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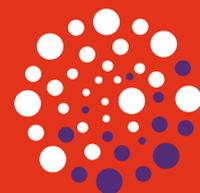
Connecting teachers, schools and systems:
Creating the conditions for effective learning

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Abstracts

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PAPER 3 ABSTRACT

Effects and Influencing Factors of Networked PLCs, Dr. Rilana Prenger, Dr. Cindy Poortman (University of Twente) & Dr. Adam Handelzalts (VU University Amsterdam) – the Netherlands

Issue

The project ‘Pilots for the development of PLCs’¹ is aimed at guiding and researching 23 PLCs in which more than 100 teachers from different schools work together to improve their professional practice. These PLCs receive guidance from an external coach from a university teacher training program. They work on the following categories of subjects: teachers’ professional attitude, e.g. research skills; the development of new lesson material, e.g. concerning ICT in the classroom; or both professional attitude and new lesson material. This study aims to research impact and influencing factors of these networked PLCs.

Key ideas

Teacher professional development (PD) programs generally share the goal of changing teachers’ behaviour, knowledge and attitude, with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 1986). Before student learning can be improved, however, teachers need to have developed the related knowledge, skills and attitudes and need to have applied these. Firstly, their response towards the program needs to be positive. The first aim of this study is to research the effects of participating in a PLC on these different levels of PD: teachers’ satisfaction with the PLC process and outcomes; their knowledge and attitude; and their application thereof.

Understanding the PD process in networked PLCs can be achieved by examining the contributing factors. In recent years, several studies have discussed the essential characteristics of PLCs, such as shared goal, reflective dialogue and trust (e.g. Lomos et al., 2011; Vescio et al., 2008; Stoll et al., 2006). The second aim is, therefore, to investigate the influence of these factors in our networked PLCs. We used a mixed-methods design combining quantitative survey research (teachers) and qualitative case study using interviews (teachers and coaches) and observations. In addition, PLC coaches filled out qualitative logs about all PLC meetings.

Main findings and conclusion

Although teachers are enthusiastic about learning and developing lesson material with colleagues from other schools, teachers’ satisfaction, knowledge, skills and attitudes and application thereof, has only been ‘moderately’ developed. On the one hand, teachers developed more awareness of their teaching subject and their teaching practice, and many also developed lesson material and research instruments. On the other hand, teachers reported not to have enough time to prepare for PLC meetings, and that not everyone (always) participated (actively) in their PLC. In addition, knowledge sharing *within* teachers’ own schools is a challenge. The outcomes at the different PD levels (e.g. satisfaction, knowledge and attitude) appear to be influenced differently by the factors included in this study. Teacher motivation, for example, influenced all PD outcomes; however, ‘trust’ only influenced ‘knowledge and skills’ significantly.

Although teachers appreciate learning with colleagues from other schools, much remains to be done to achieve improvement of all schools involved, in addition to individual teacher learning.

¹ *Granted by the Dutch Ministry of Education*