

# PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLCs) IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS: IMPLEMENTATION, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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## ABSTRACT

This research study would like to determine the extent of implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs), the different challenges and opportunities experienced by teachers, and the strategies established by head teachers and principals in implementing PLCs to selected secondary schools under City Schools Division Office of Antipolo during the school year 2021-2022. This study utilized the qualitative and quantitative method of research in form of online survey questionnaire and interview as the data gathering instrument. The percentage, weighted mean and ANOVA were used as the statistical tools to treat the data. The respondents were composed of 192 teachers and 25 school heads / head teachers.

It was revealed that the extent of implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) in the selected secondary schools is very high extent. The perceptions of the three groups of respondents on the implementation of PLCs are significantly different in terms of *shared and supportive leadership, shared vision and values, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice*. On the other hand, the only dimension of PLC implementation that showed no significant difference is the *collective learning and application*. Also, the implementation of PLCs and the participation of teachers to these activities manifested different challenges and opportunities on their part. The school heads and head teachers viewed PLCs as a good practice of enhancing and establishing the principle of shared leadership, shared responsibility, and shared accountability relative to learning outcomes and achievements. Moreover, it generally helps and supports teachers in improving their individual and professional knowledge, skills, and competencies.

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## INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCH

*Education* is an important aspect that plays a huge role in the modern, industrialized world. People need a good education to be able to survive in this complex and competitive generation. Modern society is based on people who have high living standards and knowledge which allows them to implement better solutions to their problems (Sharna, 2018).

The rise of emerging technologies and learning paradigms has called for educational revolution around the world. New competencies are seen to be more relevant as schools become more engaged into matching their programs to the social and economic needs. In effect, schools have begun transforming their facilities and equipped their teachers with skills and knowledge needed to deliver the innovative curriculum.

Since its outbreak two years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the entire education systems globally, affecting the most vulnerable learners the hardest. Prioritizing education as a public good is crucial to avoid a generational catastrophe and drive a sustainable recovery. To be more resilient, equitable and inclusive, education systems must transform, leveraging technology to benefit all learners and building on the innovations and partnerships catalyzed throughout this crisis (UNESCO, 2021).

One of the aims of education is to train the individuals in societies to acquire appropriate skills to benefit self and also to contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. It has been said that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers (National Policy on Education, 2004). Reiterating this position, Rathi (2015) as cited by Okogbaa (2017), stated that no society can be more dynamic than its system of education and no system of education can be more dynamic than its teachers. He also mentioned that the quality of an educational system depends upon the quality of teachers who man it. This statement shows that teachers play a key role in the success of any educational program.

In DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, entitled *National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST)*, education department recognizes the importance of professional standards in the continuing professional development and

advancement of teachers based on the principle of lifelong learning. It is also committed to supporting teachers and taking cognizance of unequivocal evidence that good teachers are vital to raising student achievement. Quality learning is contingent upon quality teaching. Hence, enhancing teacher quality becomes the utmost importance for long term and sustainable nation building.

The K to 12 Reform (R.A. 10533) in 2013 has changed the landscape of teacher quality requirements in the Philippines. The reform process warrants an equivalent supportive focus on teacher quality – high quality teachers who are properly equipped and prepared to assume the roles and functions of a K-to-12 teacher. Teachers play a crucial role in nation building. Through quality teachers, the Philippines can develop holistic learners who are steeped in values, equipped with 21st century skills, and able to propel the country to development and progress.

Professional learning communities (PLC) are widely accepted as contributing factors for the improvement of teaching practices and the transformation of student learning (Kennedy 2016). A PLC is essentially a group of teachers, possibly with other stakeholders, working together for a common goal over a sustained period of time, where this goal is often specified to be in line with increasing the individual and collective ability of teachers to improve student learning.

In the context of Department of Education (DepEd), professional learning communities (PLC) is introduced through DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016, *The Learning Action Cell as a K to 12 Basic Education Program School-Based Continuing Professional Development Strategy for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning*. This fully supports the continuing professional development of teaching personnel based on the principle of lifelong learning and DepEd's commitment to the development of teachers' potential aimed towards their success in the profession. It also emphasized that organizing *professional learning communities* will aid teachers in the construction of new knowledge about instruction as well as in revising traditional beliefs and assumptions about education, community, teaching, and learning to suit the present needs of learners.

DepEd Antipolo gives priority to teachers' professional growth and development by providing relevant trainings and other similar activities that would enhance the knowledge, skills and competencies of teachers towards teaching and learning process. They also give premium in

building professional learning communities (PLCs) to schools that will serve as avenue for teachers to discuss issues and concerns in their setting. These have been seen as appropriate measures to address the weaknesses of the existing paradigm for professional learning. With the discussions being brought down to the schools, teachers navigate the strengths and limitations of their own contexts and eventually develop a tailor fit solution for their concerns. The present study aimed to determine the extent of implementation of professional learning communities in selected secondary schools in DepEd Antipolo. Also, to explore the experiences of teachers in participating in professional learning communities. The challenges and opportunities experienced by teachers in these PLCs that may provide insights on the formulation of more relevant policies for school heads and administrators. Lastly, the views and strategies employed, including the constraints experienced by head teachers and principals in establishing PLCs in their respective departments and/or schools.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Over the past several decades, both the public and education professionals have been vocal in their demands for new programs and practices in education. Simultaneously, these advocates have acknowledged that educators must come to an intimate understanding of the process of change in order for implementation to be successful and for the promises of new practices to be realized.

Many researchers agree that the dominant approach to professional development of teachers in developing countries is still in traditional forms such as workshops, conferences, seminars, or short courses. Ono and Ferreira (2010) explained that most of the time, this traditional paradigm of professional development is conducted according to its purpose. For instance, teachers are enjoined to participate in professional development activities such as seminars and workshops to get certified, to become upgraded, to prepare them for new roles, to get refreshed in teaching pedagogies, and/or to get new information regarding curriculum-related updates.

In support of continuing professional development of teachers in the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) released DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016. This strengthens the continuing professional development of teachers based on the principle of lifelong learning. According to this policy, it can be done through school-based learning action cell (SLAC),

which primarily functions as a professional learning community for teachers that will help them improve practice and learner achievement. The SLAC functions as an avenue for Filipino teachers to revisit and review areas of concern in performing their duties and responsibilities to become more efficient and effective in the teaching profession.

According to DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, the Philippine Government has consistently pursued teacher quality reforms through a number of initiatives. As a framework of teacher quality, the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) was institutionalized through CHED Memorandum Order No. 52, s. 2007 and DepED Order No. 32, s. 2009. The K to 12 Reform (R.A. 10533) in 2013 has changed the landscape of teacher quality requirements in the Philippines. The reform process warrants an equivalent supportive focus on teacher quality – high quality teachers who are properly equipped and prepared to assume the roles and functions of a K to 12 teachers. The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, which is built on NCBTS, complements the reform initiatives on teacher quality from pre-service education to in-service training.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have become a popular structure for teachers to reflect, collaborate, and learn in order to meet the learning needs of their students. In the article written by Yap (2015), PLCs are essentially a group of teachers, possibly with other stakeholders, working together for a common goal over a sustained period of time, where this goal is often specified to be in line with increasing the individual and collective ability of teachers to improve student learning.

Many researchers defined the meaning of professional learning community in different ways. From an organizational perspective, Humada-Ludeke (2013) states that PLC is viewed as a whole-school reform requiring commitment and active participation of each member to improve student learning. On the other hand, Roberts and Pruitt (2009) emphasized that while student learning is the focus of PLC, it should also include shared values, shared leadership, shared accountability in the development of curriculum and instruction, and reflective dialogue for it to be effective. Moreover, PLC in context, is a working environment. It is a place or a cultural setting where students and adults engage in collaborative learning, where everyone sees themselves as an integral part of an overall welfare, thus encouraging each other (Barth, 2001).

According to Little (2012) as cited by Tayag (2020), school heads play vital roles in the establishment and propagation of PLCs. The leadership's style of the school head can either encourage or discourage the open and free flow of ideas from among the teachers and administrators. He also noted that school heads that employ learning-centered style in management tend to have better chances of successfully implementing PLCs. School heads can set up the environment for communal learning, in which teachers learn through the sharing of experiences from other teachers. This further intensifies the other requirements for PLCs to thrive such as teacher efficacy and collegial trust.

Hord and Sommers (2008) as cited by Reubel (2011), organized the literature on PLCs into five major components. They discussed how many schools use common planning time so that teachers can meet in professional learning teams. In a time when schools have lost their common planning time, the growth of PLCs as a dynamic and effective school reform effort provides an advantage to principals and teachers as they make a case to preserve or incorporate this time within the school day.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research study would like to determine the extent of implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs), the different challenges and opportunities experienced by teachers, and the strategies established by head teachers and principals in implementing PLCs to selected secondary schools under City Schools Division Office of Antipolo during the school year 2021-2022. Specifically, it sought to find answers to the following:

1. What is the extent of implementation of professional learning communities in selected secondary schools as perceived by teachers in terms of the following?
  - a. shared and supportive leadership
  - b. collective learning and application
  - c. shared values and vision
  - d. supportive conditions
  - e. shared personal practice



2. Is there a significant difference among the perceptions of the three groups of respondents on the extent of implementation of professional learning communities in terms of the aforesaid components?

3. What are the relevant experiences of teachers (*challenges and opportunities*), head teachers, and principals in participating and facilitating professional learning communities (PLCs)?

4. How do principals and head teachers view PLC as an approach to support teachers' professional development?

## SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This research study focused on the extent of implementation, challenges and opportunities of professional learning communities (PLCs) in selected secondary schools under Schools Division Office of Antipolo for the school year 2021-2022.

The respondents to this study were the principals / school heads, department heads / head teachers, and selected teachers of Cupang National High School, Mayamot National High School, and Maximo L. Gatlabayan Memorial National High School during the present school year. The survey questionnaire developed by the researcher was validated by some experts. Online survey, interview, and focus group discussion (FGD) were used to gather the pertinent and substantial data relevant to this research study.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *Sampling*

**Table 1. Distribution of Respondents**

School	Teacher		School Head / Head Teacher
	Population	Sample	
Cupang NHS	85	43	8
Maximo L. Gatlabayan MNHS	122	61	8
Mayamot NHS	173	88	9

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>25</b>
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The subjects of this research study were the following: three (3) principals, twenty-two (22) department heads / chairmen / head teachers, and one hundred ninety-two (192) teachers of the abovementioned secondary schools during the SY 2021-2022. This study used the purposive sampling, a non-probability sample that is selected based on the characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Crossman, 2019). Teachers from participating school were as sample, teachers who have mostly experienced and became part of professional learning communities (PLCs) in their respective schools. Table 1 presents the population and sample distribution of respondents from Cupang National High School, Maximo L. Gatlabayan MNHS and Mayamot National High School.

### ***Data Collection***

A survey questionnaire was used to check the extent of implementation, challenges and opportunities of professional learning communities (PLCs). The researcher developed and modified a survey questionnaire based from the study of Long, S. (2009), entitled “*Professional Learning Communities: A Case Study of the Implementation of PLCs at an Elementary School Based on Huffman and Hipp's Five Dimensions and Critical Attributes.*” Online or written interview and FGD were conducted to corroborate and authenticate the responses in the questionnaires, including the strategies and approaches applied by head teachers and principals in establishing professional learning communities in their schools.

### ***Discussion of Results and Recommendation***

Based on the gathered data, information and responses from teacher-respondents and head teacher- / school head-respondents, the following results were presented, analyzed, and interpreted, including the recommendations for possible school-based enhancement program on professional learning communities.

**Question 1.** What is the extent of implementation of professional learning communities in selected secondary schools as perceived by teachers in terms of the following?

- a. shared and supportive leadership
- b. collective learning and application



- c. shared values and vision
- d. supportive conditions
- e. shared personal practice

**Table 2**

**Extent of Implementation of Professional Learning Communities in Terms of Shared and Supportive Leadership**

Shared and Supportive Leadership <i>The school head / head teacher ...</i>	Cupang NHS		Maximo L. Gatlabayan MNHS		Mayamot NHS		Overall	
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI
1. Involves teachers in discussion and decision making about school issues.	3.58	VHE	3.57	VHE	3.39	HE	3.51	VHE
2. Allows teachers to access the school key information,	3.47	HE	3.51	VHE	3.39	HE	3.45	HE
3. Provides opportunities for teachers to initiate change.	3.56	VHE	3.56	VHE	3.45	HE	3.52	VHE
4. Participates democratically with teachers sharing power and authority.	3.53	VHE	3.57	VHE	3.35	HE	3.49	HE
5. Shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.	3.72	VHE	3.52	VHE	3.44	HE	3.56	VHE
Overall Weighted Mean	<b>3.57</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>HE</b>	<b>3.51</b>	<b>VHE</b>

Note: WM – Weighted Mean VI – Verbal

Interpretation

Scale: 3.51 – 4.00 Very High Extent (VHE) 2.51 – 3.50

High Extent (HE) 1.51 – 2.50 Low Extent (LE)

1.00 – 1.50 Very Low Extent (VLE)

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DepEd is committed in providing continuing professional development to its teaching personnel based on the principle of lifelong learning and strengthening the development of teachers' potential aimed towards their success in the profession. The following tables exhibit the extent of implementation of professional learning communities to select schools that were subject of this research.

Table 2 presents the extent of implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) in terms of shared and supportive leadership. It can be glimpsed from the table that the indicator, "*Shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions*" obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.56 verbally interpreted as **very high extent**. On the other hand, the indicator, "*Allows teachers to access the school key information,*" got the lowest weighted mean of 3.45 verbally interpreted as **high extent**.

It is manifested also in the table that Cupang NHS and Maximo L. Gatlabayan Memorial NHS have a very high extent of implementation of PLCs in terms of shared and supportive leadership, while Mayamot NHS has high extent of implementation of PLCs.

Table 3 presents the extent of implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) in terms of collective learning and application. It can be seen from the table that three indicators obtained a mean of 3.63. These are "*Maintains collegial relationships among teachers that reflect commitment to school improvement efforts,*" "*Plans and works together with teachers to find solutions and address diverse students' needs,*" and "*Ensures that professional development focuses on teaching and learning.*" These indicators described as **very high extent** in terms of PLC implementation. On the other hand, the indicator, "*Offers variety of opportunities and structures to teachers for collective learning thru open dialogue,*" got the lowest weighted mean of 3.52 verbally interpreted as **very high extent** also.

**Table 3**

**Extent of Implementation of Professional Learning Communities in Terms of Collective Learning and Application**

Collective Learning and Application <i>The school head / head teacher ...</i>	Cupang NHS		Maximo L. Gatlabayan MNHS		Mayamot NHS		Overall	
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI

1. Maintains collegial relationships among teachers that reflect commitment to school improvement efforts.	3.67	VHE	3.59	VHE	3.61	VHE	3.63	VHE
2. Plans and works together with teachers to find solutions and address diverse students' needs.	3.67	VHE	3.64	VHE	3.57	VHE	3.63	VHE
3. Offers variety of opportunities and structures to teachers for collective learning thru open dialogue.	3.51	VHE	3.56	VHE	3.48	HE	3.52	VHE
4. Ensures that professional development focuses on teaching and learning.	3.67	VHE	3.62	VHE	3.59	VHE	3.63	VHE
5. Practices collaboration among teachers and stakeholders in solving school issues and concerns.	3.67	VHE	3.64	VHE	3.51	VHE	3.61	VHE
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.64</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>VHE</b>

Note: WM – Weighted Mean VI – Verbal

Interpretation

Scale: 3.51 – 4.00 Very High Extent (VHE) 2.51 – 3.50

High Extent (HE) 1.51 – 2.50 Low Extent (LE)

1.00 – 1.50 Very Low Extent (VLE)

It is manifested also in the table that all the three (3) schools, Cupang NHS, Maximo L. Gatlabayan Memorial NHS and Mayamot NHS have a very high extent of implementation of PLCs in terms of collective learning and application.

Table 4 presents the extent of implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) in terms of shared values and vision. It can be glanced at the table that there are two (2) indicators that obtained the highest mean of 3.66. These are “*Shares visions among teachers for school*

improvement focusing on student learning” and “Guarantees that programs, projects and activities are aligned to the organization’s vision”. These indicators both described as **very high extent** in the implementation of PLCs. On the other hand, the indicator, “Confirms that collaboration among teachers exists in developing shared vision” obtained the lowest mean of 3.62 verbally interpreted as **very high extent**. It is manifested also in the table that all the three (3) schools, Cupang NHS, Maximo L. Gatlabayan Memorial NHS and Mayamot NHS have a very high extent of implementation of PLCs in terms of shared values and vision.

**Table 4**

**Extent of Implementation of Professional Learning Communities in Terms of Shared Values and Vision**

Shared Values and Vision <i>The school head / head teacher...</i>	Cupang NHS		Maximo L. Gatlabayan MNHS		Mayamot NHS		Overall	
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI
1. Shares visions among teachers for school improvement focusing on student learning.	3.79	VHE	3.67	VHE	3.52	VHE	3.66	VHE
2. Ensures that stakeholders are involved in creating high expectations to increase student achievement.	3.77	VHE	3.66	VHE	3.49	HE	3.64	VHE
3. Has shared values and norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning.	3.70	VHE	3.69	VHE	3.52	VHE	3.64	VHE
4. Confirms that collaboration among teachers exists in developing shared vision.	3.70	VHE	3.69	VHE	3.49	HE	3.62	VHE
5. Guarantees that programs, projects and activities are aligned to the organization’s vision.	3.70	VHE	3.69	VHE	3.59	VHE	3.66	VHE

Overall Weighted Mean	<b>3.73</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.64</b>	<b>VHE</b>
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Note: WM – Weighted Mean VI – Verbal

Interpretation

Scale: 3.51 – 4.00 Very High Extent (VHE) 2.51 – 3.50

High Extent (HE) 1.51 – 2.50 Low Extent (LE)

1.00 – 1.50 Very Low Extent (VLE)

**Table 5**

**Extent of Implementation of Professional Learning Communities in Terms of Supportive Conditions**

Supportive Conditions <i>The school head / head teacher ...</i>	Cupang NHS		Maximo L. Gatlabayan MNHS		Mayamot NHS		Overall	
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI
1. Shows caring relationships embedded to trust and respect among teachers and others school staff.	3.72	VHE	3.70	VHE	3.58	VHE	3.67	VHE
2. Recognizes outstanding accomplishments / achievements of teachers, students, and others.	3.77	VHE	3.69	VHE	3.65	VHE	3.70	VHE
3. Establishes communication system that promotes synchronize flow of information among teachers.	3.67	VHE	3.67	VHE	3.55	VHE	3.63	VHE
4. Invites resource persons who may provide expertise and support to continuous learning.	3.72	VHE	3.61	VHE	3.61	VHE	3.65	VHE
5. Provides appropriate and enough time to facilitate collaborative work among teachers.	3.70	VHE	3.66	VHE	3.55	VHE	3.63	VHE

Overall Weighted Mean	<b>3.72</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.59</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.66</b>	<b>VHE</b>
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Note: WM – Weighted Mean VI – Verbal

Interpretation

Scale: 3.51 – 4.00 Very High Extent (VHE) 2.51 – 3.50

High Extent (HE) 1.51 – 2.50 Low Extent (LE)

1.00 – 1.50 Very Low Extent (VLE)

Table 5 presents the extent of implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) in terms of supportive conditions. It can be seen from the table that the indicator, “*Recognizes outstanding accomplishments / achievements of teachers, students, and others*” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.70 verbally interpreted as **very high extent**. On the other hand, the indicators, “*Establishes communication system that promotes synchronize flow of information among teachers,*” and “*Provides appropriate and enough time to facilitate collaborative work among teachers,*” got the lowest weighted mean of 3.63 verbally interpreted as **very high extent**.

It is manifested also in the table that Cupang NHS, Maximo L. Gatlabayan Memorial NHS and Mayamot NHS have a very high extent of implementation of PLCs in terms of supportive conditions.

**Table 6**

**Extent of Implementation of Professional Learning Communities in Terms of Shared Personal Practice**

Shared Personal Practice <i>The school head / head teacher ...</i>	Cupang NHS		Maximo L. Gatlabayan MNHS		Mayamot NHS		Overall	
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI
1. Provides opportunities for teachers to observe peers and offer encouragement.	3.70	VHE	3.62	VHE	3.57	VHE	3.63	VHE



2. Encourages teachers to provide feedback to peers related to instructional practices.	3.77	VHE	3.64	VHE	3.52	VHE	3.64	VHE
3. Allows teachers to share ideas and suggestions for improving student learning.	3.74	VHE	3.69	VHE	3.61	VHE	3.68	VHE
4. Opens opportunities for coaching and mentoring.	3.72	VHE	3.64	VHE	3.58	VHE	3.65	VHE
5. Motivates teachers to share their best instructional practices to peers or colleagues.	3.81	VHE	3.64	VHE	3.64	VHE	3.70	VHE
Overall Weighted Mean	<b>3.75</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.66</b>	<b>VHE</b>

Note: WM – Weighted Mean VI – Verbal

Interpretation

Scale: 3.51 – 4.00 Very High Extent (VHE) 2.51 – 3.50

High Extent (HE) 1.51 – 2.50 Low Extent (LE)

1.00 – 1.50 Very Low Extent (VLE)

Table 6 presents the extent of implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) in terms of shared personal practice. It can be glimpsed from the table that the indicator, “*Motivates teachers to share their best instructional practices to peers or colleagues*” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.70 verbally interpreted as **very high extent**. On the other hand, the indicator, “*Provides opportunities for teachers to observe peers and offer encouragement,*” got the lowest weighted mean of 3.63 verbally interpreted as **very high extent**.

It is manifested also in the table that Cupang NHS, Maximo L. Gatlabayan Memorial NHS and Mayamot NHS have a very high extent of implementation of PLCs in terms of shared personal practice.

**Table 7****Extent of Implementation of Professional Learning Communities**

Indicator / Component	Cupang NHS		Maximo L. Gatlabayan MNHS		Mayamot NHS		Overall	
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI
1. Shared and Supportive Leadership	3.57	VHE	3.55	VHE	3.40	HE	3.51	VHE
2. Collective Learning and Application	3.64	VHE	3.61	VHE	3.55	VHE	3.60	VHE
3. Shared Values and Vision	3.73	VHE	3.68	VHE	3.52	VHE	3.64	VHE
4. Supportive Conditions	3.72	VHE	3.67	VHE	3.59	VHE	3.66	VHE
5. Shared Personal Practice	3.75	VHE	3.65	VHE	3.58	VHE	3.66	VHE
Overall Weighted Mean	<b>3.68</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.63</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>VHE</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>VHE</b>

Note: WM – Weighted Mean VI – Verbal

Interpretation

Scale: 3.51 – 4.00 Very High Extent (VHE) 2.51 – 3.50

High Extent (HE) 1.51 – 2.50 Low Extent (LE)

1.00 – 1.50 Very Low Extent (VLE)

Table 7 presents the summary of indicators / components in the extent of implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) in the select secondary schools. It can be seen from the table that considering the responses from the three schools, “*supportive conditions*” and “*shared personal practice*” had the highest overall weighted mean of 3.66 verbally interpreted as **very high extent**. This means that in the three schools, the two components are the most prominent in terms of implementing PLCs to their departments or schools. On the other hand, “*shared and supportive leadership*” had the lowest weighted mean of 3.51, interpreted as **very high extent**. Although this indicator showed evidently in PLCs implementation, still the respondents see this as one of the priority improvement of schools as far as PLCs are concerned.

**Question 2.** Is there a significant difference among the perceptions of the three groups of respondents on the extent of implementation of professional learning communities in selected secondary schools?

The tables presented below provided data on the significant difference among the perceptions of the three groups of respondents on the extent of implementation of professional learning competencies in terms of the following: 1) shared and supportive leadership, 2) collective learning and application, 3) shared values and vision, 4) supportive conditions and 5) shared personal practice.

It can be seen from the Table 8 that the computed F-value is 10.6335 which is greater than the critical F-value of 3.8853. Also, the p-value 0.0022 is less than the significance level 0.05. This means that there is significant difference among the perceptions of the three groups of respondents on the extent of implementation of professional learning communities in terms of shared and supportive leadership.

**Table 8**  
**Significant Difference Among the Perceptions of the Three Groups of Respondents on the Extent of Implementation of Professional Learning Communities in Terms of Shared and Supportive Leadership**

Respondents	N	Mean	Variance	F-value	p-value	F-critical	Decision
Cupang NHS	43	3.57	0.0088	10.6335	0.0022	3.8853	Reject Ho Significant
Maximo LGMNHS	61	3.55	0.0009				
Mayamot NHS	88	3.40	0.0018				

It can be seen from the Table 9 that the computed F-value is 3.1654 which is less than the critical F-value of 3.8853. Also, the p-value 0.0787 is greater than the significance level 0.05. This means that there is no significant difference among the perceptions of the three groups of respondents on the extent of implementation of professional learning communities in terms of collective learning and application.

**Table 9**

**Significant Difference Among the Perceptions of the Three Groups of Respondents on the Extent of Implementation of Professional Learning Communities in Terms of Collective Learning and Application**

Respondents	N	Mean	Variance	F-value	p-value	F-critical	Decision
Cupang NHS	43	3.64	0.0053	3.1654	0.0787	3.8853	Do Not Reject Ho Not Significant
Maximo LGMNHS	61	3.61	0.0013				
Mayamot NHS	88	3.55	0.0032				

It can be seen from the Table 10 that the computed F-value is 43.6278 which is greater than the critical F-value of 3.8853. Also, the p-value  $3.12 \times 10^{-6}$  is less than the significance level 0.05. This means that there is significant difference among the perceptions of the three groups of respondents on the extent of implementation of professional learning communities in terms of shared values and vision.

**Table 10**

**Significant Difference Among the Perceptions of the Three Groups of Respondents on the Extent of Implementation of Professional Learning Communities in Terms of Shared Values and Vision**

Respondents	N	Mean	Variance	F-value	p-value	F-critical	Decision
Cupang NHS	43	3.73	0.0021	43.6278	$3.12 \times 10^{-6}$	3.8853	Reject Ho Significant
Maximo LGMNHS	61	3.68	0.0002				
Mayamot NHS	88	3.52	0.0017				

It can be seen from the Table 11 that the computed F-value is 14.0108 which is greater than the critical F-value of 3.8853. Also, the p-value 0.0007 is less than the significance level 0.05. This means that there is significant difference among the perceptions of the three groups of

respondents on the extent of implementation of professional learning communities in terms of supportive conditions.

**Table 11**

**Significant Difference Among the Perceptions of the Three Groups of Respondents on the Extent of Implementation of Professional Learning Communities in Terms of Supportive Conditions**

Respondents	N	Mean	Variance	F-value	p-value	F-critical	Decision
Cupang NHS	43	3.72	0.0012	14.0108	0.0007	3.8853	Reject Ho Significant
Maximo LGMNHS	61	3.67	0.0014				
Mayamot NHS	88	3.59	0.0020				

Lastly, Table 12 presents the significant difference among the perceptions of the three groups of respondents on the extent of PLC implementation. It can be glimpsed from the table that the computed F-value is 22.9329 which is greater than the critical F-value of 3.8853. Also, the p-value  $7.95 \times 10^{-5}$  is less than the significance level 0.05. This means that there is significant difference among the perceptions of the three groups of respondents on the extent of implementation of professional learning communities in terms of shared personal practice.

**Table 12**

**Significant Difference Among the Perceptions of the Three Groups of Respondents on the Extent of Implementation of Professional Learning Communities in Terms of Shared Personal Practice**

Respondents	N	Mean	Variance	F-value	p-value	F-critical	Decision
Cupang NHS	43	3.75	0.0020	22.9329	$7.95 \times 10^{-5}$	3.8853	Reject Ho Significant
Maximo LGMNHS	61	3.65	0.0006				
Mayamot NHS	88	3.58	0.0019				

Considering the presented data, it revealed that among the five (5) dimensions of professional learning communities (PLCs), only the “*collective learning and application*” showed no significant difference among the perceptions of the three (3) groups of respondents. This implies that the practices of *learning together as a PLC* and *working together to apply what is learned* are evident in the three secondary schools. Hord and Sommers (2008) as cited by Reubel (2011), believed that PLC, to be successful, should not only based on inquiry and reflection, but also on dialogue about that reflection. Implementing a strategic plan and examining what really happened in practice with the intent to revise or continue the approach is very essential.

In contrast, the other four (4) dimensions, *shared and supportive leadership*, *shared values and vision*, *supportive condition*, and *shared personal practice* exhibited significant difference among the perceptions of the three (3) groups of respondents. While these dimensions of PLCs are also evident in the selected secondary schools, the perceptions of the teacher-respondents may vary depending on their knowledge, interpretation and understanding of each PLC dimension.

This finding would be relevant in recommending to secondary schools in intensifying the culture of PLCs and develop strategies that would enlighten teachers on its purpose and importance, specifically on each dimension.

**Question 3.** What are the relevant experiences of teachers (*challenges and opportunities*), head teachers, and principals in participating and facilitating professional learning communities (PLCs)?

Based on the gathered responses, there are different challenges that teachers encountered in participating to professional learning communities, whether in school and/or department. These responses were analyzed and grouped according to similarities and differences. Each group was named relative to common challenges experienced by teachers in participating to PLCs. These are as follow:

#### ***Common Challenges Experienced by Teachers in Participation to PLCs***

- Time management
- Limited materials
- Conflict / overlapping of activities
- Appropriateness of topics



- No experience / non-familiarity with PLCs
- Cooperation among teachers
- Communication
- Internet connection
- Use of PLCs in school / department
- Motivation towards PLCs
- Budget allocation for PLCs
- Learning environment

The researcher further trimmed these common challenges to point out the most prominent issues regarding PLC implementation to school / department. After a deeper analysis of the common challenges, it revealed that there are three (3) priority challenges that need to be addressed in future PLCs. These are (a) *scheduling of activities* to avoid conflicts and improper use of time, (b) *communicating the purpose* to ensure full cooperation and motivation among teachers, and (c) *engaging 100% of teachers* to give opportunities in sharing their insights and best practices.

Teacher-respondents were also asked how they find attending or participating to PLCs, whether in school and/or department. Most of them find PLCs as interesting part of the teaching profession. They feel the excitement to collaborate and share insights with co-teachers to improve skills and attain the specific goal of the school or department. They also believed that professional learning communities served as means to deliver better and effective decisions for the improvement of learning outcomes. Moreover, teacher-respondents appreciated several opportunities that will benefit them in participation to PLCs. The common responses are as follow:

#### ***Common Opportunities Realized by Teachers in Participation to PLCs***

- Improve knowledge and skills
- Practice collaboration to improve outcomes
- Improve teaching and learning
- Share best and innovative practices
- Link with other community members
- Empower and motivate teachers
- Good and harmonious relationship
- Improve teaching strategies
- Learn and explore new things and ideas
- Inculcate the values of shared responsibility

- Increase self-esteem and self-advancement
- Upskill and reskill teachers' competencies

Conversely, the identified challenges and opportunities of teachers in participating to PLCs are relevant contributors to the experiences of head teachers and principals in facilitating PLCs in their respective department / school. They also shared substantial insights and practices in implementing PLCs based on their own experiences.

According to head teachers and principals, teachers are engaged in all school programs, projects, and activities. They allowed to share their insights collaboratively during the planning, implementation, and post-implementation process. Studies reported by Hord (1997) as cited by American Institutes for Research (2021), revealed that principals in professional learning communities accept a collegial relationship with teachers, share power and decision making, and promote and nurture leadership development among the staff.

In addressing the priority improvement areas of teachers, head teachers and principals listen to the suggestions of both the internal and external stakeholders. Convene and discuss the different issues and collectively identify solutions to problems. Research revealed that in learning communities, persons at all levels of a schoolwork collaboratively to solve problems and improve learning opportunities. According to Sergiovanni (1994) as cited by American Institutes for Research (2021), this collegial relationship produces creative and satisfactory solutions to problems, strengthens the bond between principals and teachers, and increases commitment to improvement efforts.

Head teachers and principal inform and engage the stakeholders in setting expectations and targets for students' performance by sharing to them the DepEd's mandate, vision, mission, and core values. PLCs connect teachers and stakeholders to look on the same vision for the betterment of the school. Hord (1997) as cited by American Institutes for Research (2021), notes the importance of staff involvement in developing a shared vision, making decisions consistent with the vision, and promoting accountability for actions.

In the secondary schools where this research study was conducted, PLCs require two types of conditions that support a professional learning community — structures and collegial relationships. Structures include a variety of conditions such as size of the school, proximity of staff to one another, communication systems, and time and space for staff to meet and to

examine current practice. Time for teachers and school head / head teacher to meet is a crucial physical structure of a PLC. On the other hand, collegial relationships include respect, trust, norms of continuous critical inquiry and improvement, and positive, caring relationships among students, teachers, and school administrators.

Lastly, shared personal practice is very evident in the secondary schools as mentioned by head teachers and principals. They encourage teachers to improve their instructional practices by sharing their best and innovative procedures to their peers and colleagues. Sharing of personal practice through open discussion and reflection is one the good factors that contributes to the development and setting goals of the teachers. Research indicates that teacher interaction within a formalized structure for collegial coaching is a powerful contributor to professional learning communities. As "*peers helping peers*" (Hord, 1997 as cited by American Institutes for Research, 2021), teachers build a culture of mutual respect and trustworthiness for both personal and total school improvement.

**Question 4.** How do principals and head teachers view PLC as an approach to support teachers' professional development?

In relation to the questions given to principals and head teachers, some of the verbatim responses are as follow:

<i>What is the status of professional learning communities (PLCs) in your school / department?</i>	<i>How do you establish PLCs in your school / department?</i>	<i>In your context / school's or department's context, how PLCs help or support your teachers' professional development?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLCs in our school are diverse, groups are by department, grade level and project teams</li> <li>• Teachers in the department work collaboratively for our students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through collaboration and consultancy among heads and dept chair with IOC and Land D coordinator.</li> <li>• We institutionalized group and formed with a common goal and purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through trainings, webinars. Updating their skills, informing of new strategies or trends in teaching. Survey, result of ESAT, performance rating,</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our department is now in developing stage when it comes to PLC and was maximize this pandemic.</li> <li>• PLC here in our school is very much influential, we use this as means of collaboration to communicate the different program and projects in our school.</li> <li>• Performing well for their task and working collaboratively to enhance their knowledge in the teaching learning process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I consider the concerns of the teachers in the teaching and learning aspects</li> <li>• By following the needed / targeted AIP, IPPD, PROFESSIONAL GROWTH, needed TA and feedbacking are the established PLCs in the department.</li> <li>• Through LAC, FGD, INSET</li> <li>• The creation of different teams by department, a school planning, QUAME team and all others help to communicate the needs and the status of implementation of our PPAs</li> <li>• In our department, we always have consultative meeting on how the programs/activity to conduct will help learners. We also have LAC and FGD to enhance teachers' strategies on how to deal with the students in this time of pandemic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CO, IPPD etc. are basis for topics for PLC</li> <li>• Teachers grow by sharing experiences and best practices, desire for professional and personal improvement to contribute to the PIAs of the school</li> <li>• Support my co teachers in promoting professional development.</li> <li>• Teachers in the same grade level develop camaraderie, helping and encouraging one another specially in developing oneself professionally.</li> <li>• PLC in context will develop teaching skills meeting the academic performance of learners. Although teacher will undergo training of PLC as well as orient them in PLC's, end result is that learners will benefit on this.</li> <li>• PLC is very helpful to all our teachers, they collaborate, suggests and recommends. That helps them to be part of the team,</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize their individual differences and trust to one another</li> <li>• According to the results of their development needs and PIAs</li> </ul>	<p>exercised what they learnt from trainings and workshops and help them grow professionally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It enhances teacher skills in teaching. It provides more strategies that can help teachers become innovative.</li> <li>• Improve teaching skills through collaboratively study or FGD.</li> <li>• Each teacher creates professional development</li> <li>• Enhanced collaborative effort in performing their task professionally.</li> </ul>
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According to school heads and head teachers, professional learning communities (PLCs) in school / department are diverse in nature. Teachers are grouped depending on their priority improvement areas. Department, grade level and project teams are some of the varied categories of PLC in school. They also considered PLCs as influential factor to establish effective collaboration and communication among teachers to improve their individual knowledge, skills, and competencies.

School Heads and Head Teachers established PLCs in their respective schools and departments by institutionalizing the different groups and teams where teachers set common goal and target to address their development needs. The principle of shared leadership, shared responsibility and shared accountability utilized to engage teachers in the planning, implementation, and decision-making strategies. Consistent collaboration and consultation among teachers were practiced to minimizing miscommunication and conflicts that may affect the purpose of PLCs.

In general, PLCs help and support teachers to improve and grow professionally. According to Serviss (2021), PLCs allow educators to directly improve teaching and learning, build stronger relationship between team members, utilize research and other technology tools in the classroom, and help reflect on learning results and outcomes. This justified the personal experiences shared by teachers, school heads and head teachers in implementing PLCs.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

In light of the discussions and findings, the following conclusions were made:

1. The extent of implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) in the selected secondary schools is very high extent. In consideration to the different dimensions of PLCs, the three schools also manifested very high extent in the implementation of PLCs.
2. The perceptions of the three groups of respondents on the implementation of PLCs are significantly different in terms of shared and supportive leadership, shared vision and values, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice. On the other hand, the only dimension of PLC implementation that showed no significant difference is the collective learning and application.
3. The implementation of professional learning communities and the participation of teachers to these activities manifested different challenges on their part. However, there are several positive opportunities that they realized while experiencing PLCs within the school or in the department. Moreover, head teachers and principals believed that they are doing their best to utilize the principle of PLCs in terms of its five dimensions namely: shared and supportive leadership, collective learning and applications, shared vision and values, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice. These were all evident in their own distinguished strategies during the sharing of practices.
4. The school heads and head teachers viewed PLCs as a good practice of enhancing and establishing the principle of shared leadership, shared responsibility, and shared accountability relative to learning outcomes and achievements. Moreover, it generally helps and supports teachers in improving their individual and professional knowledge, skills, and competencies.



From the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were derived:

1. Intensify the implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) in schools, both elementary and secondary.
2. Formulate strategies or programs that will engage all teachers in the implementation of PLCs in schools.
3. Organize and plan PLCs for school, department and/or other teams within the school year to avoid conflict and duplication.
4. Ensure that development needs and/or priority improvement areas of a specific group of teachers will be the subject of PLCs implemented.
5. Allocate budget from MOOE / school fund for the implementation of PLCs.
6. This research study may be used as reference for future research that may focus also to professional learning communities and other variables.
7. Provide a motivating, engaging and conducive learning environment for every PLC implemented in school and/or department.

### **DISSEMINATION AND ADVOCACY PLAN**

This basic research was conducted this school year 2021-2022. Communication letters were prepared and submitted to proper authorities and/or personnel for approval and information dissemination. The results and outputs of this research work were disseminated to Division Office personnel, specifically, the School Governance and Operations Division (SGOD), Curriculum Implementation Division (CID), school heads, department heads, and teachers for them to be aware of the extent of implementation, implications, challenges and opportunities of professional learning opportunities (PLCs) in their respective schools and in improving teachers' quality and learning outcomes. This research also benefitted teachers in enhancing their individual professional growth and development. School Principals and Head Teachers can also utilize the results of this research study in making their own action and work plans to improve and intensify PLCs in schools and in their respective learning area department and make further action / basic research relative to their performance.

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