

The role of collective learning in building professional learning communities in schools in the Zambezi region of Namibia

David Nkengbeza and Eugene L. Maemeko
*Department of Applied Educational Sciences, University of Namibia,
Windhoek, Namibia, and*
Percy Mashebe
University of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to assess teachers' and principals' perception towards the role of collective learning (CL) and application in building professional learning communities (PLCs) in schools in one selected circuit in the Zambezi Region.

Design/methodology/approach – Quantitative research method was used, and the data were collected using PLCs' questionnaires revised for circuit and region in Namibia. A total of 340 teachers and principals in primary, combined and secondary schools were involved in this research. Based on teachers and principals' assessment, high- and low-performing factors of CL are presented and explained.

Findings – The major findings are that the majority of participants either strongly agreed or agreed with almost all the statements. It was only in the statement that "teachers and the broader community role players come together to discuss better ways to solve problems" that a majority of participants disagreed. This research challenges all those involved in building up PLCs to think more about CL when they are in the process of structuring their schools as PLCs.

Originality/value – This article is the original work of these authors and has not been submitted to other journals for publication.

Keywords Professional learning communities, Collective learning and application, Zambezi region, Schools, Namibia

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

In viewing of challenges that teaching and learning face in the world of globalisation, there is a need for schools to become more active in the supply of their services to learners by maximising the strategies that will ensure that effective learning takes place (Tembwe, 2014). Teachers today cannot manage the demanding expectations of daily teaching all by themselves. With expected improvements in educational philosophy, classroom technology, instructional approaches and curriculum restructuring in future, teachers will need to depend more on team efforts in which they share their knowledge and skills with others to achieve common goals (Coffey *et al.*, 2015). School members at all the stages must be involved in a process that collectively seek out new knowledge and methods of applying knowledge to



their work, and working together as professional learning communities (PLCs) to reach their educational goals and keep the high attainment scores while engaging in continuous inquiry to address the various needs of students.

Much has been discussed about the development of PLCs to suggest that when working effectively, the structure can have positive effects on learners' success on academic progress. However, little is understood about how effective PLCs are developed (Gray *et al.*, 2017). An increasing interest in PLCs has shown, and a number of studies made it clear, that these learning communities of teachers and school managements focusing on collective job-related reflection positively affect the professional functioning of teachers, development of the school and learners' outcomes.

Few studies have been conducted in component of collective learning (CL) and application. The conditions for CL are extremely hypothetical and generally based on analogies to individual learning and experience (Verbiest *et al.*, 2005). CL empowers humans in another way because individuals who share information can work together efficiently. It also produces creative and appropriate solutions to problems, strengthening the connection between the PLCs' members and increasing their commitment to improvement efforts. CL allows members to exchange ideas on school improvement issues, build new working methods and is seen as a model in which members of the professional learning community meet, share information and draw out strategies to ensure that not only teaching takes place, but that learners that are educated benefit from the teaching process, achieving the required competencies as specified in the different learning programmes.

The study seeks to investigate the role of CL and application in building PLCs in schools, mainly focusing on principals' and teachers' perceptions in one of the identified circuit in Zambezi Region. It is the first study to be conducted in the region and in Namibia on this scale.

1.2 Research question

The following research question guided this study.

RQ1. What are the perceptions of principals and teachers on the role of CL and application in building PLCs in schools in a circuit in the Zambezi Region?

1.3 Significance of the study

This study has presented some of the significant aspects of the literature which support the role of CL and application in building PLCs in schools. Principals, teachers and other members of the professional learning community are the beneficiaries of this study as it will help them to understand the role of CL and application in constructing PLCs in their schools. Students are also the other beneficiaries, as the study will help them to improve their learning by understanding the importance of collaborative learning, among others. On the other hand, future researchers interested in research on the same problem can use this study to guide them in conducting their research work. So, this study hopes to address the role of CL and application in building PLCs in schools. Hence, it is important to understand this connection between CL and PLCs in schools.

2. Literature review

2.1 What is a professional learning community?

The professional learning community's model follows from an assumption that the main business of formal schooling is not simply just to make sure that pupils are educated, but to make sure that they learn. Tembwe's (2014) study indicated that according to Harris and Jones (2010), a professional learning community is a group of associated and engaged professionals who are accountable for driving change and improvement within, between and

across schools that will directly benefit learners. PLCs are defined as inclusive institutions that continuously question the status quo for better means to improve their institutions (Nkengbeza, 2014). In such schools, all stakeholders (teachers, parents, administrators, students, government and the community) work together for the overall development of the school. A professional learning community has major core components (shared and supportive leadership, CL and application, shared values and vision, shared personal practice and supportive conditions), but this study has focused only on one core component of professional learning community, which is CL and application.

2.2 Collective learning and application conceptual framework

This core component of PLCs has been discussed by many researchers like Hord (2003) and Hunter (2013). According to Nkengbeza (2014), for CL to be successfully functional, there should be good collaboration among the stakeholders. He further explained that CL is how the principal and teachers come up with new thinking that creates or recognises ideas, possibilities or alternatives in generating the results that they want. Teachers work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that stimulate deep team learning.

Figure 1 represents six broad structures of CL and application.

2.2.1 Teachers collaboratively work together. Investigations by researchers like Nkengbeza (2014) have revealed that learning communities help individuals at all levels of schools to work collaboratively to solve problems and improve learning opportunities of learners. Successful PLCs work together to find out and create new professional knowledge. The concentration is not just on individual teachers' learning but on professional learning within the setting of a united group that focuses on collective knowledge and occurs with a context of mutual trust and knowledge (Harris and Jones, 2010). Nkengbeza and Heystek (2017) stated that collaborative learning has been facilitated in the 21st century with the overview of different knowledge. Collaborative learning today has extended from within the schools' teams to a network with other schools and teams, both national and international. Good cooperation and trust among the stakeholders are essential for CL to take place (Nkengbeza and Heystek, 2017). CL helps every school and its staff to better handle its problems and concentrates on its vision and the school transformation process.

Learning together as a professional learning community must also be supplemented by working together to apply what is learned. As cited in Ruebel's (2011) study, Hord and Sommers (2008) believe that accomplishment of the PLCs is not centred only on inquiry and reflection but also on the discussions about that reflection. A professional learning community that concentrates on growing the school's capacities, innovation and creativity promotes the production of new ideas within the school, while empowering and supporting teachers in decision-making. CL includes cooperative brainstorming and thinking outside the box. Smith's (2014) study indicated that collaboration is founded in what Louis and Kruse

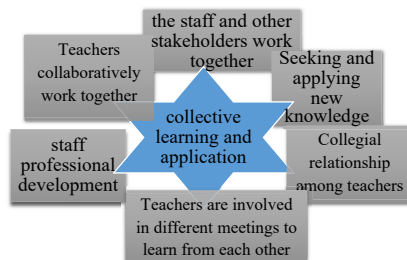


Figure 1.
The framework of CL and application

Source(s): Authors

(1995) call reflective dialogue, in which administrators and teachers take part in conversations about students, teaching and learning that include identifying concerns (Tracy, 2010).

2.2.2 The staff and other stakeholders work together. Educators need to be aware of the benefits of the active participation of parents in schools' PLCs. Parents and schools will benefit from two-way information sharing and collaborative problem-solving. Parents will feel more comfortable in meeting with school personnel when they have been actively involved in school activities and events. It is important that the schools collaborate with the community in a number of ways. Developing relationships with the broad spectrum of community services and businesses is important to the schools. Both parties have a great deal to gain by supporting and collaborating with one another. Research has shown that students will be more successful in their schools when their parents are actively involved in their education.

2.2.3 Teachers are involved in different meetings. Professional learning community teams meet to set goals, articulate their results and discuss about future actions to be taken. Teachers must have time to meet; this is essential beginning and keeping meaningful education reform within a school. There must be a time whereby teachers and principal meet and discuss new ideas and problems affecting their school. There should always be day-to-day opportunities for discussions among teachers to share what they are doing within their classes. When teachers are open to group sharing and reflection and taking the risks necessary to change, they are more successful in their collaborative effort (Harris and Jones, 2010).

2.2.4 Seeking and applying new knowledge. PLCs involve school staff at all levels in process who collectively seek out for new knowledge and methods of applying that knowledge to their work. Teachers and principal look for the best strategies and instructional practices to involve their students in learning. Together, they seek for new knowledge and skills, and they talk about the ideas as well as methods to apply them to their work.

2.2.5 Collegial relationship among teachers. Harris and Jones (2010) have explained that trust among professionals is necessary for a school to become effective PLCs. According to them, when teachers are exposed to group sharing, reflection and taking risks, they are more successful in their collaborative efforts. A culture of information sharing requires respondents to allow themselves to be vulnerable to each other. A lack of faith within a collaborative team could interfere with the team's ability to meet important goals. Trust among all school respondents is "the heart" of a strong relationship that helps the children to learn (Smith, 2014). Professionals that are working together and trust each other make progressive decisions that help them to achieve a common goal. This collegial relationship produces creative and satisfactory solutions to problems, strengthens the bond between principals and teachers and increases commitment to improvement effort (SEDL, 2015).

2.2.6 Staff professional development. Staff professional development is needed for the growth of a professional learning community. In order to build a learning community, leaders must support team improvement. Principals must understand that teams need skills and knowledge to participate in teams. The principal as a gatekeeper concept is reiterated within this component of PLCs in the sense that any school change must be accepted, appreciated and supported by the principal (Ruebel, 2011). As cited by Nkengbeza and Heystek (2017), Banai and Reisel (2007) and Leithwood and Riehl (2003), they believed that leadership is guiding others and is a process of influencing others, and they see supportive leadership behaviour as a positive attitude. Joint leadership requires the principal to work with other stakeholders as peers (Nkengbeza, 2014; Nkengbeza et al., 2015). When leaders support and share their views with others, it can help them to learn from each other, and this will lead to a well-constructed professional learning community.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

A quantitative research design was used in this study. According to [Hamunyela \(2012\)](#), quantitative research describes phenomena in numbers and measures instead of words. She further explained that quantitative researchers look for more context-free generalisations, and they are much more willing to focus on individual variables and factors rather than concentrating on a holistic interpretation; typically, they separate facts and value. The different strategies in quantitative according to [Creswell \(2012\)](#) include experimental, correlational and survey. In this study, a quantitative research method was used because the researcher wants to understand the perceptions of principals and teachers on the role of CL application in building PLCs in schools.

3.2 Research population

A population is the larger group with one or more characteristic in common from which a sample is obtained ([Gay et al., 2009](#)). The targeted population for this study were teachers and principals of schools in a particular circuit in Zambezi Region. The population included 27 schools, 313 teachers and 27 principals.

3.3 Sampling procedures

[Gay et al. \(2009\)](#) have explained that a sample is a group of individuals, items or events that represent the characteristics of the larger group from which the sample is drawn. The samples included 25 schools (93%), and the total number of teachers and principals who responded is 184, which is 54%.

3.4 Research instrument

Questionnaires were an appropriate and potential tool for this study. The questionnaire that was developed by educational researchers was constructed using the core component of PLCs (CL and application), as it is used by [Nkengbeza and Heystek \(2017\)](#). The questionnaire consists of two sections: section A consisted of respondents' personal information and schools' details, and section B contained of 15 statements on CL and application. The four-point Likert scale was employed in the questionnaire to survey principals' and teachers' perceptions on the role of CL and application in building PLCs. The scale from 1 to 4 (scale: 1. = strongly agree [SA], 2. = agree [A], 3. = disagree [D] and 4. = strongly disagree [SD]) was used.

3.5 Validity and reliability for this study

According to [Nkengbeza and Heystek's \(2017\)](#) research, validity is the degree of consistency that your research process demonstrates, and research reliability is the quality of your data gathering instrument. In this study, there is content validity. The questionnaires that were used to collect data have been used by many researchers like [Nkengbeza et al. \(2015\)](#).

3.6 Data collection procedures

For this purpose, a formal letter requesting permission to researchers to administer the questionnaires was given by the circuit inspector. The questionnaire was given to the circuit inspector, who distributed it to schools. The data were collected in one circuit in Zambezi Region. In all, 27 schools, 313 teachers and 27 principals were involved in the study.

3.7 Data analysis

Data analysis is a vehicle used to generate and validate interpretations, formulate inferences and draw conclusions as stated by [Scherman \(2007, p. 147\)](#). The researchers, for easy

understanding of the ordinary readers, presented their data in percentages, focusing mostly on the statements that were rated high and also on those that were rated low by the respondents.

3.8 Ethics statement

Because human respondents are involved in this study, ethical and legal considerations are a concern. The researcher was granted permission to conduct the study by the Regional Director of Education, and the circuit inspector was informed about the study. Each principal received a letter, informing them that the researcher had been given permission by the regional director of education and that the circuit inspector was aware of the study. The researcher made sure that there was no harm to respondents because of the results, and the consent letters were sent to all principals and teachers in schools. The identities of those that were involved in this study will not be revealed, and the names of schools will be kept anonymous. The researcher guaranteed the confidentiality of the information given. Respondents were well informed about the study as explained by Gay *et al.* (2009). The inspector and principals helped in delivering the questionnaires to the respective schools. All respondents were informed that their contributions were voluntary with no reward of any kind. The researchers made it clear that the respondents were free to contact the researchers if there was any additional question that needed clarification and/or feedback. Among the feedback received, most of the respondents indicated that they had completed the questionnaire, and some requested that we could share the articles when they are published. There was no complaining about any unfair distribution of the questionnaire.

4. Data presentation

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the findings of the study, and it is divided in two sections. Section A consists of the personal information of the respondents. Section B presents findings of the evaluation and assessments of the role of CL and application in building PLCs.

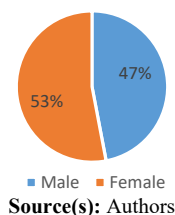
4.2 Personal information of the respondents

Section A consisted of personal information of the respondents. The section has four components: gender, age group, positions of respondents in schools and school level.

Figure 2 represents the distribution of respondents into genders. Females were more (53%) compared to males (47%).

Figure 3 presents the percentages of age groups for respondents. It can be seen from the graph that most of the respondents are between 35 and 55 years (49%), followed by those aged 35 (39%) and 55 (12%).

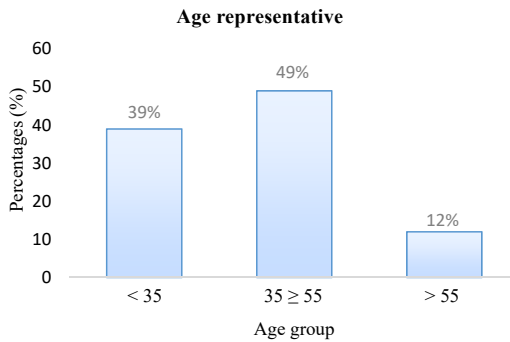
From Figure 4, it can be seen that 50% of the respondents are subject teachers (grades 4–12), 38% are class teachers (grades 1–3), 4% are heads of department (HoD) and 8% are principals (P) or acting principals (AP).



Source(s): Authors

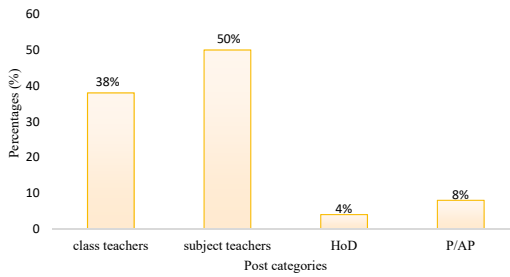
Figure 2.
Respondents' gender

Figure 3.
Age groups of
respondents



Source(s): Authors

Figure 4.
Positions of
respondents in schools



Source(s): Authors

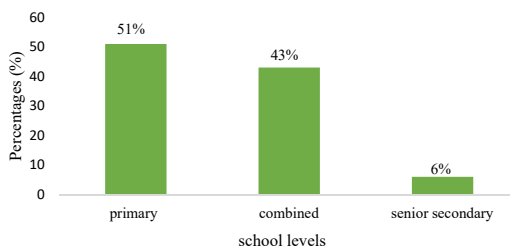
Figure 5 shows the levels of the schools that took part in the study. It shows that 51% are primary schools, 43% are combined schools and 6% are senior secondary schools.

4.3 Section B: respondents evaluations

Section B of the questionnaire contained the respondents' evaluation. The assessment was done using a four-point Likert scale as follows: 1 = strongly agree (SA), 2 = agree (A), 3 = disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). There were 15 statements under CL and application as the core component of PLCs.

Figure 6 represents the overall view of teachers' and principals' perception of their schools as PLCs under the component of CL and application. Most of the respondents who strongly agreed or agreed had a total of 81% - those who strongly agreed had 30% and those who

Figure 5.
Level of schools



Source(s): Authors

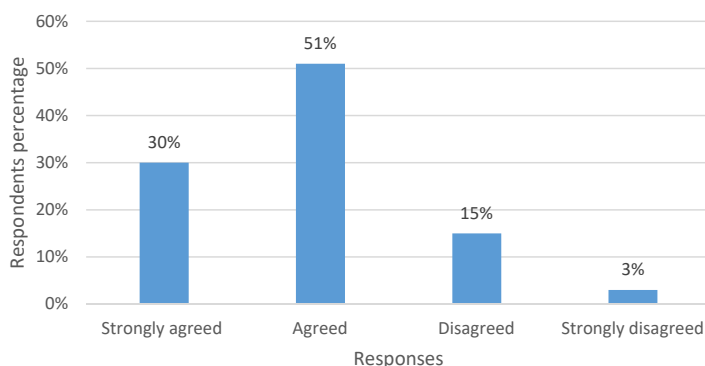


Figure 6. Overall overview of respondents

Source(s): Authors

agreed had 51%. A total of 18% disagreed (15%) and strongly disagreed (3%). This shows that CL and application is strongly practised in PLCs of these schools.

Figure 7 represents the percentages of respondents that strongly agreed with the statement (*Teachers are committed to school improvement efforts*) of CL and application. The highest number of respondents who strongly agreed (43%) in this study were registered under this statement: “Teachers are committed to school improvement efforts”. Respondents who strongly agreed plus those who agreed (43% + 52%) make up 95%.

Figure 8 shows the percentage of the respondents who agreed with this statement (*Teachers use different meetings to learn from each other*). With 60% of the respondents agreeing with this statement, it was the highest compared to other statements. However, a combination of those who strongly agreed and those who agreed (23% + 60%) made up only 83%.

Figure 9 represents the highest percentage of the respondents who disagreed (D = 38%) and strongly disagreed (SD = 13%), with a total of 51%. Most the respondents disagreed (38%) and strongly disagreed (13%) with this statement (*Teachers and broader community role players come together to discuss better ways to solve problems*) on CL and application. On the other hand, respondents who strongly agreed and those who agreed made up less than 50% (12% + 37% = 49%).

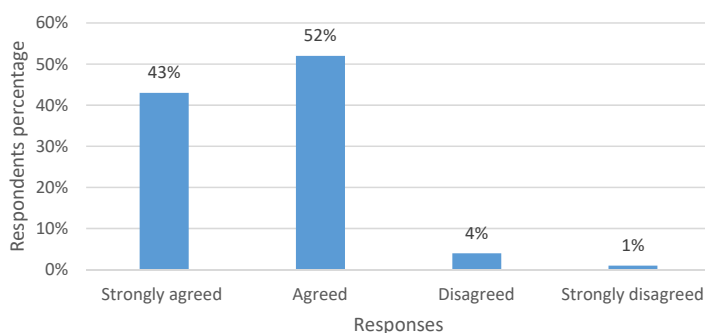
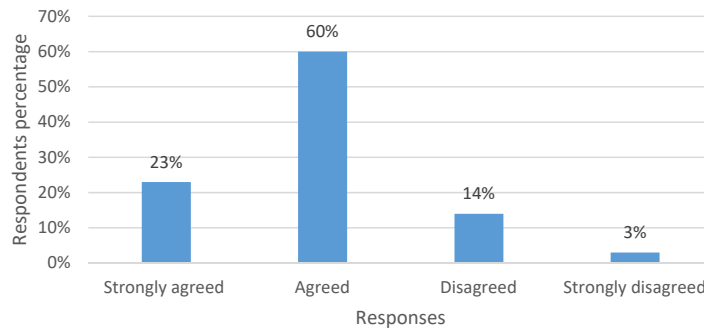


Figure 7. Teachers are committed to school improvement efforts

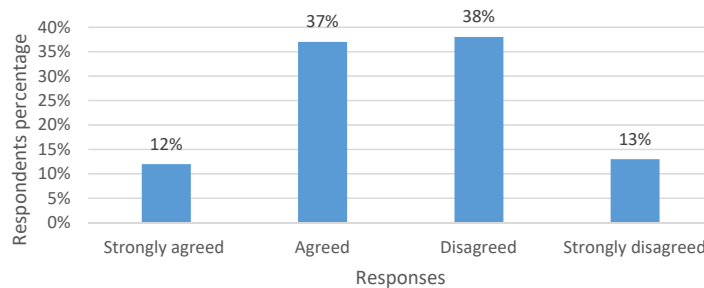
Source(s): Authors

Figure 8.
Teachers use different meetings to learn from each other



Source(s): Authors

Figure 9.
Teachers and the broader community role players come together to discuss better ways to solve problems



Source(s): Authors

5. Discussions

5.1 Introduction

The results presented in the study on the role of CL and application in building PLCs in schools are discussed in this section.

5.2 Overall performance

This study has offered us an opportunity to understand how the teachers and principals from schools in the selected circuit in the Zambezi Region assess their schools as PLCs under the core component of CL and application. The role of CL and application in building PLCs was assessed with 15 statements. The results clearly indicate that CL and application has an effective role and is being practised in most schools in building PLCs. The overall responses indicate that CL also plays a big role in building PLCs in schools. In all, 51% of the respondents agreed on the statements of CL and application on their schools; 30% strongly agreed with the statements, 15% disagreed and only 3% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This study reveals that the majority of the respondents (81%) both strongly agreed and agreed with the statements on role of CL (See [Figure 6](#)). Looking at previous literature, this can be related to the study that was conducted by [Nkengbeza et al. \(2015\)](#) in Finland, where CL was also assessed as a very strong component, with 55% of the respondents agreeing on the sub-components on CL in their schools and 20% strongly agreeing with the sub-components. Even though that study was done in Finnish schools, the findings can also be related to the one presented in this study ([Figure 6](#)) conducted in Namibian schools. According to the other study that was conducted by [Nkengbeza and](#)

Heystek (2017) in South Africa, their findings on teachers' and principals' perception of their schools as PLCs reveal that CL and application was one the components that had the highest percentage of the respondents who strongly agreed that. The study shows only few teachers and principals not considering CL in building PLCs.

5.3 Sub-components that performed well

There are also some of the sub-components of CL that did very well, whereby most respondents strongly agreed and agreed with the statement. Most of the respondents have positively assessed their schools when it comes to this statement: "Teachers are committed to assess school improvement efforts". This is indicated by Figure 7, whereby 43% of the respondents agreed, 52% strongly agreed, 4% disagreed and only 1% strongly disagreed. It can be clearly seen that most schools are practising this sub-component in their PLCs, and only few schools are not considering this statement in building their schools' PLCs under the core component CL and application.

The other sub-component that performed very well is "*Teachers use different meetings to learn from each other*". With this statement, 60% of the respondents agreed, as can be seen from Figure 8. This indicates that many of the schools are considering this sub-component of CL in their PLCs.

5.4 Sub-component that did not perform well

5.4.1 *CL and application sub-component that needs improvements.* The findings also reveal that there were also some statements on CL and application that are not being considered in building PLCs in some of the schools. This is indicated by the highest percentage of respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed on the statement. Like the statement "*Teachers and broader community role players (e.g. business) come together to discuss better ways to solve school problems*", most of the respondents as it can be seen from Figure 9 disagreed and strongly disagreed with a total percentage of 51%. This needs to be investigated to find out why this statement is not being practiced by all of the schools in building PLCs.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

It can therefore be concluded from this study that CL and application plays a key role in building and sustaining PLCs in schools. From the findings, the statement of CL and application (*Teachers and broader community role players come together to discuss better ways to solve problems*) needs to be researched on to find out why teachers and principals in most the schools are not practising this sub-component in their PLCs. The study has also given us some realities of teachers' and principals' perception of their schools as professional learning community, for example, the statement of CL and application that is highly practised and the one that is not that much practised in PLCs in schools. In this research paper, most of statements on CL were rated high, and only few were rated lower and suggestions have been given. The idea of building PLCs is worth examining as a means of promoting and for sustainable improvement in teaching and pupils' learning.

6.2 Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions were made:

It was noted that this study was done in 26 schools in a circuit in Zambezi Region. It will be a good idea to repeat the study in all the schools in the region, and also in the schools in other regions in Namibia, so that we can see if the findings will be similar. It is also suggested that

future studies find out why the number of HoDs were fewer than the number of principals and acting principals who took part in this study. Data from respondents of different schools should be differentiated during the gathering of data for researchers to make a detailed analysis where possible. It will also be a good idea to collect the data using mixed methods. If this is done, the researchers will be able to give more explanations on why certain statements are rated higher than others. It is also necessary to try and improve the respondents' participation rate as this may influence the overall perceptions for each statement.

References

- Banai, M. and Reisel, W.D. (2007), "The influence of supportive leadership and job characteristics on work alienation: a six-country investigation", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 42 No. 4, pp. 463-476.
- Coffey, D., Cox, S., Hillman, S., Chan, T.C., Cinkir, Ş., Fleuriet, C.A. and Williams, M.L. (2015), "Innovative planning to meet the future challenges of elementary education", *Educational Planning*, Vol. 22.
- Creswell, J.W. (2012), *Educational Research Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, United State of America: Pearson, New York City.
- Gay, L.R., Mills, G. and Airasian, P. (2009), *Educational Research*, 9th ed., Perason Education, London.
- Gray, J., Kruse, S. and Tarter, C.J. (2012), *Developing Professional Learning Communities through Enabling School Structures, Collegial Trust, Academic Emphasis, and Collective Efficacy*, University Council for Educational Administration, Denver, Colorado.
- Hamunyela, M. (2012), *Educational Research Study Guide*, Center for External Studies, Windhoek.
- Harris, A. and Jones, M. (2010), "Professional learning communities and system improvement", *Improving Schools*, Vol. 13, pp. 172-181.
- Hord, S.M. (2003), *Professional learning communities: communities of continuous inquiry and improvement (reprint)*, SEDL: Southwest Education Development Laboratory, available at: <http://www.pdfdrive.net/professional-learning-communities-welcome-to-sedl-advancing-e1879669.html>
- Hord, S.M. and Sommers, W.A. (2008), *Leading Professional Learning Communities: Voices From Research and Practice*, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Hunter, J. (2013), *Professional learning communities*, available at: <http://johunter.pbworks.com/f/PLC.pdf>
- Leithwood, K. and Riehl, C. (2003), *What Do We Already Know About Successful School Leadership?*, Paper for AERA, Chicago, April.
- Louis, K.S. and Kruse, S.D. (1995), *Professionalism and Community: Perspectives on Reforming Urban Schools*, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Nkengbeza, D. (2014), in Pekka, O. and Tuikka, S. (Eds), *Building a Professional Learning Community in a Conflict and Post-conflict*, University Library of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä.
- Nkengbeza, D. and Heystek, J. (2017), "Professional learning communities: a comparative study of three educational areas in the north west province of South Africa", *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 5 No. 4, pp. 98-119.
- Nkengbeza, D., Pukkinen, S. and Kanervio, P. (2015), "Assessing comprehensive schools in one Finnish municipality as professional learning communities", *Zimbabwe Journal of Science and Technology*, Vol. 10, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291945773_ASSESSING_COMPREHENSIVE_SCHOOLS_IN_ONE_FINNISH_MUNICIPALITY_AS_PROFESSIONAL_LEARNING_COMMUNITIES
- Ruebel, K.K. (2011), "Research summary: professional learning communities", available at: <http://www.nmsa.org/Research/ResearchSummaries/PLC/>

-
- Scherman, R. (2007), "The ethnic identity development and adjustment of Eastern European children adopted in New Zealand: an empirical study", *Paper presented at, and published in the Proceedings of the 6th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences*, 1 June, Honolulu, Hawaii.
- SEDL (2015), *Collective Learning and Application of Learning*, American Institutes for Research, Vol. 8.
- Smith, H.H.R. (2014), "Development of trust and collaboration between teachers in plc teams: the roles of teachers, principals and different facets of trust", Brigham Young University ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 3622127.
- Tembwe, N.N. (2014), *Understanding the Concept of Professional Learning Community*.
- Tracy, L.R. (2010), *A Study on the Principal's Role in the Development of Professional Learning Communities in Elementary Schools that "Beat the Odds" in Reading*, University of Minnesota.
- Verbiest, E., Ansems, E., Bakx, A., Grootswagers, A., Heijmen-Versteegen, I., Jongen, T. and Teurlings, C. (2005), "Collective learning in schools described: building collective learning capacity", *REICE*, Vol. 3, pp. 17-38.

Further reading

- Mitchell, C. and Sackney, L. (2000), *Profound Improvement: Building Capacity for a Learning Community*, Copyright 2011.
- Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M. and Thomas, S. (2006), "Professional learning communities: a review of the literature", *Journal of Educational Change*, Vol. 7 No. 4, pp. 221-258, available at: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/nt436623r1810168/>

(The Appendix follows overleaf)

1

Professional learning communities' questionnaire revised for schools, circuits and regions in Namibia

Instructions

Please read carefully the questionnaire below assessing your perception of your principal, staffs and other stakeholders in your educational institution as a professional learning community.

The purpose of this research is to determine how the teachers and principals perceive their school as a professional learning community

Section A: Personal Information (Please tick the correct box)

1. Gender

Male	1
Female	2

2. Age Group

Less than 35	1
Between 35 and 55	2
More than 55	3

3. My post in the school

Class Teacher (Gr 1-3)	1
Subject Teachers (Gr 4 – 12)	2
Head of department	3
Principal or Acting Principal	4

4. Level of school

Primary	1
Combined	2
Senior Secondary	3

5. School location

Town (Urban)	2
Rural	3

6. Number of learners in your school (To be completed by principal and acting principal only)

--

7. Number of teachers in your school (To be completed by principal and acting principal only)

--

1

Table A1.
Collective learning and application questionnaire

Collective learning and application		SA	A	D	SD
19	Teachers work together to seek new knowledge or skills				
20	Teachers apply new knowledge in their work				
21	Heads of departments are part of the learning teams in school				
22	Collegial relationships exist among teachers				
23	Teachers are committed to school improvement efforts				
24	Teachers work together to search for solutions to address diverse learner needs. (e.g. different reading abilities)				
25	Different meetings (departmental or grade or subject meetings) exist where teachers can learn from each other				
26	Teachers use different meetings to learn from each other				
27	Teachers actively discuss new ideas and problems affecting their school				
28	Teachers and parents come together to discuss better ways to solve school problem				
29	Teachers and broader community role players (e.g. business) come together to discuss better ways to solve school problems				
30	All our staff members attend professional development organized by the department voluntarily because we want to improve the quality of education				
31	Teachers are committed to voluntarily come together and discuss issues that enhance learning				
32	Teachers work together to read journals or books to learn about effective teaching and learning methods				
33	Teachers collaboratively analyse learner work to improve teaching and learning				
Comments Please write behind this page if you need more space					

Note(s): Scale: = strongly agree (SA), 2 = agree (A), 3 = disagree (D), 4 = strongly disagree

Source(s): Nkengbeza *et al.* (2015)

Corresponding author

David Nkengbeza can be contacted at: dnkengbeza@gmail.com

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com