



Open Universiteit

Why start a Professional Learning Community?

The why, what, and how of a PLC

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Why a PLC?

- Creation of new knowledge, visions, ideas, perspectives on teaching, teaching approaches, and materials
- Leading to teacher professionalisation, school development, improvement of teaching practice, and ultimately student results
- Developing a learning culture by collective learning

What is a PLC?

A PLC is a group of teachers who, in a culture of collective learning, cyclically, collaboratively, and reflectively examine teaching practices to improve and renew them to achieve better student learning outcomes.

Activities: reflective dialogue, researching, and experimenting

Overview of our research on PLC development

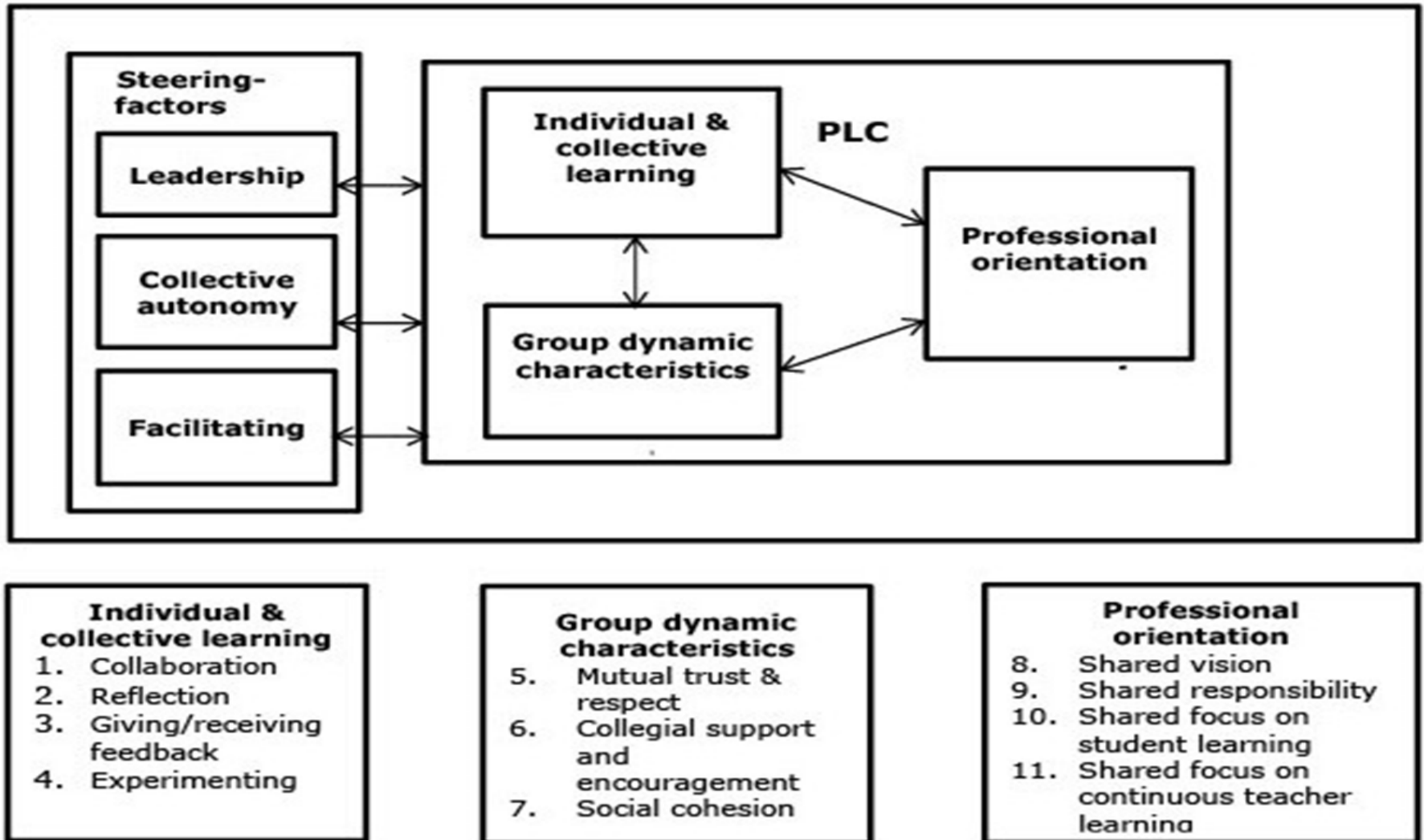
- Longitudinal: two school years
- Multi-case: 7 PLCs, at 6 different schools, secondary education
- Research methods
 - Literature review (framework)
 - Survey
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Observations
 - Framework

Framework

The framework consists of

- three clusters, each with its own characteristics
- Three factors that influence the development of the PLC

Comprehensive and dynamic framework



Levels of performance

PLC characteristic	Performance	Levels of performance					
Collaboration	Interdependency	Story telling	Aid and assistance	Sharing 1	Sharing 2	Joint work 1	Joint work 2
Reflection Feedback Experimenting	Collectivity	Individually	jointly				
	Occurence	Incidentally	Structurally				

Main results of the development of PLCs

- All PLCs developed but at different rates and to various levels
- Within a PLC, characteristics developed differently concerning the level achieved.
- Collaboration did not develop to the highest level in any PLC
- Feedback, reflection, and experimenting were performed more collectively
- Feedback, reflection, and experimenting were not performed systematically, nor cyclically.
- Chains of development have been identified
- No uniform development pattern identified

Main results influence factors

Key to success are:

Influence factors

- Supportive, proactive leadership
- Collective autonomy within the PLC
- Skilled facilitator
- Well-organized and structured PLC meetings
- In-depth collaborative reflective dialogical discourse
- Sufficient time and space

What's required of a school leader

- Explicit desire to introduce collaborative learning in the school
- Knowledge of PLCs
- Willingness to implement organizational and cultural changes
- Sincere interest in the development of the PLC
- Providing time, space, resources, and opportunities for professional development

What's required of the PLC participants

- Have an open attitude and show commitment.
- Want to make the PLC a success.
- Be willing to share knowledge and experiences.
- Keep to agreements made.
- Ask in-depth questions (reflection and feedback).
- Show respect and trust. Ask for (different) views and opinions.
- Work cyclically.
- Prepare for meetings and participate actively.

The quality of the discourse is paramount!

- Structured and focused
- Active listening
- Openness, trust, vulnerability
- Use various types of questions
- Willingness to change one's opinion
- Seeking to understand, not to convince
- Don't be judgmental

How (1)?

How to start a PLC?

- Start with a preparation meeting
- Take the opportunity to get acquainted
- Provide information about the PLC concept
- Make agreements about the organization and the effective course of the meetings
- Discuss everyone's expectations and contributions.
- Number of participants: 5–10

How (2)?

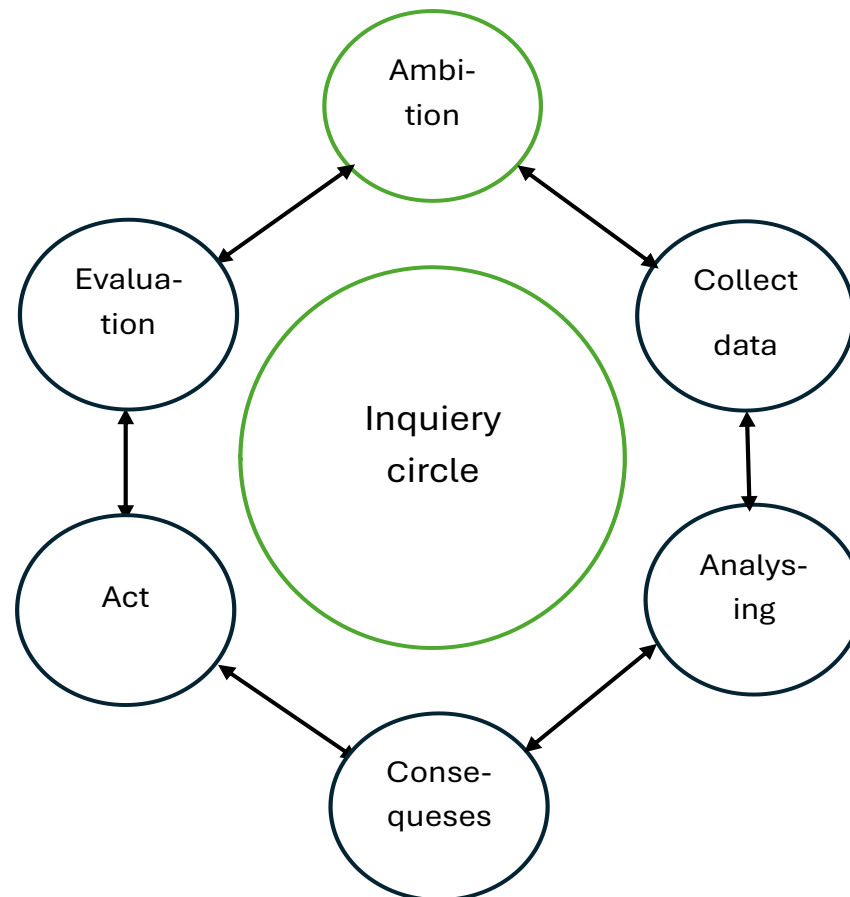
- Ensure variation in knowledge, experience, and skills
- Discuss ground rules in advance
- Define collective and individual learning goals
- Evaluate each meeting in terms of:
the process (how the PLG is functioning/
expectations), the product (the theme or topic
discussed)
- Plan and prepare meetings carefully
- Use the research cycle systematically

How to ensure that a PLC will last

1. Create Support and Engagement
2. Set clear goals and structures
3. Provide structural Time, Space, Resources, and professionalisation opportunities
4. Support with Professional Development
5. Monitor and Evaluate
6. Connect with School Culture

Questions?

Inquiry circle





Thank you for your attention!

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