After word: What to learn from, what to adopt, what to remain alert to and what *not*-to-forget in the post pandemic world of lesson studies and online professional learning.

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It was hard at first to know what to say about this excellent book. First of all because there is just *so much to* say – and yet the chapters themselves say it all so well - both individually and collectively. (And if that isn't enough Jean Lang's and Nina Helgevold's summary chapter leaves no stone unturned in highlighting the nuggets from each of these studies and synthesising their key contributions). I say this having read the book from cover to cover and most of it more than once - and it is the kind of book that is seldom read 'in full' from front to back.

If you can read it all - then do. The full effect is breath taking.

The editorial team Rongjin Huang, Jean Lang, and Nina Helgevold, and all the contributors should be congratulated on creating a milestone of a publication that carefully documents and sequences the value, innovation and contribution made by lesson studies (and by lesson study inspired professionals) to limit pandemic damage and prepare for the post pandemic future even in the midst of the fog, panic or near despair that most educators around the world experienced to some extent during the most devastating educational disaster of our lives – Covid 19.

In fact it is probably worth just reflecting on the status quo-ante (the pandemic) and also on its early days.

"There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen"

These words, usually attributed to Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, come to mind as I remember events like the following. Having been impressed in 2016 by a trans-national research lesson taught

in both Tokyo and Lausanne, Switzerland presented by Takeshi Miyakawa and Stephane Clivas in Lausanne, Switzerland, I suggested at the WALS conference that same year that we should all try to explore new platforms like Zoom (which I had also discovered that year courtesy of WALS council member Lynn Payne at Michigan State University) to try conducting cross-school, cross-system and trans-national research lessons. A year or so later I was briefly involved in helping to put one such event together between teachers in the UK and teachers in China, but I then remember feeling put off by what felt to me like enormous complexity, technical barriers and logistical challenges. I also remember suggesting to a group of schools at that time that they consider using inter-school Zoom lessons to allow expert teachers of shortage subjects to teach more children across their cluster. Everyone agreed the platform looked great but hardly anyone thought that online teaching on something like Zoom would work (and I had no evidence that it would). I and my colleagues could all see potential, but were all unwilling to take risk the effort involved in departing from the usual ways.

Yet 36 months later children everywhere were learning online from their homes. (Others of course were *not* able to do so – more of which in a page or so). I remember experiencing a number of emotions myself as I started to deliver my summer term teaching program for the first time entirely online. I missed the students and the classroom. I actually wondered at one point that term, whether lesson study would survive Covid at all. It was (or felt like) a paradigm shift.

I heard stories that warmed my heart – of schools who as a matter of principle had sought to preserve social interaction between students when learning online as a pedagogic necessity for their learning. They designed extended groupwork sessions in breakout rooms to allow students to think and explore ideas together (despite being miles apart) and at the same time of course to enable their teachers to evaluate the audible learning by eavesdropping on the conversations and so plan better follow-up discussion and lessons.

But I also heard very different stories - for example, of schools that had been torn between being compliant with national safeguarding legislation and conducting online learning. Some had been so focused on protecting children from risk of harm (such as having their images captured illicitly and published online) that they adopted such policies as never allowing any cameras to be switched-on in lessons at any time – not even the teacher's camera.

Furthermore, other than the teacher, all microphones were also switched off and all student-teacher and student-student interactions were posted using (typed) chat entries. It is difficult to imagine how near-yet-so-far-away those children felt from the peers and teacher they were used to seeing daily and were missing so much.

(You can judge which approach in the wider scheme of things you think exposed children to the greatest risk of harm).

When the early studies of the effects of the pandemic started to be published they were bleak. The common theme amongst them was that all children's learning had been disrupted but that almost everywhere the level of 'learning loss' was seen to be in inverse proportion to the affluence of a child's home. Disadvantaged households often had no devices capable of operating the software. If they did there was likely to be only one device usually shared between several children and which was also likely to be on a costly mobile data connection, never intended for such sustained use and thus swiftly unaffordable and abandoned. The space for study between these online sessions was often overcrowded and noisy.

What we find when we read this book is that even at this early time in the forced online revolution, there were dedicated professionals with level heads keeping calm and focusing their collective attentions on searching out replicable ways of preserving quality – even when online; limiting damage; innovating new approaches and systematically sharing what they found with the world. Front and centre of these practitioners are the authors who have contributed to this book. More impressive still, they were not prepared to see teacher development and professional learning abandoned in the chaos of trying to cope with running education in lockdown conditions. They have demonstrated that highly effective forms of online learning and teaching are possible and can be innovated and improved using lesson study informed online learning processes – even in such adverse conditions. Some so successful that elements of them are being incorporated into practice and professional development even after the return to face-to-face teaching.

So substantial and complete is this work that I cannot add anything of substance that would not merely echo what is already clear to all who do read it. What I will do instead is to write something about my own reflections on these questions.

1. What can we take from this book?
2. What does it tell us about lesson study community?
3. What must we try to remember?
4. What must we try to make sure we don't forget!

My bullet points here below represent what jumped out at me from these pages and are not listed in any specific order.

What should we take from this book and why is it important?

- Profound hope. The contributors have modelled how to behave in a crisis for us all.
- Universality of the pandemic educational experience. There are lots of citations in these articles from non-English language sources and the research is global in its coverage.
- Diversity of approaches to thinking and analysis within the common format of the lesson study cycle: these researchers have used a panoply of methodological approaches and theoretical and analytical lenses and yet revealed common patterns and experiences.
- A focus on discriminatory elements or perspectives of learning and teaching have made visible and resolvable otherwise 'wicked' online classroom issues.). A number of studies required participants to make one-way-or-another judgements collectively which requires negotiation of meaning and cross boundary thinking. Typical of these are asking participants to anticipate or predict student responses or behaviours in learning and then to observe what actually happens in a research lesson. Or asking teachers to set out what they believe will count as evidence of progress in a lesson and then to observe and assess how the students do in relation to these. Focusing on these 'knife edge' discriminators can force better aligned joint understandings and also enable deeper revelations to become visible to the whole group (especially where there is variance between the predicted student responses and the actuals that need (at least hypothetically) explaining and (practically) acting upon).

What does it tell us about lesson study community?

- Lesson study communities are resilient, strong in the face of adversity and determined to bring about well evidenced change even in transformed conditions.

- They are committed to evidence-informed change and knowledge creation
- They are committed to sharing their new knowledge
- They generate and enjoy a sense of community ownership of the work they do and resist prowess of individuals
- They have shown themselves to be committed to doing all this across classrooms, schools, systems, countries, continents and languages …
- They are inclusive – not wanting inequities exaggerated by the pandemic to go unchecked or to become permanent.

What must we try to remember?

These studies suggest:

- We should remember to involve students in our studies whenever we can (in many ways they can know more than us). I was struck recently when feedback from young learners in a study I was involved in in Palestine revealed that seeing themselves on screen looking as big as their teacher was empowering for them and made them feel more confident.
- We should remember to keep human interaction to the fore in online settings - dialogue, faces, body language, small groups, class community.
- Make our school systems more equitable by making sure the poorest people financially are not those paying more for their data, connections, devices, electric power than the more affluent.
- We should train all teachers in online and develop out-of-hours learning resources and courses that are 100% online after the pandemic so we keep these skills current and sharp.
- We should keep doing cross-school, cross-nation and dual language lesson studies so we learn more and assume less about what we are each doing in our classrooms or about how our children are learning

As Camilleri and Calleja conclude in the preceding chapter.

> *"Ultimately, the volunteering teachers had to learn to take control of their own learning and 'survive in style'. In other words, teachers need to experience disruptions as a mode of learning in relation to addressing practice-related issues. As teachers attempt to resolve the disruptions that they encounter, their*

state of cognitive discomfort may induce new opportunities for action and learning. This intrinsic realization (of a new learning opportunity) by teachers stimulates the reconsideration of actions and behaviours and, hence, a reconceptualization of their existing beliefs and practices."

Somehow, I believe we will have to adopt the process of 'surviving in style' as part of a 'new normality' in preparation for the next set of changes around the corner which are likely to severely disrupt education be they as a result of conflict, global warming or for other reasons. Keeping a cool-enough, professional mindset to be able to step back for a time and design the elegant online version of the IMPULS programme Takahashi et. al. describe; to redesign-in-flight and so complete the complex investigation Weaver et. al. describe or to realise, as all these researchers have, that there is always some time to employ systematic thought and study together in order to limit otherwise inevitable damage (and thus, in real terms, to dramatically improve education and learning) is a spirit we will all have to adopt and keep alive and burning.

There are some things therefore that I have listed as being things we must try NOT to forget. These are (and again in no order):

We must try not to forget that:

- Pre- and mid-pandemic, around the world outside of Japan, lesson studies seem to focus predominantly on mathematics, science or language teaching. Will the pandemic world do anything to broaden this?
- Parents or carers may be joining your class unseen!! (Usually at the moment they can keep quiet no longer). So how can we use lesson studies to help turn their closer proximity to and sight of lessons to the advantage of learning and achievement?
- Technology allows us to create and keep a lot of potentially sensitive or dangerous data. Recorded lessons should be permanently deleted after a period or: edited, anonymised, pixelated and kept as resources for future learning and discussion.
- 'Chat' features in online classrooms are great because they allow learners to ask questions when they think of them without disrupting the class and also because you can save the chat for later perusal. BUT it demands students put their thoughts into publicly observed writing. First of all writing is a much more complex process than talking and can divert learners from listening to crucial aspects of dialogue and secondly anyone who is not confident about the quality of their writing will be

unwilling to share it with the class - so the Chat should never be used as a 'substitute' for talk but rather as a supplement.

- The tech companies will continue to innovate. Now we widely have auto-transcription of dialogue and auto-translation between languages on most big platforms which were not there before the pandemic. These are already helping to facilitate cross-country/language lesson studies involving participants who are not able to speak each others' languages fluently.

On this last point I would like to reflect again about forms of professional development that have been catapulted forward by the pandemic.

Equity versus risk

In 2014 the WALS conference was held in Bandung, Indonesia which at the time had the greatest proportion of Twitter users per head of population in the world. The Mayor (who kindly hosted a great conference event) had 'frog hopped' most Western Cities (which ran their administrations by paper post, email, phone calls and to some extent web platforms). Bandung however ran on Twitter. If you find a hole in the road outside your house you take a photo of it and Tweet it for the Council and all its followers to see. When the workers complete their work they send you a photo of the repair (also for all to see).

It is the '*for all to see'* element I want to dwell-on briefly here.

What'sApp and other platforms (such as We Chat in China) enable very large numbers of teachers (tens or even hundreds of thousands) to participate in online learning communities. Asynchronous (any day, any time) access to these groups draws teachers into professional learning who might not otherwise be able to participate because of their busy home lives. Indeed, in some rural and conservative communities where education of women and girls is still contested, such courses are transformative for these women and for their communities.

But there is also a powerful downside in such online settings. The caution exercised by the schools I describe above above in relation to safeguarding, while perhaps overdone, was not misplaced. The feeling of safety one can develop in an online community of like-minded individuals in a large What'sApp group can cause people to drop their guard in what feels

like a safe environment of like-minded individuals where one can take risks and speak out or reveal inner ideas and thoughts.

One way to help make sure this happens is to find a blend of face to face and online. The face-to face community is visible , audible and thus easier to judge, and so is safer. It can also be a mechanism for protecting and safeguarding its members in a larger online setting.

Many of the studies in this book are anticipating or already experiencing a future which blends professional learning together in: physical classrooms or research lessons; online access to classrooms of distant lesson study partners; visceral, face to face discussion at pre-planning, planning and post research lesson stages as well as extensions of these online where recorded clips, still photos, children's work and much else, can supplement the notes and teacher memories contributing to the online analysis and where additional expertise may more easily be introduced to the group from afar through the inclusion of a colleague with experience and expert knowledge in the aspect under focus in the lesson study.

And before we get too scared off by the downsides of online learning, I want to make a very important final observation.

In 2020 I attended the closing ceremony of the first ever online WALS conference. The conference (originally planned to be held in San Francisco) had a strong conference theme of equity in education. At the closing ceremony I tried to list the shining examples I had seen in the proceedings around the world of lesson study promoting and impacting upon equity in education. A participant from Indonesia spoke a little later about my list, politely pointing out that I had not seen the equity wood for the trees. He had been a member of WALS conducting lesson studies in his school for many years. He had wanted to attend the first WALS conference in 2007 but it had been unaffordable. He'd had the same experience every subsequent year – even in 2014 when it was in Bandung! And yet in 2020 he and several of his teachers and senior leaders had all been able to attend and to participate!

So this for me is the biggest thing we must not forget. Even if the quality of the online experience is somewhat reduced in comparison with a face-to-face experience – it is nevertheless almost universally available to anyone with access to a device and some internet.

Oh and there was one other thing ‘not to forget’ in the exciting new online future of lesson studies and professional learning:

Don’t forget to unmute!