

# *Improving Teaching and Enhancing Learning: A Japanese Perspective*

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Also recent approaches to teacher development have centered more in schools and classrooms, involving teachers more directly in decisions which shape their instructional approaches.

The contemporary situation of *Jugyou Kenkyu* in Japan provides various opportunities for change and enriching classroom practices, for teachers' professional development and for improving school activities and environment.

## ***Kenkyu Jugyou & Jugyou Kenkyu***

Open School and Classroom to Community:  
*Kenkyu Jugyou*  
(considered as an event)

Do lesson study:  
*Jugyou Kenkyu*  
(considered as a process)

## **Introduction**

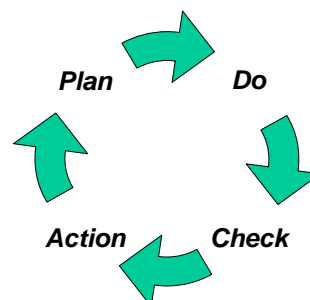
Recent scholarship on teachers' professional development calls for change and suggests that one of the most important things for teachers' professional development is to do research into their own classrooms with their own students.

In the *Jugyou Kenkyu (Lesson Study)* as a fundamental program in Japanese school-based in-service teacher training, teachers find opportunities to reflect on many school and classroom problems that challenge them and develop their own responses.

*Jugyou Kenkyu* helps teachers to reconceptualize how they can improve both their professional effectiveness in their work and their relationships with their students through classroom instruction and related activities.

*Jugyou Kenkyu* with practical quality circle (questioning, planning, acting, observing, reflecting and replanning) has a more significant effect on developing teachers' competences, improving quality of teaching, enhancing learning, recognizing their common stake in the future of the school system and learning from each other than other types of in-service training.

## **The Process of *Jugyou Kenkyu***



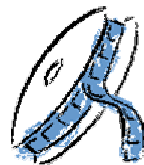
## Plan

First, all of the teachers discussed in some detail the teaching theme they had chosen to focus upon for the year. For example improving the teaching process in first grade mathematics. This had been identified in the “all faculty meeting” at the beginning of the school year.



Clip 1

One of the teachers agreed to present the lesson based upon the lesson plan made cooperatively with his or her colleagues. Fellow teachers were active observers during this class session and made ethnography notes on what happened in the classroom during the lesson. Each teacher had a specific assigned role during the lesson.



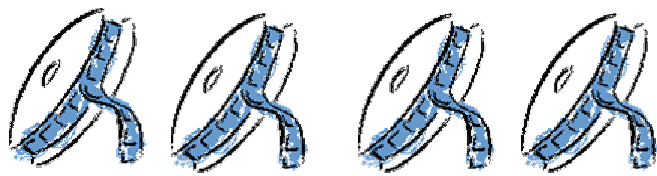
Clip 2



Clip 5

## Check

Following the teaching of the lesson, all of the teachers then met again as a group for analysis, criticism and evaluation of the lesson plan and the volunteer teacher's implementation of it. During this session they examined the appropriateness of the teaching theme, the materials used, instructional methods selected, problems involved in the teacher's performance and the characteristics of each pupil's learning activities.



Clip 6

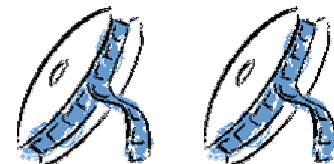
Clip 10

Clip 11

Clip 13

## Action

Finally, teachers discussed necessary revisions to the lesson plan based on their observations and reflections, suggested new teaching-learning strategies, shared their findings and conducted self-directed professional development and self-improvement activities.



Clip 7

Clip 9

## Planning, Acting, Reflecting, Replanning & Reacting

This kind of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting is decidedly intellectual in nature; these teachers are thinking deeply about the options available to them and the way the experiences they standing of each subject matter.

## The Purposes of *Jugyou Kenkyu*

The contemporary situation of *Jugyou Kenkyu* in Japan provides various opportunities;

- for change and enriching classroom practices,
- for improving teaching,
- for understanding children thinking,
- for advancing students' academic achievement,
- for enhancing learning,
- for progressing school effectiveness,
- for teachers' professional development, and
- for creating schools as professional learning communities.

# A Case Study on Cooperation of Nagoya University and the Tokai City Board of Education in Japan



## Purposes of the Study

- The purpose of this study was to investigate the results of a three year collaborative research and professional development partnership between Nagoya University and *Fukishima Junior high school* in Tokai city with a primary emphasis on creating effective environment in school for teachers;
- to learn from each other,
  - to develop mutual lesson observation,
  - to reflect on classroom practices,
  - to understand importance of ethnographic notes in self-reflection and professional development,
  - to understand each students and design learning materials effectively,
  - to create new strategies in teaching, and
  - to support school to develop into a place which is not only for teaching but also for learning.

## Research Methods

We employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods for data collection. Our approach involved classroom observations, ethnography notes, interviews with teachers, teaching analysis and the examination of other relevant school documents. We also videotaped all the collaborative project meetings we observed. Interview, questionnaire, ethnography and observational data were collected from teachers before and after they participated in the project. In the interviews and questionnaires, teachers were asked to discuss their background and experiences in teaching and what had changed as a result of the project relative to their professional development in general and their own teaching specifically.

# A Collaborative Project in Fukushima Junior High School

A Three Year Collaborative Research and Professional Development Partnership Between Nagoya University and *Fukishima Junior High School* (2002-2005)



## Purposes of the Collaborative Project

- Creating school that learns
- Supporting problem solving approach in practice
- Teachers professional development
- Improving teaching
- Enhancing learning

## Programs of the Collaborative Project

- Providing Proposals of *Kenkyu Jugyou* (open school to community)
- Arrangement and planning of all of *Jugyou Kenkyu* in each academic year
- Workshops on *Jugyou Kenkyu* (lesson study)
- Collaborative research on teaching in each subject matter
- Workshops on methods of lesson analysis (*Jugyou Bunseki*)
- Council and advices

# Contents of the Collaborative Project

## For Creating School that Learns & Learning Community

- Open School and classroom to community  
*Kenkyu Jugyou (considered as an event)*

## For Improving Teaching & Enhancing Learning

- Do lesson study  
*Jugyou Kenkyu (considered as a process)*

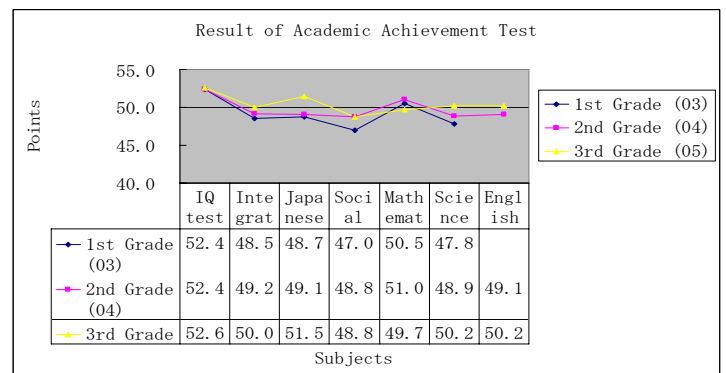
# Do Lesson Study

*Jugyou Kenkyu* & collaborative research on teaching in each subject matter especially: Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Foreign Language, Japanese, Moral Education, Integrated Studies, Health and Physical Education.

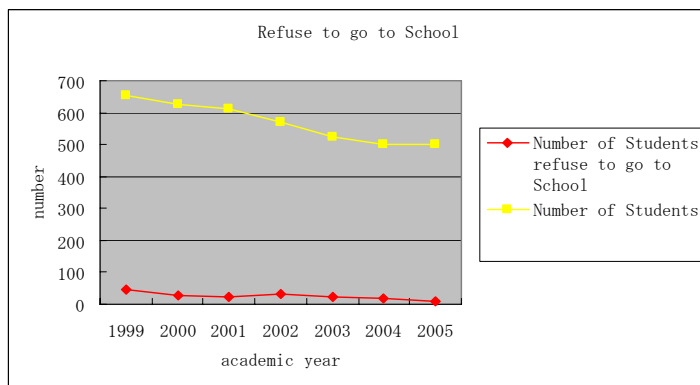
## Research Findings

- Student Academic Achievement
- The School Learning Environment
- Staff Empowerment and Professional Development
- Human Relationships
- Climate of the School for Improving Teaching

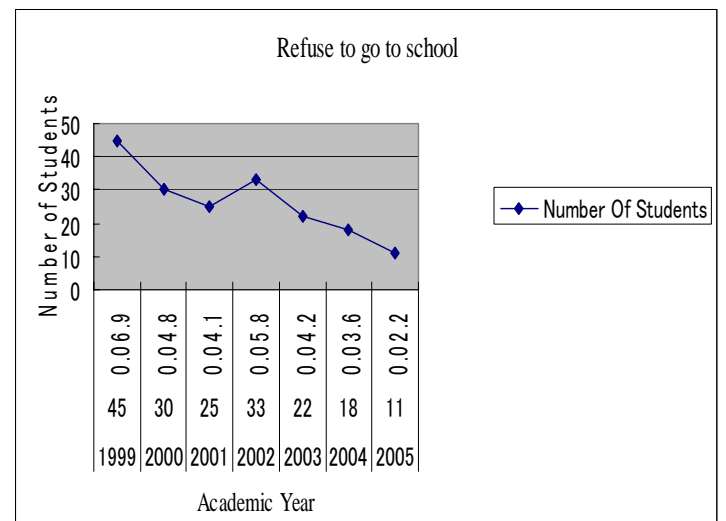
## Student Academic Achievement



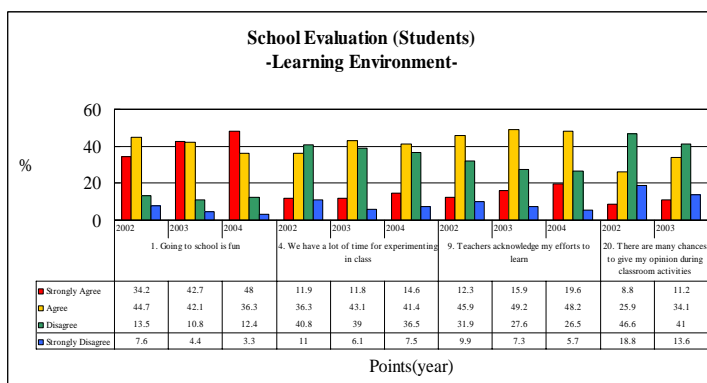
## The School Learning Environment



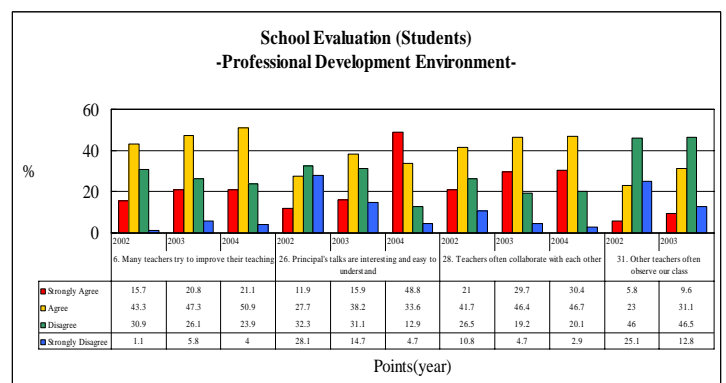
## Refuse to go to school



## The School Learning Environment (Students Evaluation)



## Professional Development



# Human Relationships

Better Relationships Between:

- Teacher-Students
- Teacher-Teacher
- Student-Student
- Teachers-Parents

## Change Climate of the School for Improving Teaching

Teachers tries to:

- Pay attention to individual needs of pupils and asking questions to understand his or her thinking,
- Analyze the progress of teaching and transition points from one activity to another,
- Nominate pupils and react to their behavior during teaching-learning process,
- Choose appropriate teaching techniques to facilitate the use of teaching materials selected, and,
- Guidance of pupil activities for solving problems.
- Apply problem solving approach in the teaching-learning process

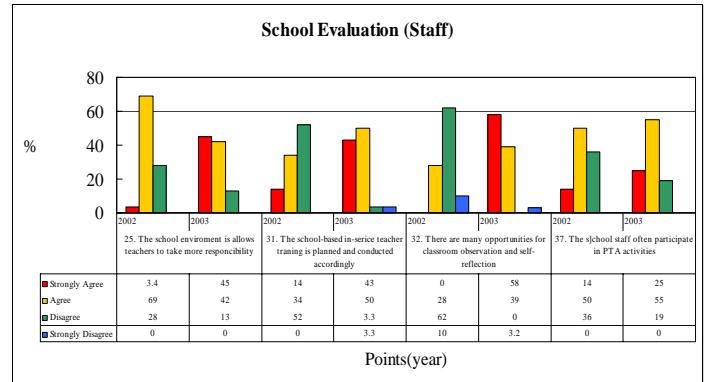
## Teachers Self-reflection(2)

Rather than learning a formal theory of teaching and learning, in the project, teachers learn and develop their skills through observation and reflection on their practice, analysis and evaluation of teaching, and collaborative discussion about classroom activities and each students needs and abilities. Teachers discuss and decide their own research themes, lesson plan, and class for practice, how to examine and reflect of teaching, and how to include students as partner in their collaborative research on classroom activities. Through the project especially the “*Jugyou Kenkyu*” teachers also are doing action research in practice.

## Teachers Self-reflection(4)

In the project, teachers try to understand what students need to experience success in their classroom. As a researcher in the classroom, they understand the processes of teacher-student interaction, learn how to examine classroom phenomena, learn how to evaluate the teaching-learning process, and learn more about their students, what they are interested in and capable of doing.

# Interrelated Communication



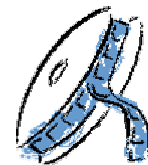
## Teachers Self-reflection(1)

Learning about teaching is a *collaborative* activity and a school partnership with a university is excellent way of collaborative on school improvement. Through, the project, teachers find opportunities:

- to work together,
- to understand each other
- to reflect upon their teaching experiences,
- to understand and communicate their ideas to others,
- to learn from their teaching assessment and self-selection as well as group –reflection, and
- to learn from each other.

## Teachers Self-reflection(3)

In the “*Jugyou Kenkyu*”, as a fundamental program of the project, teachers have opportunities for professional collaboration in solving school problems and addressing teachers’ individual needs. They can adopt innovative teaching methods, plan for the use of new technology, focus upon the teaching of specific skills, and a host of other matters related to classroom instruction and management. These provide opportunities for teachers to share their experiences, their successes and failures, and to seek solutions to common problems together with full understanding of the constraints and limitations under which they must work.



Clip 16

## Limitations of the Study

- It is a first efforts for improve school through a partnership with a university in Nagoya University.
- It is as a case study and generalizability of the results can be questioned.
- The author is head of the project team and hope to develop this kind of project more, so negative points maybe is cover.
- There are many factors which influences on students academic achievement, so it is difficult to judge that all of changes in the school are because of the project.

### *American Teachers' Case*

we can identify over 70 groups engaged in *Jugyou Kenkyu* in the United States, ranging from initiatives at the state level, to small groups of teachers from one school. These groups represent at least 28 states, span at least 90 school districts, include more than 230 schools, and involve at least 1200 teachers.



### *Iranian Teachers' Case*

Iranian teachers may be for the first times learn during *Jugyou Kenkyu* how they can learn from their classroom and collaborative activities. They recognized that they can learn from each other more in detail and in more useful way, especially, through self-reflection and group-reflection on their practices.



## Can *Jugyou Kenkyu* Work in Other Countries?

Many Japanese educational practices have been examined by American educators for possible application in the United States. This is one which we believe has been overlooked and yet has the potential for significant impact, especially as more schools become site-based managed.



## Progress & Challenge

Recent research identify a number of challenges to importing Japanese lesson study in the United States, including lack of shared, frugal curriculum, lack of good lesson examples on particular topics, the need for guidelines on how to observe, discuss, and revise lessons, and the lack of shared planning and observation time during the paid workday, to name but a few.



## Progress & Challenge

Iranian Teachers need more supports, funds and cooperative projects with Japanese educators and educational researchers, who could help them to figure out the quality of *Jugyou Kenkyu* and adapt it to their very different educational system, teachers' quality and school culture.

## Transfer of *Jugyou Kenkyu*

To transfer *Jugyou Kenkyu* to Iran, United States and other countries successfully, it is necessary to develop a culture for collaborative activities, shared professional culture, writing an instructional plan in detailed, developing a unit perspective on teaching-learning process, anticipating students' thinking, learning to observe classroom activities, and giving teachers a central role in developing these practices.

## Conclusion

We define lesson study as systematic inquiry by teachers with the goal of improving their teaching practices. It is a shared professional culture that requires teachers to engage in a cycle of questioning, planning, reflecting, acting, observing, reflecting, replanning, and often questioning future.

*Jugyou Kenkyu* brings an alternative approach to improve teaching-learning process and teachers' professional development and to support school to develop into a place which is not only for teaching but also for learning and as a *learning orientation*.

## Japanese Teachers' Culture

*Jugyou Kenkyu* is based on a long-term continuous improvement model and focuses on student learning, improvement of teaching and *collaborative* activities.

Japanese teachers know that experience, self-study, critiques of their teaching by their colleagues and self-reflection are important parts of this process. Rather than "one-time" workshops on the latest educational topic they are engaged in a "long-term" process of self-reflection and development.

We concluded that *Jugyou Kenkyu* as collaborative research on teaching-learning process needs to take into consideration more the *cultural environment* in order to become an effective model for improving teaching and learning in the other educational contexts.

*Learning orientation* means involving everyone in the system in expressing their aspirations, building their awareness, and developing their capabilities together.



More time and research is needed to evaluate the role of a Japanese approach for improving teaching and professional development-Jugyou Kenkyu- in changing school from “institutions of learning & teaching” to “a learning organization”.

Thank you