

# Arrangement for Professional Learning: A Review of Literature

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## **Abstract:**

*Professional learning enables teachers to develop the knowledge and skills they need to improve student achievement. Professional learning requires thoughtful planning followed by careful implementation with feedback to ensure it responds to teachers' learning needs. This paper finds that principal and school improvement team have essential role to build planning. Every school has to do need assessment for planning. This literature review also suggests direction for future research.*

**Keywords:** Arrangement for professional learning, school improvement team, structure of professional learning and consideration for planning professional learning.

## **Introduction:**

Professional learning enables teachers to develop the knowledge and skills they need to improve student achievement. Professional learning requires thoughtful planning followed by careful implementation with feedback to ensure it responds to teachers' learning needs. The effectiveness of professional learning depends on how carefully school improvement team conceive, plan, and implement it. There is no substitute for rigorous thinking and execution. Then, teachers must put their new knowledge and skill to work. Professional learning is not effective unless it causes teachers to improve their instruction or causes administrators to become better school leaders (Darling-Hammond, 2009).

This paper has several questions to be answered about both organizational and individual readiness to develop professional learning communities (PLC). The first question is what is the role of the school leaders in planning professional learning? The second question is what does the school improvement team do? The third question is what is a professional learning plan? The fourth question is what are the structure of professional learning to consider? The fifth question is what are consideration for planning?

### **Literature Selection and Review Process**

Literature was selected in two steps. First, search used internet using keywords plan for professional learning, school improvement team, professional learning plan, structure of professional learning and consideration for planning professional learning. Second, researcher selected relevant articles, books, and book chapters referenced in the studies from initial internet searches.

Literatures were divided into empirical and case studies, program and personal description, and literature reviews and position papers. Researcher selected the literature for further review on the basis of whether it addressed issues on the role of school leaders and school improvement team, the definition of a professional learning plan, the structure of professional learning to consider, and consideration for professional learning planning.

The literatures fell into five categories based on the purpose of this paper. The first group of studies discuss about the role of school leaders. The second group describe about the role of school improvement team. The third group explore detailed about the definition of a professional learning plan. The fourth group explore detailed about the structure of professional learning to consider. The fifth group describe about consideration for professional learning planning.

Researcher used all of those categories to organize the body of this review. Researcher used all of the literatures as a basis to develop conceptions, identify assumptions, make comments, offer implications, and point to future directions of research.

### **The role of the school leaders in planning professional learning**

School leaders played an essential role in nurturing the development of professional learning (Newman, King, and Young, 2000, Morrissey, 2000). Characterizing principal's central role has been a valuable first step in increasing student learning (Fullan, 2002). Thus, principal needs to do reflection as the first step of planning for professional learning.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) asserts that a principal has two roles when it comes to professional learning: instructional leader and transformative leader. As instructional leader, the principal aims to improve practices directly by creating pressure and support to help teacher continuously improve, making data-driven decisions regarding content and pedagogy, serving as a coach and mentor to teachers, and assessing students' learning within a framework of high expectations (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) and to manage all relevant resources and align them toward the sustained improvement of teaching and learning for all children (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Instructional improvement is informed by student data, and teacher supervision and evaluation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

As transformative leader, the principal aims to change the organizational culture and dispositions, develop structures and norms that support high quality teaching and learning, enhance the capacity of the faculty to meet the needs of students, and implement reform strategies that will improve student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). According to

research by Leithwood and Jantzi (2000), the most critical practices to support of instructional improvement involve: (1) working directly with teachers to improve effectiveness in the classroom, (2) providing resources and professional development to improve instruction, (3) regularly monitoring teaching and student progress, (4) participating in discussions on educational issues, and (4) promoting parental and community involvement in the school.

Taken together, both of the principal roles impact professional learning planning by supporting affirm the value of the work of an internal school improvement team, providing the resources required to help the team be successful, and encouraging cooperation between the school improvement team and the larger school community are essential (Barnes, 2004).

### **The School Improvement Team**

A School Improvement Team (SIT) is established after a principal has reflected upon his or her role as both instructional and transformative leader. This committee is a small size group made up of various members of the school community; including administrators, teachers, parents, and students; to plans, develop, lead, and coordinate the school-improvement process (Barnes, 2004). While the principal plays an important role in developing the professional learning plan, it is not just the principal who is accountable for making the learning deep and meaningful. It is a collective responsibility shared by everyone (Harrison and Killion, 2007).

The role of the SIT are (1) to work with the members of the school community to produce an in-depth picture of the many dimensions of school practice and a common awareness of the school's strengths, needs, and challenges (Barnes, 2004), and (2) to develops a deeper learning instructional framework innovation configuration map to guide implementation, feedback, self-assessment, reflection, and formative assessment of implementation (Killion, 2013).

The SIT has to be guided by the question "Is what we are doing working to improve student learning?" this needs to be the lens through which planning occurs (Killion, 2013). The SIT will establish a year-long plan (Harrison and Killion, 2007), but should continue to meet throughout the year to assess progress towards long-term goals, and make any necessary revisions based on need, feedback, or findings (Barnes, 2004).

The SIT should also use its analysis of student achievement data to plan relevant professional learning (Mizell, 2010), including differentiated learning options for the staff. There will be more discussion about needs assessments and differentiated professional learning. But first it is important to note the central role research plays in developing meaningful and outcomes-based professional learning (Killion, 2013). While creating a professional learning plan, it is recommended that committee members conduct review research so they are developing professional learning opportunities with the most up-to-date scholarly and practitioner knowledge. The question of research are (1) What strategies or interventions does the research talk about?, (2) What does it say about them?, and (3) What are those relevant to the current goals and objectives?

### **Definition of Professional Learning Plan**

A professional learning plan is the navigation system for the comprehensive professional learning system, including application, analysis, reflection, coaching, refinement, and evaluation of effectiveness to produce results for educators and students (Killion, 2013). The professional learning plans focus on the specific content, learning designs, implementation support, and evaluation of professional learning. Thus, planning for professional learning should begin with a thorough needs assessment (Hassel, 1999). Needs assessments are essential as they surface specific areas for work and improvement. They can be conducted with student or teacher data. When a needs assessment survey is administered to teachers, questions should be asked in a way that identifies authentic problems, rather than specific professional learning activities (Guskey, 2000).

Professional learning plans begin with the desired outcomes in mind, student achievement. The summative evaluation and formative evaluations are built from those outcomes yielding information that will allow adjustments to ensure those outcomes are reached. It is essential as we begin to talk about developing a professional learning plan to be cognizant that every step stems from a clear articulation of the intended impact and how the SIT will know if it is achieving that impact. The driving questions for SIT to develop evaluation are: (1) How does the evaluation demonstrate that a transfer of new practice has occurred? How does the evaluation show whether or not teacher practice has improved or that student achievement has been positively affected? (Desimone, 2009).

The next step is establishing goals for professional learning. Goals can be written to initiate a desired change within many different areas, for example student achievement or implementation of new teaching strategies based on subject matter standards (Desimone, 2009). Evaluation and goal-setting help establish coherence, which is another essential element in a professional learning plan (Desimone, 2009). It impacts how teacher make sense of the work, and how seamlessly they incorporate it into their instructional practices, as well as the results they get (Hassel, 1999).

## **The structures of professional learning**

### ***Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)***

There is no universal definition of a PLC (Stoll et al., 2006). Hord (1997: 1) defining a PLC as "... in which the teachers in a school and its administrators continuously seek and share learning, and act on their learning. The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals for the students' benefit". PLCs are usually composed of teachers, although administrators and support staff do participate (Bolam et al., 2005). Teacher and administrators work collaboratively to explore common problems, share learning, engage in new learning, and, ultimately act on that learning to improve their effectiveness as professionals. Through participation in PLCs, teachers enhance their leadership capacity while they work as members of collaborative teams that focus on improving their teaching and student learning (Darling-

Hammond et al., 2007). PLCs have at their core a belief in teacher leadership and in the importance of teacher involvement in school improvement efforts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). PLC activities are driven by the understanding that improving classroom instruction is a major factor in improving student achievement results (DuFour, 2004). The PLC idea is relatively new and grew out of attempts to reshape school culture by examining school structure and organization, how teachers work within that organization, and particularly their commitment to student achievement. PLC studies indicate that when teachers regularly learn from one another, it leads to greater job satisfaction and heightened responsibility for student learning (Louis, Marks, and Kruse, 1996). This sense of fulfillment results in not only improved teacher well-being, but also makes a difference in student achievement (Barnes, 2004).

PLCs demand a school culture that understands and embraces teacher leadership and collaboration (Louis, 2007). Team members who regularly collaborate with the goal of continuous improvement share an instructionally focused vision aimed towards school improvement. In a PLC structure, teachers share, question their practices using a critical lens, reflect, collaborate and commit to inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the student they serve (DuFour, 2004).

According to Hord (1997), there are five dimensions of PLC: (1) supportive and shared leadership, (2) collective creativity, (3) shared values and vision, and (4) shared personal practice, and (5) supportive condition which include both physical condition and people capacities. These practices are essential to the development of PLCs.

### ***Job-Embedded Professional Development***

Job-embedded learning is one of the most promising new approaches to professional growth in education (Wood and McQuarrie, 1999). Job-embedded professional development (JEPD) refers to “teacher learning that is grounded in day-to-day teaching practice and is designed to enhance teachers’ content-specific instructional practices with the intent of improving student learning” (Croft, 2010). One of the most common ways to engage in JEPD is action research (Wood and McQuarrie, 1999) where is always school or classroom-based and is integrated into the workday. In a JEPD context, teachers assess and find solutions for authentic and immediate problems as part of a cycle of ongoing improvement (NSDC, 2010). Because it is locally rooted and makes a direct connection between learning and application in daily practice, teachers are required to be actively involved in cooperative. High-quality JEPD is aligned with standards for student achievement and any related local educational agency and school improvement goals (Hirsh, 2009), teacher opportunity to learn and facilitator skills (Croft, 2010).

JEPD can be the work of an individual teacher, a view of professional knowledge as “social, situated, and distributed among colleagues” is the foundation of JEPD (Putnam and Borko, 2000). If implemented and supported effectively, JEPD can impact the development of all teachers within a school by generating authentic conversations among teachers about concrete acts of teaching and student learning (Wei et al., 2010). JEPD also draws primarily on the

professional knowledge that exists in a teacher's own school and among their colleagues (Wei et al., 2009) which is informed by other professional development opportunities that help teachers learn research-based practices. JEPD may consist of departmental, cross-departmental, grade-level, or vertical teams of teachers engaging in interactive, integrative, practical, and results oriented work (Fogarty and Pete, 2009). Activities include designs such as mentoring, coaching, lesson study, action research, peer observation, examining student work, and virtual coaching. PLC can be forums for JEPD.

### **Consideration for planning**

Guskey (2000) suggest three major consideration for planning. First is content, or the what. The content includes the new knowledge, skills, and understanding that form the basis for the professional learning. This may include a deeper understanding of a particular academic discipline, specific pedagogical practices, or new roles and responsibilities. The content should come directly from the needs assessment that identifies gaps in teacher knowledge that will enhance student learning and achievement. Also included in the content are aspects relating to the magnitude, scope, credibility, and practicality of the change required to implement. In other words, content has to take into consideration all of the factors related to implementation. As Guskey (2000) says, the kind of professional learning you plan is dependent on the content of the professional learning.

The second is process, or the how of professional learning. This includes not only the types and forms of the professional learning but how they are planned, organized, carried out, followed-up, and evaluated. This involves the work of the SIT including conducting and analyzing its needs assessments, planning professional learning opportunities, doing research, forming groups, and planning formative and summative evaluations. And the last is context, or the who, when, where, and why of the professional learning. The context takes into account the organizational systems, or culture, in which the professional learning takes place, and where the new understandings are to be implemented. The unique characteristics of the context impact the content and processes of the professional learning.

### **Summary and Discussion**

Principal has an essential role in cultivating of professional development. Principals need to know clearly their central role as instructional leader and transformative leader. The principal standard in Indonesia still doesn't comprehend the roles. Thus, researcher suggests further literature review on the ladder of both instructional leader and transformative leader. Leadership can also be build through teacher engagement in the process of professional learning.

The SIT has to align all of the programs of professional learning to improve student learning. So, they have to revise the professional learning planning all the year. Unfortunately, SIT who

responsible for organizing professional development have had no formal education in how to do so. Ministry of Culture, Primary and Secondary Education has to provide training for SIT.

Professional learning plan is the navigation for professional learning system that focus on specific content, learning designs, implementation support, and evaluation of professional learning. Need assessments have to be done to reveal the need of the teachers.

The structure of professional learning maybe PLC, JEPD and the combination of the two. The SIT can make differentiated professional development to meet the teachers' professional learning needs.

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