change in teaching practices. In conclusion, the study suggests that LS has significant potential as an innovative asset for Ecuadorian educators, offering a non-technological pathway to improve teaching and learning practices and encourage a shift toward a more collaborative educational culture.

KEYWORDS Innovation, Education, Lesson Study, English Teachers.

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El estudio de lecciones como catalizador de la innovación en las aulas de inglés ecuatorianas: experiencias y desafíos de los docentes

RESUMEN Este estudio explora la implementación del Lesson Study (LS) como un enfoque innovador en el contexto educativo ecuatoriano, donde la innovación es un concepto emergente. Con una exposición limitada a metodologías colaborativas, muchos docentes ecuatorianos aún no se han involucrado en prácticas que promuevan el aprendizaje compartido y el crecimiento profesional. Las investigadoras tienen como objetivo indagar cómo el LS, como modelo colaborativo, puede fomentar la innovación entre los educadores al fortalecer el trabajo en equipo, la responsabilidad compartida y una cultura de cooperación. Utilizando una metodología cualitativa basada en la investigación narrativa, se entrevistó en profundidad a dos docentes voluntarias de inglés que participaron en un taller de LS para captar sus reflexiones y percepciones sobre el LS como herramienta innovadora. Los datos recopilados fueron estudiados mediante análisis de contenido, lo que permitió que surgieran temas y categorías en torno a la comprensión de la innovación y el papel de la tecnología en la educación por parte de las docentes. Los hallazgos clave indican que, si bien la tecnología se percibe comúnmente como un posible impulsor de la innovación, las docentes también reconocen que la innovación puede lograrse mediante nuevos enfoques de enseñanza independientes de la tecnología. El LS fue percibido como un método colaborativo beneficioso que fortalece las relaciones profesionales e introduce un cambio sostenible en las prácticas docentes. En conclusión, el estudio sugiere que el LS tiene un potencial significativo como un recurso innovador para los educadores ecuatorianos, ofreciendo una vía no tecnológica para mejorar las prácticas de enseñanza y aprendizaje y promover un cambio hacia una cultura educativa más colaborativa.

PALABRAS CLAVE Innovación, Educación, Estudio de Lecciones, Profesoras de Inglés.

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INTRODUCTION

Lesson Study is the English equivalent of *jugyou kenkyuu* in Japanese, which is a teaching-learning model used to enhance education at different levels. LS was first developed in Japan and involves teacher-led research in order to improve classes. According to Lewis (2009):

> 'Lesson study' is a professional learning approach in which teachers work together to: formulate goals for student learning and long-term development; collaboratively plan a 'research lesson' designed to bring to life these goals; conduct the lesson in a classroom, with one team member teaching and others gathering evidence on student learning and development; and discuss the evidence gathered during the lesson, using it to improve the lesson, the unit, and instruction more generally (p.95).

The LS approach can be adopted as an innovative method to boost education at different levels as a creative answer to applying pedagogical innovations. LS "is a collaborative process in which teachers observe, analyze, and evaluate each other's actual classroom lessons mainly with the objective of improving their lessons" (Pérez et al., 2010). LS has been extensively applied in Japan, and, even when it is a relatively new technique for the USA, Canada, and some countries in Europe, it has been cataloged as one of the most effective and relevant strategies to foster collaboration among teachers (Pérez et al., 2010).

The LS approach typically follows a cyclical process that involves several key stages, as illustrated in the following diagram. This process ensures continuous improvement and reflective practice among educators.

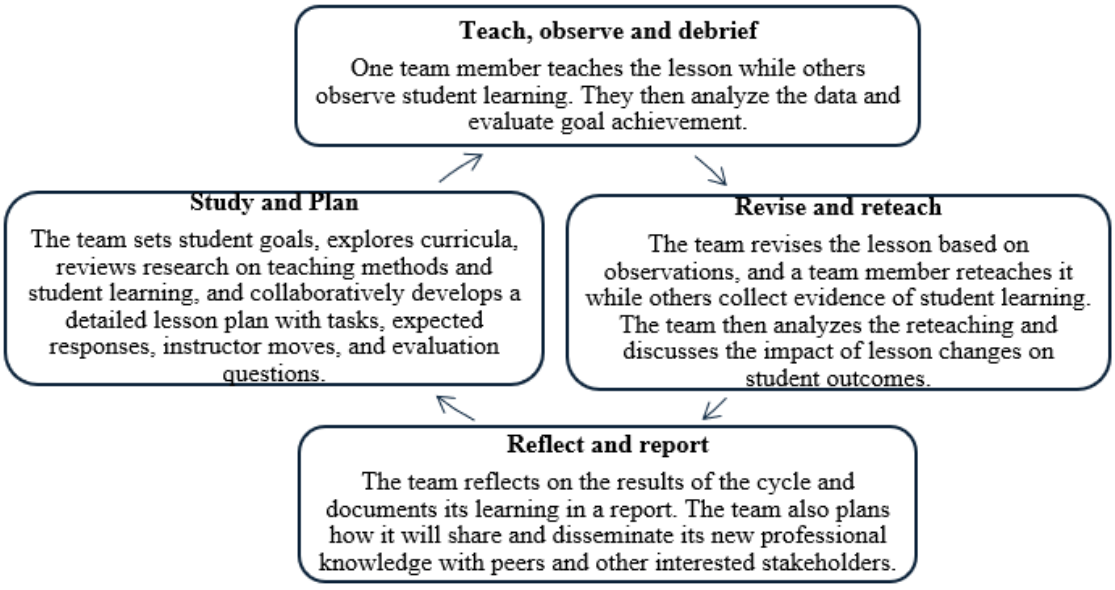

Fig. 1. Lesson Study Process. (Taken from Leong et al., 2021).

The image outlines the cyclical process of the Lesson Study (LS) approach, emphasizing continuous improvement and reflective practice. This process begins with collaborative planning and goal setting, followed by the teaching and observation of the lesson. Insights gained lead to lesson revision and reteaching, with further observations to assess the impact of these changes. The cycle concludes with reflection and documentation of outcomes, fostering ongoing professional development and knowledge sharing among educators. This iterative process enhances teaching effectiveness and promotes a culture of collaborative teaching-learning processes.

Consequently, this constitutes a convenient tool for Ecuadorian teachers since one of its principles is that it fosters collaboration. This is a very weak skill in Ecuadorian educational contexts where educators were even considered "unlikely collaborators" since they

prefer to work autonomously (Serrano et al., 2015). This issue needs to be addressed, and LS proposes an accurate methodology as it is not only about collaboration but "emphasizes co-learning within the teacher group" (Nesusin et al., 2014). Thus, using the strategy of LS constitutes collaborative work, which means it is potentially beneficial for Ecuadorian educational environments. In addition, we can say that LS also represents innovation, since studies state that "LS is a teachers' tool to study and improve their practice, implement curriculum reform, build school-based curriculum innovations and develop their professional knowledge and the teachers themselves in the process" (Tan-Chia et al., 2013).

Along with this, the term 'innovation' has been pushing education to face imperative changes and the adoption of new institutional forms in response to the rapid pace of technological enhancements. Therefore, it is no secret that we must include innovation in education and, as mentioned by (Gulden et al., 2020), "it is worth to note the significance of innovation management to quality assurance of education." In this light, it is compulsory for educational actors to take action and implement new techniques and approaches that last and transform the educational landscape; however, not any ideas, but "new ideas or practices that are impactful and valuable to individuals or communities" (Fenwick & Vermeulen, 2016), which need to be taken into account at the time of implementing innovative resources to the classrooms.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, innovation responds to technological progress and implementation. In fact, some studies state that leveraging technology is crucial for any study mode in that it should be applied to any curriculum plan to ensure a better education (Sarker et al., 2019); that is why it has been seen as a potentially useful asset. Nonetheless, the authors also point out that the use of technology has not always been effective when it comes to providing students with meaningful learning and that implementing it in institutions may involve complex situations regarding variables such as people involved, context, and technical issues (Koc, 2013). Consequently, educational stakeholders ought to explore alternative approaches in order to foster innovation in instances where the integration of technology poses challenges.

With this in mind, we can talk about how necessary it is to implement pedagogical innovations, which means "to introduce innovations into the pedagogical system, to update the progress of educational processes, to have a positive impact on its results" (Shuhratovich, 2020) even if we do not use technology when implementing them. By introducing these novelties, we can evidence that innovation is not always about technology, but about guiding positively the results of any of the processes influenced by innovative resources, being these new methods, techniques, resources, etc. This concept leads us back to the LS approach, which presents a novel alternative for incorporating innovation into conventional classes, even in the absence of technological resources, since LS "could be an innovative model of professional development that is effective in enhancing teachers' pedagogical content knowledge through peer collaboration"(Mon et al., 2016)

Based on the information above, this study was carried out with the aim of describing the perceptions of two teachers who participated in an LS workshop facilitated by the writers' research group. This was a four-week workshop in which the facilitators explored the basis of LS, its cycle and process, and how to apply it to real contexts by asking the participants to apply the approach in their classes. For this, attendants needed to plan, teach, and record a class, analyze it in small groups, and build on that collaboratively to highlight each other's practices and weak or strong points. The present paper will use the narrative inquiry methodology to explore the participants' insights about the workshop and the use of LS as an innovative tool for their teaching-learning processes. This approach allowed the researchers to explore the participants' points of view and experiences after the workshop, which were expressed in their own narratives with the objective of framing a better understanding of the inquired topic.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

How do Ecuadorian English teachers perceive the implementation of Lesson Study as a tool for fostering innovation, collaboration, and professional development in their teaching practices?

METHODOLOGY

The writers followed a qualitative methodology with a narrative inquiry approach. This approach blends the view of specific sets of people's experiences and how the author inquiries into these experiences by setting them in definite contexts and circumstances to reach an insightful interpretation of the data (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). According to Savin-Baden & Niekerk (2007), "when using narrative inquiry, it is important that the researcher is not only able to ask questions that elicit stories but also that she/he is able to position her/himself so that stories can be analyzed effectively." The utilization of narrative inquiry allowed for an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences and perspectives, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the topic under investigation. Therefore, it is worth mentioning that narrative inquiry was chosen over other qualitative methods because it allows for a deep exploration of participants' personal experiences, beliefs, and reflections within their specific contexts. By delving into the narratives and personal accounts of the participants, this study aimed to construct a comprehensive and meaningful interpretation of the data.

To ensure an effective analysis of the narratives, it was essential for the researchers to not only ask questions that encouraged the participants to share their stories but also to position themselves appropriately to facilitate a thorough analysis. The researchers aimed to create a safe and supportive environment that encouraged participants to openly express their experiences, thoughts, and reflections. Considering the aforementioned method, this study was carried out with two volunteer English teachers who were aware of the use of LS as a potential tool for their practices. To select the suitable participants, we took into account the people who agreed to be contacted after the aforementioned LS workshop ended.

From the list of those volunteers, researchers contacted four female teachers from public schools who were actively participating during the training sessions and that showed themselves confident and interested in learning about LS. Finally, two of them accepted to be part of the study due to time and availability considerations. Both teachers have substantial experience in the field of English teaching, with over 10 years in Ecuador's school system. Their schools are situated in urban settings with limited access to resources for professional development. Despite these limitations, both teachers have previously participated in occasional workshops and training sessions but had minimal exposure to innovative, collaborative methodologies like LS. This background makes them ideal candidates for exploring how LS might be perceived and implemented within their professional settings.

DATA COLLECTION.

An in-depth interview was prepared for two English teachers who participated in a 4-week workshop in which they met the generalities of LS, practiced with their colleagues who were also attending the workshop, and were asked to transmit their knowledge to their co-workers. The participants, both female English teachers aged between 30 and 60, also had administrative responsibilities and were leaders of English groups within their

respective institutions. After the workshop, the two participants were asked to be involved in individual interview sessions to explore their insights and perceptions about the use of LS as an innovative resource. The subjects were provoked to tell their own stories and observations about their experiences derived from the workshop they attended, how they linked it to innovation, and how it affected their teaching-learning practices.

Participants were prompted to talk about their understandings related to the workshop and include any information they considered relevant to illustrate their insights about LS and how it is related to innovation. The interviewer met the participants and talked to them for around ten minutes to prepare them for the interview and explain the dynamics of it. Later, participants talked for 2 hours and 5 minutes and 3 hours and 15 minutes, correspondently, to express their thoughts and perceptions about the given issue. The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent, and they were asked to use their mother tongue (Spanish) to allow them to express their ideas freely and with no restrictions.

Participants were required to talk first about their conception of innovation, their perception of it, and the usage of this concept in their classes, the relationship between LS and innovation, and real examples from their contexts. However, as the instrument used was an in-depth interview, participants added some important insights that provided a profound understanding of their perceptions. Researchers could tell when participants exhausted their answers because they started being repetitive and redundant; subsequently, the data collection ended. The obtained information was transcribed and coded using the MAXQDA software, chosen for its robustness in handling qualitative data and coding complex narrative structures. MAXQDA enables systematic coding and organization of themes, making it well-suited for narrative inquiry where the goal is to identify recurring themes and patterns across participants' stories. The choice of this software was based on its features that allow for deep analysis of narrative data, providing tools that support categorizing and linking ideas across multiple interviews. After the coding ended, only the relevant information for this study was translated into English to be included in the analysis that will be described in the following section.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The analysis of the data started with the transcription of the data and the selection of the codes based on the procedure proposed by (Lieblich et al., 1998) who believe the researcher can obtain data from the participants but then analyze the gathered information by separating only the relevant contributions and organizing the information to obtain different topics and categories. The aforementioned method is known as "content analysis", which is part of the narrative analysis that takes into account the content that is relevant to the research but not the form or the timeline of the told stories. (Lieblich et al., 1998)

The transcripts were read numerous times to identify stressed and repeated ideas expressed by the participant teachers to be assembled as codes. This coding was handled using the MAXQDA software by highlighting the relevant ideas that were found in the obtained testimonies. Once the codes were identified, they were separated from the original text using the content analysis method; subsequently, similar pieces of information were compared and evaluated. After the comparison, it was remarkable that both partakers experienced alike situations related to their participation and experiences.

Iterative reading and deep examination of the gathered data constituted the methodological approach to derive codes that started as Innovation Concepts, Perceptions of collaboration, LS and Innovation, Technology, etc. Subsequently, they were organized into wider themes for comprehensive discussion and analysis. This systematic analysis allowed

the researchers to assign relevant codes to the collected information which encapsulate the participants' perceptions: Innovation in education; Technology versus Innovation; and LS as an Innovative Tool. These codes facilitated a detailed exploration of diverse aspects regarding teachers' utilization of LS as a transformative instrument within their pedagogical practices. The aforementioned issues are presented in the following paragraphs.

INNOVATION IN EDUCATION.

It is important to mention that innovation in education is a relatively new concept due to the limited information and exposure that teachers have had to this topic. For instance, one of the institutions created to promote innovation and new ideas in Ecuadorian education is the Secretaría de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación (SENESCYT), which was founded in 2007 as an attempt to bring the concept of innovation into the educational landscape (Balbachevsky, 2020). As Balbachevsky notes, the establishment of such institutions in Latin America is part of a larger effort to close the gap in awareness and implementation of educational innovation. Nevertheless, according to the participants in this study, innovation is not a concept they had previously analyzed deeply due to its relative novelty and limited dissemination in educational settings.

Supporting this idea, the background knowledge that teachers have about innovation tends to develop gradually through experience and exposure. For example, Participant A mentioned, "Back then, when we had some workshops about English, they helped us to grow, improve our teaching-learning process, and innovate, even when at that time we did not know the word innovate" (Participant A, personal communication, May 19th, 2023). This aligns with Hargreaves and O'Connor's (2018) perspective that teachers often engage in innovative practices informally through collaborative learning experiences, even if they don't initially identify these practices as "innovation." As they explore solutions and improve their teaching incrementally, their understanding of innovation grows organically.

Participant B added to this understanding by describing innovation as "being a nitpicker, to take a look at places nobody wants to look at because you know there is something extra to do to look for a solution to a problem" (Participant B, personal communication, May 23rd, 2023). This perception resonates with the findings of Freeman et al. (2017), who emphasize that innovation in education often requires a mindset shift toward active problem-solving and a willingness to seek novel approaches. In this sense, both participants highlight a foundational concept of innovation as not solely about new technologies or methods but as a proactive approach to improve educational practices through curiosity and collaboration.

With this in mind, we found different conceptions after we explored deeply into their knowledge, and some of the concepts that they were able to build during the interview related to how they conceive innovation based on their own experiences were the following ones:

"To innovate is not to discover something new, but to add something new to what you already have (…) it is to be willing to change and improve." (Participant A, personal communication, May 19th, 2023).

"Something is innovative because it goes against what everybody does everywhere. It is to break the mold. To be different." (Participant A, personal communication, May 19th).

After analyzing these concepts, we can say that teachers explored basic notions of innovation. which "consists of the generation of a new idea and its implementation into a new product, process or service" (Kogabayev & Maziliauskas, 2017), or it is seen as "an outcome of a process, rest on two defining characteristics, a degree of newness of a change

and a degree of usefulness or success in the application of something new" (Granstrand & Holgersson, 2020), which is not far from some of the ideas that participants expressed themselves. Based on this, we can conclude that they have an upright idea of what innovation is because of their personal reflection.

TECHNOLOGY VERSUS INNOVATION.

In addition to what teachers expressed about innovation, the participants also shared noteworthy insights on the role of technology in creating an innovative environment in their classrooms. Some authors, such as Findikoglu & Ilhan (2016) suggest that the integration of technology can enhance educational practices, particularly when it aligns with curriculum goals and improves instructional quality. They argue that technology, when used meaningfully, can indeed drive innovation in education. However, this perspective also acknowledges that technology alone does not constitute innovation; rather, it is the pedagogical impact of its use that matters. This aligns with the participants' reflections on how technology, while potentially valuable, is not essential for fostering innovation in their classrooms.

As Participant B observed:

> "Technology, platforms, and computers can be tools, but not the only thing. We need to look forward. Some people can turn the use of technology into something shallow and say 'Yes, I use the lab' but for what? Sometimes just as the make-up of something that is not meaningful. We need to make something meaningful to innovate" (Participant B, personal communication, May 23rd, 2023).

This sentiment resonates with Selwyn's (2021) critique, which highlights that the implementation of technology in education is often superficial, lacking a genuine focus on enhancing learning experiences. Selwyn argues that technology should be thoughtfully integrated to add pedagogical value, rather than merely serving as an aesthetic addition.

Similarly, Participant A shared:

> "It is not necessary for me to use technology to improve my teaching practices: I can come up with a new way to teach my students and make them conscious that learning is easy, then I am innovating. By adding something new to my classes, I am innovating. I have a coworker who is really good with technology because he is an engineer. You can see he uses technology, but his classes are very linear" (Participant A, personal communication, May 19th, 2023).

This perspective aligns with the work of Rajiani & Ismail (2019), who emphasize that non-technological forms of innovation—such as management and pedagogical adjustments—are also critical in education. Their study points out that meaningful innovation often involves restructuring teaching practices and fostering dynamic learning environments, which can be achieved even without technological tools.

In summary, while the participants acknowledge the potential benefits of technology in education, they also emphasize that innovation is not solely dependent on technological tools. Their perspectives align with research that highlights the importance of meaningful integration and thoughtful pedagogical strategies as essential components of innovation. This understanding suggests that teachers are aware of both the advantages and limitations of technology in education and recognize that innovation can be equally effective through non-technological means. This has prompted them to adopt a broader perspective on innovation, leveraging the advantageous factor of interviewing educators who hold positions of influence within their respective institutions. This advantage allowed for an exploration of their perceptions regarding the application of innovation, not only within

their own classrooms but also throughout the entire institution, including the potential for implementing learner-centered strategies within their specific contexts.

LS AS AN INNOVATIVE TOOL.

We already defined LS and highlighted its collaborative nature. Therefore, this section will explore the participants' perceptions of the usage of this potentially innovative tool in their institutions. We will start with Participant A, who stated the following:

> "LS is presented as a tool, as a project for teachers to innovate, improve, and develop themselves in order to reach students more effectively. Of course, LS is part of innovation, and that is what we have learned now. We learned that because LS taught us to cooperate, but why? Not just for ourselves but to improve and make changes so that students can also see a light at the end of the tunnel, saying, 'Finally, the classes are different." (Participant A, personal communication, May 19th, 2023).

This aligns with the findings of Ronda & Danipog (2022) who conceptualize LS as an encounter at the boundaries of research and practice, examining teacher-academic collaboration for its potential to shape teacher research identity. Their study reports that teachers engaged in LS were able to present their work at conferences, indicating a significant development in their professional practice.

Similarly, Participant B emphasized that LS promotes shared responsibility and teamwork, stating that "responsibility is shared... it becomes a team effort." This perspective is supported by Chenault (2017), who discusses how LS fosters a collaborative pedagogy in higher education, encouraging faculty to work together, share expertise, and collectively improve instructional practices. Furthermore, Participant B noted that LS creates "a kind of culture that is no longer punitive but collaborative." This observation resonates with the study by Ronda and Danipog (2022), which found that LS facilitates problematizing instruction based on evidence from practice, using research-informed frameworks, and sharing lesson studies, all of which contribute to a supportive and collaborative teaching environment. These studies corroborate the participants' views, demonstrating that LS serves as a powerful tool for fostering innovation, shared responsibility, and a collaborative culture among educators.

Additionally, the revealed vision of LS that the participants have reiterates that this methodology can be used as a tool for innovation in the educational field. This non-technological type of innovation reveals a new path to introduce novelty into teaching-learning practices in Ecuadorian contexts. Moreover, collaboration plays a crucial role in this process. In fact, some authors claim that "to foster innovation, the public sector is required to create and implement a strong innovative culture, develop collaboration with other institutions and sustain adequate resources in promoting innovativeness" (Ab Rahman et al., 2018).

The previous appreciation brings us to another crucial advantage LS possesses, which is collaborative and cooperative work. LS promotes shared responsibility, teamwork, and a culture of cooperation. Hence, this emphasis on collaboration not only enhances the effectiveness of the methodology but also nurtures a sense of collective growth and development among educators. In that light, participants have their opinions on how collaboration can make this tool a valuable addition to their team:

> "Yes, I feel that it is more feasible, more real, and more collaborative. It's no longer just me coming and judging you. Now we sit down, talk, plan, identify problems, and seek solutions. We review, provide feedback, and discuss what went well and what didn't. It's a constant cycle of feedback and improvement." (Participant B, personal communication, May 23rd, 2023).

Participant A, on her side, explained it with an example of how collaboration helped her and her colleagues to start learning from each other:

> "I invited a teacher to my class to observe and I told him 'Come to my class and judge me. Judge me all you want, whether I'm doing well or poorly. If I'm doing poorly, it's better that you judge me. Your judgment won't affect me anymore or any less. Come to my classroom and see what I do, see for yourself.' I understand, I'm telling you, the day he entered my class, he was amazed." (Participant A, personal communication, May 19th, 2023).

The previously stated ideas support the claim that any "teacher must be a person who has a collaborative spirit, who can share their knowledge, who can unlearn to learn again, and who can work as a team with teachers and administrators to transfer this knowledge to their students"(Ramírez-Montoya et al., 2021)critical thinking, and problem-solving in educational environments linked to real-world scenarios. Therefore, teachers have been challenged to develop new methods and resources to integrate into their planning in order to help students develop these desirable and necessary skills; hence, the question: What are the characteristics of a teacher to consider within the framework of Education 4.0? This study was conducted in a higher education institution in Ecuador, with the aim to identify the teaching profile required in new undergraduate programs within the framework of Education 4.0 in order to contribute to decision-making about teacher recruitment, professional training and evaluation, human talent management, and institutional policies interested in connecting competencies with the needs of society. Descriptive and exploratory approaches, where we applied quantitative and qualitative instruments (surveys. LS serves as a powerful tool for fostering these qualities in teachers. Through LS, educators engage in collaborative planning, problem-solving, and continuous feedback, creating a culture of shared learning and improvement. By actively participating in LS, teachers become examples that students aspire to, embodying the values of collaboration, open-mindedness, and lifelong learning.

Nonetheless, it is also worth mentioning the possible obstacles regarding LS. When talking about potential setbacks, many factors have been mentioned by other authors because they represent a palpable reality in our country. For instance, Alvarez & Guevara (2021) stated that "EFL teachers may still have negative perspectives towards these new materials because of time constraints, lack of training, uneven activities among language skills and learner strategies, lack of destination culture and contextualized activities."

Linked to this, the participating subjects also have uncertainties because collaboration is not one of the strengths in Ecuadorian educational contexts. In fact, there are some authors who recognize that collaborating is not a problem that was originated individually but collectively, making it part of a culture. Thus, they suggest that "it only requires a drastic change in the mentality of the oligarchies and of the faculty and will involve a breaking down of the walls that separate academics, schools and colleges within the institutions" (Feyen et al., 2016). Hence, it is no surprise that the participants in this study mention collaboration as a potential threat at the time of applying LS. To illustrate this, participant A talks about the potential disadvantages of using LS in her context:

> "The way that person will perceive it (collaboration) is crucial because when you engage in group planning, they might expect their ideas to be accepted. If you present an idea and they don't agree with what you're thinking, you may think, "Why should I do this if I believe that this other approach is better? Perhaps, this is the potentially negative aspect of collaboration" (Participant A, personal communication, May 19th, 2023).

Furthermore, the concern of the participants about the potential problems of collaboration also includes the willingness to be part of the project because of the time it would take to apply the whole process of working together. Participant B, in that regard, states that,

> "LS implies a lengthy process that can take a month, two months, or even the entire year, requiring consistent collaboration with my partner. My partner needs me, as I mentioned at the beginning, right? The question is, are people always available and willing to engage? Or is it more like the less they bother me, the better? Just let me have my free hours and that's it. Therefore, the fact that we now have to sit down, talk, plan, and take some of my free hours to do this becomes part of the problem." (Participant B, personal communication, May 23rd, 2023).

Based on that, we can imply that one of the challenges teachers can face during the implementation of this innovative tool is the lack of interest in collaborating or the little time that people may have to sit down and reflect together about their practices. However, the participants that were interviewed showed a vast interest in applying the whole process in their institutions since they consider that would be a step to introduce innovation into their educational contexts and even proposed the researchers apply the tool in their group of teachers:

> "LS is something that I would like to do in the long term, and I was mentioning that I would like to see if there is an opportunity to demonstrate this to the authorities and create a kind of pilot program. Yes, let's start with my area. Let's begin with one trimester since they don't want to commit to the entire year. We can start in the first trimester, identify the problems that we already know exist, and try to improve upon them" (Participant B, personal communication, May 23rd, 2023).

> "Since I am in the mindset of change, improvement, and being judged, I believe that it won't affect me negatively at all. In fact, it will help me improve and become more creative. Maybe in my class, in my subject, or in the topic I am teaching, I can search for better strategies or techniques to enhance the learning experience. Why not? There's nothing to lose in trying to improve" (Participant A, personal communication, May 19th, 2023).

In conclusion, this study sheds light on Ecuadorian teachers' perspectives regarding Lesson Study (LS) as a tool for innovation and professional growth. Participant A viewed LS as a means to innovate and enhance instructional practices, aligning with recent studies that highlight LS's role in fostering reflective and evidence-based improvements in teaching (Vermunt et al., 2019). Participant B emphasized LS's collaborative benefits, including shared responsibility and problem-solving, which are also supported by recent literature that underscores the capacity of LS to build a cooperative culture among educators (Cajkler et al., 2013). Together, the participants recognized LS as a valuable approach to introduce meaningful innovation and improve the learning experience for students through collaboration and mutual support.

Teachers identified challenges in implementing Lesson Study (LS), notably time constraints and the need for a collaborative mindset within Ecuadorian education. These concerns align with findings from recent studies. For instance, Takahashi & McDougal, (2016)however, is a challenge, since they require significant changes in how mathematics is taught. Lesson study (jugyou kenkyuu highlight that time constraints and the necessity for a collaborative culture are significant barriers to LS implementation. Similarly, (Dudley et al., 2019) emphasize that institutional support and dedicated time are crucial for successful LS adoption. In contexts like Ecuador, where collaborative practices in education are still developing, fostering a collective mindset and providing sufficient time and institutional support are essential for LS to succeed.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis and discussion provide valuable insights into Ecuadorian English teachers' perceptions of Lesson Study (LS) as a tool for fostering innovation, collaboration, and professional development. Although innovation in education is a relatively new concept for the

participants, they exhibited a growing understanding of it, recognizing that innovation involves introducing new elements to traditional methods and remaining open to change. They realized that while technology can enhance innovation, it is not essential; instead, purposeful and meaningful approaches in teaching can drive impactful changes in the classroom. This finding reflects the participants' emphasis on the need for teaching methods that actively engage students and enhance learning, aligning directly with the study's research question on how LS supports innovative and collaborative practices in the Ecuadorian educational context.

Regarding LS specifically, participants perceived it as a valuable, collaborative approach that fosters professional growth, enhances teaching practices, and improves classroom experiences. They highlighted LS as a means to shift institutional culture from punitive to supportive by encouraging problem-solving and continuous improvement. Despite recognizing challenges—particularly in terms of time constraints and the need for commitment from colleagues—the participants expressed a strong interest in implementing LS within their institutions and were even willing to advocate for it as a pilot program. Their enthusiasm underscores the potential LS has for cultivating a collaborative and supportive culture within Ecuadorian schools, paving the way for sustainable educational innovation.

This study contributes to existing literature by expanding our understanding of LS as an innovative tool in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, particularly in Ecuador, where collaboration and innovation are emerging practices. The findings suggest that LS not only offers a practical framework for professional development but also promotes shared responsibility and collaboration, essential for meaningful educational reform. By linking LS with innovation in a non-technological sense, this study underscores that innovation in EFL can stem from methodological approaches, not just technological advancements, thus enriching the global dialogue on how LS can drive change in diverse educational settings. Overall, this study indicates that LS holds significant promise for advancing innovation and enhancing both teaching and learning in Ecuadorian schools, providing a foundation for future research and practice in similar contexts.

LIMITATIONS

Despite the valuable insights gained from the analysis and discussion of the results, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The study was conducted with of only two participant teachers. While their perspectives and experiences provide valuable insights, it is crucial to recognize that the findings may not be representative of all teachers in Ecuador or other educational contexts. Furthermore, the analysis and interpretation of the data in this study were subjective processes. The researchers' personal biases and perspectives may have influenced the coding and categorization of the data, potentially leading to a subjective interpretation of the participants' response. Efforts were made to mitigate bias through multiple readings and discussions among the research team, but it is essential to acknowledge that subjectivity may still exist to some extent. Finally, the data collected in this study relied on self-reported accounts from the participant teachers. Researchers strained to ensure confidentiality and encourage open and honest responses, self-reporting introduces the possibility of response bias and inaccuracies. Participants may have unintentionally omitted or misrepresented information, leading to potential limitations in the accuracy and completeness of the data.

FURTHER WORK

Future studies could investigate the long-term effects of LS on teacher practice and student learning outcomes. By conducting longitudinal research, researchers can track the sustained impact of LS on teachers' instructional practices and student achievement over an extended period of time. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits and limitations of LS as a long-term professional development strategy.

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