A Feasibility Study of Lesson Study Implementation for Iranian English Teachers' Professional Development: Managers' Insights

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A B S T R A C T

Recent studies have identified Lesson Study (LS) as an effective professional development activity for language teachers, emphasizing its potential to enhance teaching practices through collaborative planning, observation, and reflection. This study investigated the feasibility of implementing LS for Iranian English teachers' professional development, using content analysis and quantitative analysis of code frequencies to assess LS's recognition and applicability. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six institute managers, utilizing 13 open-ended questions. After transcribing the interviews, 14 codes were identified through deductive descriptive coding: belief, cognition, efficiency, implementation, preference, obstacles, financial issues, voluntary implementation, permission, class observation, interaction, collaboration, teacher, and teaching. Among these, cognition, efficiency, and implementation emerged as the most critical factors. Findings revealed that LS was not recognized by most English institute managers. However, its positive effects on EFL teachers' perceptions highlighted its value as a professional development approach. Despite these advantages, LS was deemed inapplicable in Iran due to a lack of relevant knowledge and understanding among educators. The study concludes that implementing LS in Iranian English institutes requires cultural and contextual adaptation. To establish LS as a professional development tool, it must be effectively promoted and understood within the local educational framework.

1. Introduction

Lesson Study (LS) originated in Japan as a joint professional development approach for teachers. By using LS, teachers work together to plan lessons, observe classroom teaching, and engage in reflective discussions to enhance instructional practices. LS has become globally popular as an effective

approach for improving teacher learning and enhancing educational outcomes (Godfrey et al., 2019). In spite of its widespread success, one of the continuous challenges in professional development is the isolation that many teachers face, with restricted opportunities to observe peers or receive constructive feedback on their teaching methods (Coenders & Verhoef, 2019). LS, which has been used for over a century in Japan, has become a cornerstone of teacher growth (Schipper et al., 2017).

However, the use of LS in other educational contexts, particularly in non-Japanese settings, has been less extensively studied. Although professional collaboration is increasingly emphasized in education (Richit & Da Ponte, 2021), countries like Iran still face substantial obstacles to applying collaborative professional development models. Many ELT teachers in Iran continue to work in environments characterized by isolation and limited access to peer feedback. This separation raises critical questions about the feasibility and applicability of LS in such contexts. Although LS has been shown to foster reform-based teaching practices and improve teacher reflection (Arslan, 2019), its potential within the Iranian educational landscape remains largely unexplored.

The existing literature on LS, while extensive in its analysis of Western and East Asian contexts, provides little insight into how this model can be adapted for countries like Iran, where systemic and cultural differences may impede its success. There has been research by Dudley (2013) suggesting that LS can be successfully used in small groups of teachers, even with minimal resources, but these kinds of findings have not been systematically tested in environments where collaboration is not an important part of the professional culture. The relevance of LS to the specific challenges faced by Iranian English language teachers has not been fully established, while LS fosters enhanced pedagogical content knowledge and improves student learning outcomes (Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004).

Despite recent efforts to improve professional development initiatives aimed at empowering teachers to enhance student learning outcomes in Iran (Azari Noughabi & Amirian, 2021; Bonjakhi et al., 2024; Keyvanloo et al., 2023), significant gaps remain in the effectiveness and implementation of these programs. By emphasizing teacher agency and collaborative problem-solving, LS presents a promising model for sustainable professional development (Holmqvist, 2020). However, the present landscape of professional development in Iran often lacks the necessary structure and support to facilitate meaningful change. Ongoing evaluation and improvement of teaching practices are crucial since they are key factors in student learning success (Laoli et al., 2022). Inadequate teaching practices can severely hinder students' learning conditions, underscoring the urgent need for structured professional development approaches like LS.

Lesson Study (LS) has gained considerable attention globally over the past two decades, with various adaptations across Europe and the USA. However, its core principles remain deeply rooted in its origins in Japan, as well as in other parts of the Far East, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and China (Lee, 2008). Significant challenges arise when attempting to implement LS in new educational contexts, while these global adaptations demonstrate the flexibility of LS. Although LS focuses on collaborative lesson planning, live lesson observations, and reflective dialogue, its success depends largely on the professional and cultural environment in which it is used.

One key problem with LS implementation outside of its cultural origin is the issue of teacher collaboration. In many Western and non-Asian educational settings, professional collaboration is not deeply embedded in the teaching culture. The UK version of LS, as outlined by Dudley (2013), shows

that teachers typically focus on a small number of case students and follow a cyclical process of research lessons, review, and planning meetings. However, even in the UK, the success of LS is not guaranteed without significant adaptation to the local teaching culture and practices. This raises concerns about how LS can be effectively implemented in educational systems that do not value collaborative professional development, such as in the Iranian context, where teachers often work in isolation.

While the fundamental goal of LS is to enhance teaching knowledge and improve student learning outcomes, literature largely focuses on its benefits rather than the barriers to its implementation. Takahashi & Yoshida (2004) emphasize the capacity of LS to promote reflective teaching practices and create opportunities for professional growth. However, these benefits are highly contingent on institutional support and the professional willingness of teachers to participate in LS cycles. Without addressing these contextual factors, LS may be viewed as an idealized model that is difficult to realize in less collaborative teaching environments.

Furthermore, while LS's adaptability has been widely praised, its implementation across different contexts often fails to account for critical variables such as resource availability, teacher workload, and the specific needs of foreign language teachers. As practiced in Dudley's (2013) UK model, the research lesson cycles might not fully translate into countries like Iran, where teaching resources are often limited and teachers face additional barriers to collaboration and professional development.

There has been another challenge showing that most studies on LS (e.g., Khalid et al., 2016; Schipper et al., 2017) tend to focus on its positive effects on teachers' knowledge and professional collaboration, which often neglect to critically examine its limitations in diverse educational settings. For example, while LS fosters dynamic lesson design and reflective practices, its ability to address the specific needs of foreign language instruction, especially in underdeveloped educational contexts, remains underexplored. Studies like Coşkun (2017) suggest that LS can support foreign language teachers in continuously improving their instructional practices; yet, little empirical research has been conducted on the logistical and cultural hurdles that must be overcome for LS to be effective in non-Western or non-Asian settings.

Thus, while LS offers a well-structured approach for enhancing instructional practices, its implementation needs careful consideration of cultural and contextual factors that may hinder its success in places like Iran. The current body of research, although rich in its depiction of LS's potential, fails to address these critical challenges, leaving a significant gap in the literature. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the feasibility of LS in Iranian English language institutes, where professional collaboration is not yet institutionalized. Understanding these barriers and proposing practical adaptations for LS in the Iranian context will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how LS can be applied in diverse educational environments.

The literature on LS has increasingly recognized its potential as a collaborative professional development model for teachers, particularly in enhancing pedagogical practices and fostering a supportive teaching community. One significant study by Altınsoy (2023) in Turkey showed that LS effectively reduces isolation among novice teachers by promoting collaboration through cycles of lesson planning, observation, and reflection. In this study, participants exhibited significant growth in their pedagogical knowledge and collaboration skills, which suggests that LS can effectively bridge

the gap between theory and practice in teacher education, especially for pre-service teachers. However, this research mainly focused on pre-service educators, leaving unanswered questions regarding the impact of LS on experienced teachers who may have different professional development needs.

Building on these insights, Willems and Van den Bossche (2019) synthesized various studies on LS and confirmed its effectiveness in enhancing teacher knowledge, skills, and reflective practices. Their findings underscored the role of LS in creating collaborative environments that could be beneficial for both novice and experienced teachers. Nonetheless, they identified a critical gap in long-term research regarding the sustainability of LS practices across diverse educational settings, indicating a pressing need for empirical studies that explore the scalability and lasting effects of LS.

Vermunt et al. (2019) contributed to this discourse by examining the qualitative effects of LS on teacher learning and collaboration, focusing on reflective discussions during lesson planning and delivery. Their findings revealed that LS deepens teachers' understanding of student thinking and enhances instructional strategies, particularly through video analysis as a tool for refining teaching practices. However, they also pointed out the logistical challenges teachers face when employing digital tools for LS, especially in resource-constrained environments.

Further research has emphasized LS's potential to integrate with modern educational approaches such as STEM education. Aykan and Yıldırım (2022) noted that LS improved STEM lesson planning and teaching quality during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings demonstrated that LS could enhance both pedagogy and content knowledge in distance learning contexts. However, this study did not thoroughly explore how LS can be sustained beyond crisis-driven distance learning or how its benefits can be scaled across various subjects and educational systems.

Laoli et al. (2022) examined challenges faced by novice English teachers and found that LS could alleviate issues like lack of confidence and reliance on traditional teaching methods. This research leaves open questions about how experienced educators might benefit from LS and how it could be adapted to environments lacking a collaborative culture, while emphasizing the importance of structured support systems for novice teachers' long-term success.

Although studies like Richit et al. (2021) and Durkin (2023) provide valuable insights into the collaborative nature of LS, there remains a noticeable gap regarding the adaptability of LS in non-collaborative, resource-constrained environments such as Iran. Most research tends to focus on the positive aspects of LS without critically addressing the logistical and cultural barriers impeding its implementation in such regions.

Research consistently underscores LS's role as a collaborative professional development model. For instance, Sabbagh et al. (2023) developed a model for managing LS in secondary schools that emphasizes mutual learning through qualitative research circles involving questioning, planning, action, observation, and reflection. This study lacks empirical evidence regarding the long-term sustainability of LS within non-Western educational systems where professional collaboration is less common, while it highlights the potential for peer support and practical experience exchange to enhance instructional quality.

In the EFL context, Zahedi et al. (2022) investigated LS's role in improving classroom education specifically within elementary schools in Iran. Their findings suggest that LS can improve teaching quality by fostering teacher collaboration; however, this research is limited to early educational settings and does not address whether similar benefits apply to higher education or foreign language instruction contexts like EFL teaching.

Building upon these insights, Farvardin et al. (2022) explored the impact of LS on both teachers' professional development and learners' grammatical knowledge. Their study demonstrated that LS enhances teacher collaboration and professional growth while supporting its adaptability to EFL settings. However, they did not completely address how LS can be implemented in systems that lack institutional support or where teachers face resource constraint issues prevalent in many non-Western educational systems.

Regardless of the empirical evidence supporting the benefits of LS, a significant gap exists in qualitative research focusing on institutes' managers, particularly through semi-structured interviews. Most existing studies have primarily focused on teachers' perceptions while largely neglecting the views of managers. This oversight is vital, as understanding managers' perspectives could provide deeper insights into the institutional support mechanisms necessary for the effective implementation of LS practices. Furthermore, while empirical research consistently stresses the advantages of LS, many studies overlook the challenges associated with its application in different cultural and institutional contexts. This is particularly relevant in regions like Iran, where a lack of a strong collaborative teaching culture may impede the adoption of LS. Addressing these gaps, this study aims to investigate the feasibility of implementing LS in Iranian English language institutes, focusing on identifying barriers and potential adaptations required for successful implementation.

There remains a significant gap in the literature concerning the perceptions of institute managers on LS, while teachers' perceptions have been extensively researched across various topics (e.g., Amirian & Azari Noughabi, 2017; Atai-Tabar et al., 2024; Richards et al., 2001), including their beliefs about LS (Khokhotva & Elexpuru Albizuri, 2020; Mayrhofer, 2019; Purwanti & Hatmanto, 2019) and how it shapes their professional learning opportunities. The current study aims to address this gap by exploring the perceptions of Iranian English Language Teaching (ELT) institute managers about the feasibility of applying LS in Iran to understand the cultural and contextual challenges that may influence its adoption. This is significant because, without clear evidence of its applicability from those in managerial positions, LS risks being disregarded as an effective professional development tool in Iran. The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

RQ1. What are Iranian English language institute managers' perceptions of the recognition of Lesson Study as a method for professional development in Iran?

RQ2. What are Iranian English language institute managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of Lesson Study as a method for professional development in Iran?

RQ3. What are Iranian English language institute managers' perceptions of the feasibility of Lesson Study as a method for professional development in Iran?

2. Methodology

This section includes the description of the participants, the instruments, and the data collection procedure.

2.1 Participants and Setting

This study employed a qualitative design, utilizing descriptive conceptual content analysis to identify concepts or ideas in the qualitative data and examine the study's objectives. The research was conducted in Mazandaran and Khorasan Razavi provinces. The participants consisted of six exclusively male institute managers aged 40–60, five Ph.D. holders, and one M.A. holder in ELT, selected through purposive sampling. This group included experienced ELT teachers with a minimum of 10 years of teaching experience and 5–30 years of management experience.

Purposive sampling is a kind of qualitative research technique that is used by researchers to deliberately choose participants who have specific characteristics relevant to the research focus. This ensures that the data collected is rich and relevant to the study's objectives. Additionally, it facilitates a deeper exploration of topics that may be overlooked in broader sampling methods. This leads to more detailed and contextually rich data (Creswell, 2016). Efforts were made to ensure diversity by including managers from institutes of varying sizes and operational models to provide a range of perspectives. Although the sample size was small, it was deemed appropriate for an exploratory feasibility study aimed at generating deep insights into the potential implementation of LS in Iranian context.

2.2 Instrumentation

Institute managers were chosen in this study for semi-structured interviews because of their experience in both management and teaching, as well as their understanding of institutional challenges related to professional development. These interviews were the primary data collection instrument conducted with the selected institute managers and lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. Among these six interviews, two took place face-to-face, while the remaining four were conducted online due to COVID-19 restrictions. In-depth exploration of topics is among the benefits of semi-structured interviews, which keep a consistent framework and allow for both reliable data collection and rich qualitative insights (Creswell, 2016). The mentioned interviews consisted of 13 open-ended questions designed to explore managers' views on cognition, perception, and the feasibility of LS implementation in their institutes. These questions were developed based on a review of the relevant literature and validated by seven experts in ELT to ensure their validity. Example questions included:

"Have you studied or researched Lesson Study? If so, could you share your insights?"

"What is the fundamental difference between Lesson Study and other methods of improving education?"

"Do financial issues hinder the implementation of Lesson Study?"

"Have you ever conducted or do you plan to conduct Lesson Study at your institute?"

2.3 Research Procedure

The study was conducted over a period of 5 to 6 months and was designed as a feasibility study without an experimental or control group. Participant selection involved approaching 30 institutes across various cities. Out of these, 16 institutes refused to participate without considering the topic. Ultimately, 14 institutes consented to cooperate; however, eight of these withdrew after being informed about the specifics of the study, showing a lack of recognition of LS as an important professional development method. This left six English language institutes that agreed to participate in the study. The remaining six institute managers participated in the semi-structured interviews to provide insights into their cognition, perceptions, and challenges related to LS. The interview protocol of this study, adopted from Jacob and Furgerson (2012), begins with an introduction that briefly explains the purpose of the study and obtains informed consent from institute managers as the participants. Following this, warm-up questions are posed to gather general information about the participants' backgrounds and experiences related to education and professional development. The core questions focus on open-ended inquiries regarding previous knowledge or research on LS, perceptions of its effectiveness as a professional development method, challenges faced in implementing LS, and plans for future implementation. Exploring questions is encouraged to elicit elaboration on responses, which allows for deeper insights based on the participants' answers. The interviews conclude with a summary of key points discussed, thanking the participants for their time and contributions. Additionally, the interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. The transcribed interviews underwent descriptive conceptual content analysis using MAXQDA software, which facilitated the identification of recurring themes and codes.

Through deductive descriptive coding, 14 codes were extracted from the data, including belief, cognition, efficiency, implementation, preference, obstacles, financial issues, voluntary implementation, permission, class observation, interaction, collaboration, teacher, and teaching. These codes were derived from a thorough review of the transcribed interview data and aligned with the study's research questions as well as relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical studies on LS. The codes were analyzed to determine their significance in relation to the research objectives. The frequency of each code's occurrence was quantified using SPSS version 26 to enhance the rigor of the content analysis. This quantitative component provided additional insights into the prominence of specific themes within the dataset. By integrating both qualitative insights and quantitative frequency counts, the study ensured a comprehensive exploration of the feasibility of LS implementation in Iranian English language institutes.

3. Data Analysis

To address the first research question concerning the perceptions of Iranian Language Institute managers toward recognizing LS as a method for professional development, interviews with managers of these institutes and analysis of the collected data revealed several key codes. Among these codes, cognition, efficiency, and implementation emerged as the most critical in addressing the research questions. Notably, the code "cognition" was identified as particularly significant in understanding the managers' perceptions of LS. The insights shared by interviewees regarding their understanding of LS are summarized in Table 1, which illustrates their varying levels of awareness and recognition of this professional development approach.

Table 1

The ideas given by the interviewees on their cognition of LS

	Cognition
Interviewee One	-Yes, I know LS. -I have a personal interest in this topic. -I have studied and conducted a workshop on the subject.
Interviewee Two	-I don't know it academically. -We do not have academic knowledge, but I have some general information from my university days. -LS is carried out based on the needs of the teachers and the class, and there is no fixed method.
Interviewee Three	-It is an effective method, and based on the explanations given, it is very good. -The main difference is that it is natural and derived from the practice to theory. -I have also experimented with it, using several professors in teaching. This creates a valuable reflection among teachers in the class. -I may not know it academically, but according to the principle of LS (teachers' cooperation to solve class problems), this topic was my idea before establishing the institute.
Interviewee Four	-I have personally studied peer observation and mentoring, and I have read some materials, but I have no knowledge and no study about LS, and I have not seen it at any institutes, even in famous institutions like the ILI. -In my opinion, the difference between Lesson Study and other methods is that the teachers can choose the right method based on their own problem with the cooperation of other teachers and the needs of the class. -I did not do it in my institute and my answer is negative. But in my opinion, based on the explanations given, it can be very effective.
Interviewee Five	-Yes, there is a difference. LS is a type of participatory approach that involves participation among teachers. -I also wrote a thesis on LS, and it is like action research, so the teacher must have the ability to reflect with others. -Teachers observe each other and use their experiences to solve classroom problems with the aim of improvement. As for me, I have a very positive opinion about it.
Interviewee Six	-I am familiar with LS, but it has not been implemented in a structured manner in the class until now. However, I believe that having someone come and observe the class and provide feedback would be beneficial. -There is something similar to LS called action research, which addresses the issues present in the class. It is worth noting that action research emphasizes solving one's own problems. -The main distinction between LS and action research is that LS is conducted in groups, where observations are made, and the findings are used to make adjustments to the lessons. On the other hand, action research can be carried out individually, for personal and classroom improvement purposes. -In my opinion, LS falls under the category of CPD (Continuous Professional Development). Attending CPD activities is a way to enhance one's career.

Based on the data received from interviews, the majority of the institute managers showed a limited or incomplete understanding of LS. Out of the six institute managers interviewed, four (66.7%)

showed a distorted familiarity with LS, indicating that while they had heard of the concept, their knowledge was inaccurate or superficial. Two managers (33.3%) had either no or minimal knowledge of LS, reflecting a significant gap in awareness. Only one institute manager (16.7%) had a thorough understanding of LS, having studied and applied it in a comprehensive manner. This pattern highlights a general lack of cognition about LS among Iranian English language institute managers. The use of LS in Iran faces significant challenges due to limited awareness and distorted familiarity among those who would use it, even though LS has proven to be an effective professional development approach in other contexts. These findings highlight the need to educate managers on LS, which would be an important first step toward fostering its use in the Iranian educational system. To address the second research question concerning institute managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of LS for their professional development, the researcher focused on analyzing data related to the code "efficiency." This analysis involved transcribing the interviewees' insights regarding their perceptions of the efficiency of LS, which are specified in Table 2. The results show how managers evaluate the impact of LS on their professional growth and highlight their beliefs about its effectiveness as a developmental approach within their institutes.

Table 2

The ideas given by the interviewees on the efficiency of LS

	Efficiency
Interviewee One	-I strongly believe in it. -It is definitely very effective. -And it is believed to be efficient. -It will solve many problems in the class and promote the teacher and education.
Interviewee Two	Yes. If it can be fully implemented, it will be an effective method.
Interviewee Three	-LS creates a very positive impression among the teachers in the class. -And, based on the explanations given, it is very beneficial. -And if I were to implement it and the problems of the institutes were reduced, I would bring the entire classes and teachers to it.
Interviewee Four	-I firmly believe that the concept of Lesson Study (LS) needs to be cultivated within our educational culture -LS is inherently subjective, but based on the explanations provided, I have strong faith in its value. -Teachers collaborating and supporting one another is crucial, and I am fully convinced that LS can be 100% effective. -Furthermore, if implemented correctly, I believe LS has the potential to address many educational challenges.
Interviewee Five	-The goal is to improve and address problems in LS. -Professors can observe each other's classes in groups and collaboratively solve problems, which -I believe can be very beneficial. -LS can be highly advantageous. Teachers can address these problems by working together.
Interviewee Six	-LS is very practical; it can be used to solve problems in class. -I think it is very effective, but if it is done correctly, it is wonderful. If you remove the hassle from it, the results are very good and, at the same time, the atmosphere of the classroom and the institute will be very good.

The data revealed that five out of six institute managers (83.3%) viewed LS as a useful and efficient method for teaching skills development. These managers expressed a strong belief in the effectiveness of LS to foster professional development, reflection, and collaboration. They emphasized that, if used appropriately, LS could significantly enhance teacher development and classroom instruction in their institutes. However, one manager (16.7%) did not consider LS relevant or effective for their context. This could be due to either a lack of understanding of LS or challenges in adapting it to the specific needs of their institute. Overall, the results reveal that even though most of the managers believe in the efficiency of LS, its successful implementation would rely on addressing gaps in understanding and ensuring that all managers and teachers are fully informed of its benefits. Without sufficient knowledge and awareness, LS may not be applied effectively in the Iranian English language institutes' professional development frameworks. Therefore, raising awareness and providing training on LS is needed to enable its implementation and maximize its potential for teacher development. In addressing the third research question involving the feasibility of implementing LS as a method of professional development in Iranian English language institutes, the relevant code identified was "implementation." This code contains various insights about the practical application of LS. The ideas expressed by the interviewees regarding their experiences and strategies for implementing LS are transcribed and analyzed in Table 3.

Table 3

The ideas given by the interviewees on their Implementation of LS

	Implementation
Interviewee One	–Our teaching method at the institute is for newcomers to observe at least 10 classes and write a report on them after completing the TTC course. This approach has been very helpful, as one of the new teachers who had many problems in the classroom has made significant progress. –Our teachers observe each other's classes to address any questions they may have, such as how the teacher is managing the class and what strategies they are using. These questions and answers have helped solve many problems. –For their own benefit, teachers can invite other teachers to observe their classes and provide feedback and comments. Alternatively, a less experienced teacher can attend an experienced teacher's class to learn new things. Teachers who teach the same class can also observe each other and brainstorm together.
Interviewee Two	–In our teacher recruitment system, after the new teachers are trained, they must attend several classes and observe other teachers to learn the institute's processes. –We had a course where the training was intensive and the class content was extensive, so the teachers communicated with each other and discussed the issues during these meetings. –In our institute, there are regular meetings where teachers are asked for their opinions on various aspects of teaching, such as departmental matters, class management, and scheduling. –Whether it was regarding educational or management issues, there were instances where experienced teachers provided assistance to those who were less experienced and offered solutions on how to handle various classroom situations.

Interviewee Three	-We didn't have LS, but one issue was very important to me: good support was formed among the language learners, which was very satisfying. -Naturally, yes, I did some parts of LS with the discussions and observations that the professors made together, not only in the field of educational processes, but also in other issues such as class and time management, they were able to reduce their problems a lot.
Interviewee Four	-No, I have not done it yet, but if the institute undergoes significant development and the number of students increases, I will definitely do it. -I have not done it yet, but I can confidently say that if LS is implemented in my institute, it will undoubtedly improve the educational process.
Interviewee Five	-Some parts of LS have been used. -Many problems in the classes have been solved thanks to the experiences of experts, which have been very helpful. However, as I mentioned, the LS study has not been fully implemented.
Interviewee Six	-We had some parts of the Lesson Study, such as peer observation and mentoring, and we involved the teachers in the discussions. However, it has not been applied in a structured way in the class until now. However, it is possible for someone to come and observe the class and give feedback as part of the course research. -Because it is not conventional, there may be more problems than benefits. However, if it is done correctly, it can be wonderful. -We have had some collaborations, but we have not had an academic and structured LS. If we want to implement it in a structured way, we can choose several teachers to participate. It must be culturalized.

While LS can present a lot of advantages to students and teachers by promoting a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth, the data from the interviews illustrate a significant gap in its applicability in Iranian English language institutes. Out of the six institute managers interviewed, only one manager (16.7%) with prior knowledge and implementation experience expressed a positive view regarding the feasibility of implementing LS in the institute. The remaining five managers (83.3%), not knowing LS prior to the interview, considered it irrelevant and incompatible with their context due to fundamental knowledge gaps about the LS concept and institutional barriers such as financial obstacles, restrictive policies against observation, and the absence of collaborative frameworks that must be culturalized. This perception of LS as "not relevant" among initially unaware managers means that before the successful adoption of LS in Iranian institutes, much has to be done to raise awareness and provide training for institute managers and teachers. Without a foundational understanding of LS and its advantages, the likelihood of successful implementation remains low. Therefore, while LS offers considerable potential, it is not currently viewed as applicable within the current structure of Iranian English language institutes without systemic changes to address knowledge deficits and institutional barriers.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the current study was to explore the feasibility of implementing LS as a professional development tool for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Iranian English language

institutes. It sought to determine whether LS is recognized by institute managers as an effective method for teacher development and whether it is suitable to enhance EFL teachers' professional development in Iran.

The findings indicate a relationship between an understanding of LS and its application for teachers' professional development. Managers who were aware of LS recognized its potential to foster reflective practices, enhance collaborative lesson planning, and improve classroom teaching. These results are consistent with the work of Yoshida (1999), Fujii (2019), and Arslan (2019), where LS is used to enhance teaching practices through peer collaboration and constructive feedback. However, LS is still relatively unfamiliar to many educators outside of Japan and in some regions like Iran, where limited knowledge of its implementation strategies poses challenges. This observation aligns with the findings of Bayram & Bıkmaz (2021), who believe that increased adoption of LS would be achievable if teachers and administrators were professionally trained and supported for effective implementation.

In the Iranian context, the study highlighted that even though LS has the potential to significantly influence the professional development of EFL teachers, its adoption is hindered by a lack of teacher awareness and institutional support. The findings reflect the work of Ashraf & Kafi (2017), Arslan (2019), and Derakhshan et al. (2020), who also identified LS as a powerful tool for teacher development, especially when educators fully understand its processes. Managers who had some insight into LS believed it could improve teacher collaboration and instructional quality, provided that teachers were comprehensively informed about its benefits. However, the absence of a collaborative professional culture remains a significant obstacle. In Iran, EFL teachers are predominantly isolated and are not provided with sufficient opportunities to engage in reflective and collaborative practice, which is central to the success of LS.

Despite the evidence of LS's benefits in enhancing pedagogical content knowledge and improving classroom practices (Cerbin & Kopp, 2006), its practical application in Iran is not well developed. Studies by Alipour (2018) and Haghighifard & Marzban (2016) confirm that LS is not utilized to its maximum potential in Iranian language institutes due to a lack of institutional support, limited resources, and the absence of a collaborative professional development culture. While some managers recognize the potential of LS, others view it as irrelevant or challenging to implement, citing these constraints as significant barriers. This finding is consistent with research by Richit et al. (2021) and Durkin (2023), emphasizing that leadership plays a pivotal role in either facilitating or hindering the adoption of new educational practices like LS.

To overcome such challenges, there is a need to raise awareness about the benefits of LS and to professionally train managers and teachers. Establishing institutional structures that encourage collaboration could significantly enhance the effectiveness of LS in Iranian English language institutes. Willems and Van den Bossche (2019) indicate the need for more extensive, long-term research to assess the sustained impact of LS in various educational settings, suggesting that without suitable leadership and institutional support, the benefits of LS may remain limited.

Additionally, the results of this study indicate that the applicability of LS in Iran is constrained not by the inherent limitations of the concept, but by the reluctance of managers and teachers to embrace it fully. This is consistent with the findings of Alipour (2018) and Haghighifard & Marzban (2016), who also identified a gap between the potential benefits of LS and its actual implementation in Iranian English language institutes. This reluctance highlights the need for cultural and contextual adaptation of LS to better fit the Iranian educational system.

This research highlights that LS is a valuable professional development initiative through which teachers collaborate to plan, observe, and reflect on lessons. LS provides a means for teachers to carry out classroom research, helping them identify areas for improvement and develop more effective teaching strategies. Its inherent flexibility and emphasis on collaborative inquiry make it an effective method for enhancing teaching practices and learners' outcomes in various educational contexts, including Iranian English language institutes.

To promote the use of LS in these institutes, it would be ideal to share success stories of English language teachers who have effectively implemented LS in their classrooms. Organizing training sessions on LS can equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills for its effective implementation. These sessions should incorporate hands-on activities, collaborative lesson planning, and reflective activities to deepen participants' understanding of LS principles.

Additionally, establishing partnerships with universities and other educational institutions can facilitate the promotion of LS as a professional development method, which may eventually lead to joint training programs or the integration of LS into existing professional development initiatives. Raising awareness among teachers and institutional managers about the benefits of LS is extremely crucial for its effective implementation. A comprehensive understanding of LS can foster strong support among educators, while a lack of recognition remains a primary barrier to its use.

By providing targeted information and training, institutes can strengthen beliefs in the efficacy of LS and establish a good foundation for overcoming difficulties. Furthermore, LS practitioners and institute managers implementing LS in diverse teams need to be aware of practical factors such as team composition, students' conversational skills, and the learning characteristics of participating schools. Addressing these considerations will help ensure that LS fosters successful collaboration and achieves its intended outcomes, ultimately contributing to the professional growth of EFL teachers and enhancing student learning experiences.

The findings of this study carry considerable implications for professional development in the Iranian educational setting. LS is a promising approach to enhancing teaching practices and fostering collaboration among educators. For successful implementation, it is essential that institutes provide adequate resources, time, and support for collaborative practices like LS, with the active support of management. Comprehensive training programs must be developed to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to engage effectively in LS, along with practical activities such as lesson planning, observation, and reflective exercises. Additionally, LS must be culturally and contextually adapted to align with the characteristics of Iranian English language institutes, addressing potential resistance to collaboration and fostering environments beneficial to open discussions. Access to qualified facilitators who understand LS principles is essential for guiding collaborative processes, and institute managers need to be trained so that they can support LS initiatives within their institutes. Finally, the integration of LS into broader institutional policies and professional development programs will help ensure its sustainability and long-term impact on teacher development.

This study faced several limitations that need to be mentioned. Firstly, the sample size was limited to six institute managers, which restricts the generalizability of the findings; a larger and more diverse sample in future research could provide a more comprehensive view of LS implementation. Additionally, while the focus on managers' perspectives was in line with the research objectives, it excluded teachers' direct experience of LS, thereby limiting what is known about its practice in the classroom. The geographic scope of the study was also limited to two provinces, which may not

provide an encompassing view of the Iranian context; extending the research coverage to additional areas would enhance its applicability. Finally, logistical constraints due to the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated online interviews for four participants, which may have impacted the depth of data collection and the richness of responses.

Given these results, there are some directions for future research to explore and expand the potential of LS as a professional development model. First, more empirical studies are needed to examine the long-term effects of LS on teachers' performance and students' outcomes in Iran. As Vermunt et al. (2019) note, reflective discussions of lesson planning and teaching can deepen teachers' understanding of student learning; however, logistical challenges such as resource constraints and the availability of digital tools must be addressed if LS is to be fully effective. Additionally, action research could be conducted to pilot LS programs in selected Iranian institutes and form a foundation for extensive implementation and help to refine LS practices for under-resourced environments. For instance, Altınsoy (2023) demonstrated that LS has the potential to bridge the gap between theory and practice in pre-service teacher education, but further research should examine how LS can be adapted for in-service teacher development, particularly in resource-constrained settings like Iran. Future studies should also explore the impact of LS on students' learning outcomes in English language classrooms through quantitative or mixed-method approaches.

Furthermore, it would be beneficial to examine teachers' experiences and perceptions towards LS to provide a more thorough understanding of its challenges and benefits. Research on how LS can be culturally adapted to address specific challenges in Iranian educational contexts, such as fostering collaboration in traditionally isolated teaching environments, would also be valuable. Lastly, conducting longitudinal studies to measure the effects of LS on teachers' motivation, retention, and job satisfaction could provide deeper information on its long-term effects.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. Have you ever studied or researched Lesson Study? If so, could you share your insights?

2. What is the fundamental difference between Lesson Study and other methods of improving education?

3. Do you believe Lesson Study is an effective method for professional development?

4. Have you ever conducted or do you plan to conduct Lesson Study at your institute?

5. What obstacles do you think hinder the implementation of Lesson Study in your institute?

6. Do financial issues hinder the implementation of Lesson Study?

7. Is it possible to carry out parts of Lesson Study work spontaneously and voluntarily? (In cases where financial issues are considered to be an obstacle to implementation)

8. Are teachers willing to participate in a method of professional development that does not offer awards, points, letters of appreciation, or similar incentives? With what motivation or purpose?

9. If Lesson Study has been implemented in your institute, how effective was it in solving problems and improving the educational process?

10. If Lesson Study is implemented in your institute, to what extent has it solved the issues raised in the classroom and education? Please give an example if possible.

11. Have your teachers ever been allowed to observe each other's classes, or do they have permission?

12. Do the teachers at your institute sit together and discuss financial, educational, and disciplinary issues?

13. For the implementation of Lesson Study at your institute, is your emphasis on improving teaching (education) or on teachers?