

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
COMMUNITIES AS A CHANGE
AGENT FOR IMPROVING
TEACHER AND STUDENT
OUTCOMES IN AN
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN
VIETNAM.**

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Phenomenological Case Study

- Phenomenology focuses on the lived experience of participants and strives to explore in detail what the experience for the participants is like and what sense a particular person is making of what is happening to him or her.

Phenomenological Case Study

- Bilingual international school in Hanoi
- No formally structured Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at the school.
- Three year-level PLCs created at the start of the academic year in 2011.

Learning organizations

- Peter Senge ([1992](#)) emphasizes personal mastery of each individual as a fundamental aspect of learning organizations.
- As each individual learns more and masters the job at hand, more value is added to the organization.

Learning organizations

- Senge further argues that it is in the best interests of any organization to have a constantly learning workforce seeking to master the job at hand and endeavoring to continue to improve upon it.

Life-long learning

- ‘Global citizens,’ ‘digital citizens,’ ‘reflective practitioners,’ ‘life-long learners,’ ‘problem solvers’ and ‘professional learning communities’
- Reflective practitioners and life-long learners are becoming the hallmarks of a successful collaborative teaching staff agenda.

Life-long learning

- Opportunities to promote reflective practice as an essential dimension of teaching can be provided through PLCs which are planned as spaces and times for teachers to come together.

Three different PLCs established.

- The first group consisted of three Grade Three teachers.
- The second group consisted of four Grade Four teachers.
- The third group consisted of three Grade Five teachers and the primary researcher.

Analysis

- The analysis was carried out in six steps:

Step 1 - Reading and re-reading

Step 2 - Initial noting

Step 3 - Developing emergent themes

Step 4 - Searching for connections across emergent themes

Step 5 - Moving to the next case

Step 6 - Looking for patterns across cases

Super-ordinate themes

- Sharing resources
- Life-long learning
- Leadership
- Culture
- Supervision
- Time
- Processes
- Staff turnover

Findings

- Open sharing of resources within the PLCs was something teaching staff greatly appreciated.
- PLC participants showed evidence of considerable willingness to share with their peers and reflect upon their sharing experiences.
- They also displayed a mutual appreciation for the work of colleagues and knowing what was going on in other classrooms.

Feeling “valued”

- The teachers felt valued by adding to the corporate knowledge while in the PLC.
- They enjoyed sharing their expertise with each other and this gave them a sense of belonging.

Value of staff meetings

- “PLCs were many times more productive than a [staff] meeting.”
- This quote showed how a staff meeting was not considered productive whereas the PLC was not seen as a ‘staff meeting’ but a different form of gathering that generated productive dialogue and authentic professional communication.

PLCs promote positive culture

- PLCs offer teachers the opportunity for professional dialogue and support which in turn supports their opportunities to grow and mature professionally. Such development helps to carry the workplace forward as a productive learning organization.

Conclusion

- If teachers are more confident in what they are doing and feel positively supported and valued in their roles, they will perform better as teachers and colleagues and commit to better performance in the classroom.

Conclusion

- PLCs offer outcomes that benefit the entire school community and generate a more positive culture of learning and professionalism.