

UDC 37.013.42

https://doi.org/10.33619/2414-2948/124/64

FROM PASSIVE TO ACTIVE LEARNING: LESSON STUDY AS A TOOL FOR CHANGE

©*Zheenbekova Ch.*, SPIN-code: 7561-7285, Ph.D., Ala-Too International University,
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, *chynara.zheenbekova@alato.edu.kg*

©*Irenchieva G.*, Ala-Too International University, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

©*Arapova G.*, Ph.D., Ala-Too International University, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

ОТ ПАССИВНОГО К АКТИВНОМУ ОБУЧЕНИЮ: ИЗУЧЕНИЕ УРОКОВ КАК ИНСТРУМЕНТ ИЗМЕНЕНИЙ

©*Жээнбекова Ч. М.*, SPIN-код: 7561-7285, канд. филол. наук, Международный университет
Ала-Тоо, г. Бишкек, Кыргызстан, *chynara.zheenbekova@alato.edu.kg*

©*Иренчиева Г. А.*, Международный университет Ала-Тоо, г. Бишкек, Кыргызстан

©*Арапова Г. У.*, канд. филол. наук, Международный
университет Ала-Тоо, г. Бишкек, Кыргызстан

Abstract. Despite the widespread promotion of student-centered approaches, passive learning remains common in classroom practice. This article examines Lesson Study as a practical and sustainable tool for shifting from passive to active learning. It explores how research-oriented lesson planning, focus students, pedagogical hypotheses, formative assessment, and descriptive observation make student learning visible and analyzable. The article argues that active learning emerges not from specific methods, but from systematic inquiry into how students engage with tasks and supports.

Аннотация. Несмотря на широкое распространение подходов, ориентированных на ученика, пассивное обучение остается распространенным явлением в практике преподавания. В данной статье рассматривается изучение уроков как практичный и устойчивый инструмент для перехода от пассивного к активному обучению. Исследуется, как ориентированное на исследования планирование уроков, фокус на учениках, педагогические гипотезы, формирующее оценивание и описательное наблюдение делают обучение учащихся видимым и поддающимся анализу. В статье утверждается, что активное обучение возникает не из конкретных методов, а из систематического исследования того, как ученики взаимодействуют с заданиями и поддержкой.

Keywords: lesson study; active learning; passive learning; formative assessment; focus students; pedagogical hypothesis; teacher professional development; evidence-based practice.

Ключевые слова: изучение уроков; активное обучение; пассивное обучение; формирующее оценивание; фокус на учениках; педагогическая гипотеза; профессиональное развитие учителя; доказательная практика.

Despite ongoing educational reforms and the widespread adoption of student-centered discourse, passive learning continues to characterize everyday classroom practice in many schools. Curricula emphasize competencies, lesson plans include clearly articulated objectives, and teachers thoughtfully select instructional strategies intended to promote engagement. Yet, in practice, students are often positioned primarily as recipients of information rather than as active constructors of knowledge. Participation may be limited to answering teacher-initiated questions, completing tasks

with predetermined outcomes, or following instructions without making meaningful decisions about their learning. This discrepancy between intention and reality creates a familiar tension for teachers. While engagement and understanding are expected outcomes of well-designed lessons, teachers frequently struggle to identify concrete evidence that learning has actually occurred. Students may appear attentive, compliant, or busy, yet their thinking, reasoning, and learning strategies remain largely invisible. As a result, teachers are left to infer learning from surface indicators—such as task completion or correct answers—rather than from observable learning processes.

One of the central reasons for the persistence of passive learning lies in traditional lesson planning practices. Planning is often organized around content coverage, sequencing of activities, or the selection of instructional methods. Success is frequently defined by whether the lesson was delivered as intended, whether the teacher managed time effectively, or whether planned activities were completed. Much less attention is paid to how different students interpret tasks, where they encounter cognitive obstacles, or which supports enable them to engage productively with learning. Consequently, planning tends to prioritize what the teacher will do, rather than what students will think, say, or attempt at specific moments during the lesson.

This approach can result in lessons that appear coherent and well-structured, yet leave the underlying mechanisms of learning unexplored. When students struggle, explanations are often sought in general factors such as motivation, ability, or behavior, rather than in the design of tasks, instructions, or learning conditions. In this sense, passive learning is not simply a student issue, but a systemic outcome of planning and reflection practices that lack a research-oriented focus on learners.

This article argues that Lesson Study provides a powerful framework for addressing this challenge and for supporting a shift from passive to active learning. By reconceptualizing lesson planning as collaborative inquiry, Lesson Study redirects teachers' attention from instructional delivery to student learning. Through the identification of concrete learning problems, the deliberate selection of focus students, the formulation of testable pedagogical hypotheses, and the collection of descriptive observational evidence, Lesson Study makes learning processes visible and open to analysis. Rather than striving to produce a single “good lesson,” teachers engaged in Lesson Study participate in a cycle of investigation, reflection, and revision. This process supports sustained changes in classroom practice by enabling teachers to understand not only whether learning occurs, but why it occurs in particular ways for different students [1].

In doing so, Lesson Study offers a practical and sustainable pathway for transforming classrooms from spaces of passive participation into environments of active, observable, and continuously improving learning. In other words, Lesson Study is a collaborative, evidence-based professional development approach in which teachers jointly plan, teach, observe, and analyze a research lesson with the explicit goal of understanding student learning. Originating in Japan, Lesson Study has been adapted internationally as a sustainable model of teacher learning.

At its core, Lesson Study represents a paradigmatic shift in how teaching and learning are understood. Traditional professional development often evaluates teaching quality through observation of teacher actions. In contrast, Lesson Study positions student learning as the primary object of research. Teachers do not ask whether a lesson was “well taught,” but rather how and why students responded to specific tasks and supports. Equally important is what Lesson Study is not. It is not a demonstration lesson, a teacher appraisal tool, or a competitive performance exercise. It is non-evaluative, collaborative, and grounded in descriptive evidence. This distinction is essential, as it creates the psychological safety required for teachers to examine practice honestly and to move beyond superficial indicators of success. By reframing teaching as inquiry and learning as observable behavior, Lesson Study creates the conditions for active learning to emerge as both a design goal and an object of study.

The transition from passive to active learning begins at the planning stage. In Lesson Study, planning does not start with a lesson topic or teaching method, but with the identification of a learning problem. A learning problem describes a specific difficulty students experience in their learning and is grounded in observation or evidence. For example, rather than stating that “students are not motivated” or “students do not understand the topic,” a Lesson Study team formulates the problem as: Students experience difficulties initiating independent work because task instructions are too complex and insufficiently scaffolded [2].

This shift is critical. Passive learning is often sustained by vague or abstract problem statements that cannot be investigated during a lesson. In contrast, a clearly defined learning problem directs attention to observable student behavior and to specific stages of the lesson where difficulties arise.

By anchoring planning in concrete learning problems, Lesson Study moves teachers away from assumptions about learning and toward systematic inquiry.

Active learning does not look the same for all students. Lesson Study addresses this reality through the use of focus students, typically representing three learning profiles:

- A – high-attaining students
- B – average learners
- C – students who experience difficulties

Importantly, focus students are not individual children, but types of learning behavior. They serve as analytical lenses that help teachers anticipate how different learners may respond to the same task.

By tracking focus students, teachers can see how instructional decisions enable or constrain participation, thinking, and persistence. A task that appears engaging for confident students may overwhelm struggling learners, while a highly scaffolded activity may limit challenge for advanced students.

Through this approach, Lesson Study makes learning processes visible and prevents “active learning” from becoming a one-size-fits-all label. Instead, activity is examined in relation to specific learners, tasks, and conditions. A central feature of Lesson Study is the formulation of a pedagogical hypothesis. The hypothesis predicts how a specific change in teaching will influence the learning of focus students and must be testable through observation [3].

A typical structure is: If the teacher implements..., then focus students will..., because... For example: *If the teacher introduces a self-check checklist, then focus student C will be able to correct at least two errors independently, because the checklist reduces cognitive load and clarifies success criteria.*

Unlike traditional lesson objectives, hypotheses do not describe what the teacher intends to cover, but what change in student learning is expected. Poorly formulated hypotheses (e.g., “students will be more motivated” or “the lesson will be successful”) sustain passive learning because they provide no clear focus for observation. A strong hypothesis, by contrast, directs both lesson design and data collection, ensuring that student activity is purposeful, observable, and analyzable. A central contribution of Lesson Study to the development of active learning lies in its approach to lesson design. Rather than treating planning as a technical task of organizing content and activities, Lesson Study frames planning as an interactive and analytical process focused on anticipating student learning. Through a set of structured planning tools, teachers are guided to design lessons in which student activity is intentional, observable, and directly linked to identified learning problems and hypotheses. Lesson Study encourages teacher teams to plan lessons “backwards,” beginning not with what the teacher will explain, but with what a focus student—often the struggling learner—should be able to do by the end of the lesson. This starting point fundamentally shifts the logic of lesson design.

Instead of asking how content will be delivered, teachers ask what kind of learning action will indicate progress and what conditions are necessary for that action to occur.

By foregrounding student action as the end point of planning, this approach challenges the traditional sequence in which explanation precedes engagement. It requires teachers to consider how understanding will be demonstrated through concrete behaviors such as task initiation, strategy use, verbal reasoning, or self-correction [4].

As a result, active learning is not treated as an add-on or an outcome to be hoped for, but as a design principle embedded from the outset of the planning process.

To ensure that active learning is accessible to all students, Lesson Study teams often design one key learning task in multiple versions, tailored to the needs of different focus students. While the overall learning goal remains shared, the task is adjusted in terms of cognitive demand, level of structure, or type of support for focus students A, B, and C.

This approach recognizes that identical tasks do not generate identical learning opportunities. A task that is sufficiently challenging for a high-attaining student may overwhelm a struggling learner, while a heavily scaffolded activity may limit productive struggle for more confident students. By deliberately varying task design, teachers create conditions in which each focus student can engage meaningfully and actively with the learning goal. In this way, differentiation becomes a mechanism for participation and agency rather than a simplification of content [4].

Another key feature of interactive planning in Lesson Study is the use of “stop-frame” planning. Teachers identify critical moments within the lesson and explicitly describe what a focus student is expected to be doing, saying, or producing at those points. This anticipatory process requires teachers to move beyond general intentions and to articulate specific indicators of learning activity.

Stop-frame planning transforms abstract notions of engagement into concrete, observable behavior. Instead of assuming that students will be “active” during a task, teachers specify how activity will manifest in student actions, language, and choices. This level of precision not only strengthens lesson design, but also provides a clear focus for observation during the research lesson, ensuring alignment between planning, teaching, and data collection.

Lesson Study planning tools also draw attention to linguistic and conceptual “red flags” that signal passive approaches to learning. Common formulations such as “students will understand,” “students will be introduced to,” or “the teacher explains” are critically examined and revised. These statements are replaced with descriptions that emphasize observable student actions and deliberate teacher moves. By refining the language of planning, teachers clarify what learning will look like in practice and how it can be observed. This process supports a shift from intention-based planning to evidence-oriented design, reducing reliance on assumptions about learning and increasing accountability to student behavior. Identifying and addressing these red flags helps prevent passive learning from being embedded in lesson plans and reinforces a culture of intentional, active learning design. Formative assessment plays a crucial role in activating learning within the Lesson Study framework, as it is deliberately embedded in lesson design and directly aligned with the research hypothesis. Rather than serving as a mechanism for checking attainment at the end of a lesson, formative assessment is used to support learning as it unfolds. Key elements include lesson goals expressed in student-friendly language, clearly articulated success criteria, opportunities for self-checking, and structured peer feedback. These components help students understand not only what they are expected to learn, but also how to monitor their own progress toward that learning [5].

In this context, formative assessment is not something done to students, but with them. Students are positioned as active participants in the assessment process, using criteria to guide their work, identify errors, and make adjustments. This supports learner agency and metacognitive engagement, while simultaneously generating rich evidence of learning. For Lesson Study teams, formative

assessment becomes a critical source of data, making it possible to observe how students regulate their learning, respond to feedback, and navigate challenges during the lesson.

The focus on evidence continues during the research lesson itself, where observation shifts decisively from watching teaching to studying learning. Observers do not evaluate the teacher's performance or the overall quality of the lesson. Instead, they concentrate exclusively on student behavior in relation to the hypothesis. Descriptive evidence is collected in the form of student utterances, actions, written work, errors, and problem-solving strategies. By deliberately avoiding judgments and interpretations, observers ensure that the data remains grounded in what students actually do and say, rather than in assumptions or impressions [5].

This shift in observation practice represents a critical step in moving beyond passive professional observation toward active pedagogical inquiry. When attention is redirected to learners, classroom events that might otherwise go unnoticed — such as moments of hesitation, strategy change, or peer negotiation—become visible and analytically significant. Observation thus functions not as a tool for accountability, but as a means of understanding how learning is shaped by task design and instructional conditions.

Following the research lesson, post-lesson discussion provides a structured space for transforming observational data into professional learning. Discussions are organized around evidence and guided by questions such as what students actually did, why learning unfolded in the observed ways, and whether the pedagogical hypothesis was supported. Rather than attributing success or difficulty to student ability or teacher competence, the team examines how specific elements of the lesson — tasks, instructions, pacing, interaction formats, and supports—contributed to observed outcomes.

Improvement in Lesson Study is achieved through revision and re-teaching, reinforcing the idea that active learning develops through iterative cycles rather than isolated lessons. Insights gained from one lesson inform the redesign of tasks and supports, allowing teachers to test refined hypotheses and deepen their understanding of learning processes over time. This cyclical approach shifts professional learning away from evaluation toward continuous inquiry and growth.

Sustaining this shift from passive to active learning depends heavily on the role of trainers and facilitators. Trainers model analytical thinking, maintain a consistent focus on evidence, and protect the non-evaluative nature of the process. They support teams in resisting familiar patterns of judgment and help redirect discussions toward student learning. Without skilled facilitation, Lesson Study risks reverting to traditional lesson observation practices that prioritize teaching performance over learning analysis. Over time, successful Lesson Study initiatives can be identified through several indicators of change. Teachers increasingly use evidence-based language when discussing lessons, student learning becomes the central focus of professional dialogue, collaboration deepens, and instructional practices evolve in response to observed learning. Together, these indicators signal a genuine and sustained shift toward active learning, grounded in collective inquiry and informed by evidence from the classroom.

Thus, passive learning persists not because teachers lack commitment, but because traditional planning and observation practices often fail to make student learning visible. When teaching is evaluated through delivery rather than through evidence of learning, engagement and understanding remain assumed rather than examined. Lesson Study addresses this challenge by reframing teaching as collaborative inquiry into student learning. Through research-oriented planning, focus students, testable hypotheses, and evidence-based observation, Lesson Study enables teachers to design, observe, and refine active learning in purposeful ways. Rather than promoting specific methods, it supports a cultural shift toward evidence, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

As a sustainable professional learning model, Lesson Study helps transform classrooms from sites of passive participation into environments where learning is active, observable, and continually developed through collective inquiry.

References:

1. Dudley, P. (2011). Lesson Study: A handbook. Norwich : Centre for Lesson Study.
2. Lewis, C. C. (2002). Lesson Study: A handbook of teacher-led instructional change. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.
3. Lewis, C., Perry, R., & Murata, A. (2006). How should research contribute to instructional improvement? The case of lesson study. *Educational researcher*, 35(3), 3-14. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3700102>
4. Stigler, J. W., & Hiebert, J. (1999). The teaching gap: Best ideas from the world's teachers for improving education in the classroom. New York: Free Press,
5. Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: principles, policy & practice*, 5(1), 7-74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969595980050102>

Список литературы:

1. Dudley P. Lesson Study: A handbook. Norwich : Centre for Lesson Study, 2011. 120 p.
2. Lewis C. C. Lesson Study: A handbook of teacher-led instructional change. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools, 2002. 180 p.
3. Lewis C., Perry R., Murata A. How should research contribute to instructional improvement? The case of lesson study // Educational researcher. 2006. V. 35. №3. P. 3-14. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3700102>
4. Stigler, J. W., Hiebert, J. The teaching gap: Best ideas from the world's teachers for improving education in the classroom. New York : Free Press, 1999. 241 p.
5. Black P., Wiliam D. Assessment and classroom learning // Assessment in Education: principles, policy & practice. 1998. V. 5. №1. P. 7-74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969595980050102>

Поступила в редакцию
08.01.2026 г.

Принята к публикации
21.01.2026 г.

Ссылка для цитирования:

Zheenbekova Ch., Irenchieva G., Arapova G. From Passive to Active Learning: Lesson Study as a Tool for Change // Бюллетень науки и практики. 2026. Т. 12. №3. С. 553-558. <https://doi.org/10.33619/2414-2948/124/64>

Cite as (APA):

Zheenbekova, Ch., Irenchieva, G., & Arapova, G. (2026). From Passive to Active Learning: Lesson Study as a Tool for Change. *Bulletin of Science and Practice*, 12(3), 553-558. <https://doi.org/10.33619/2414-2948/124/64>