



NAZARBAYEV  
UNIVERSITY  
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Nazarbayev  
Intellectual  
Schools



# **Study of NIS Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**

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# Background of the study

- Kazakhstan's integration into the world educational sphere
- The establishment of Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) in 2008 brings many changes in secondary education
- According to the Development Strategy of Autonomous organizations until 2020 (2011) , NIS integrates with best international experience in teaching and learning
- Professional learning communities as action research and lesson study were introduced in NIS in 2011 aimed at improving teacher practice. Teachers are expected to join PLCs and collaborate with peers.

# Research Problem

- PLCs are a new trend in secondary education of Kazakhstan
- Teachers mostly used to work in isolation
- PLCs are obligatory for teachers
- Lack of qualitative studies in Kazakhstan on professional learning communities and various factors that enhance or inhibit teachers' perceptions of PLCs
- Teachers participate in PLC, however there is no research evidence how teachers perceive PLCs and what drives teachers' motivation to be part of learning communities

## **Purpose of the study**

To explore how teachers of NIS perceive the role of PLCs in the school and what their experiences are.

# Research Questions

## Main research question:

How do NIS teachers perceive professional learning communities in the school?

## Subsidiary research questions:

- What factors enhance teachers' perception of professional learning communities in the school?
- What factors inhibit teachers' perception of professional learning communities in the school?

# Literature review

- How schools developed into professional learning communities?
- Professional learning communities: characteristics and definitions
- Teachers' perceptions of professional learning communities
- Factors inhibiting teachers' perceptions of PLCs
- Factors enhancing teachers' perceptions of PLCs

# Literature Review

How schools developed into PLCs?	PLCs: characteristics and definitions	Teachers' perceptions of PLCs	Factors Enhancing Teachers' Perception of PLCs	Factors Inhibiting Teachers' Perception of PLCs
<p><i>Rozenholtz (1989)</i></p> <p><i>Senge (2006)</i> <i>Hord (1997)</i></p> <p>PLCs were introduced to address teacher isolation and develop teaching</p>	<p><i>Hord (1997) 5 attributes of PLCs</i></p> <p><i>DuFour (2004) 3 Big Ideas</i></p> <p><i>Stoll et al (2005); Little (2001); DuFour &amp; Eaker (1998); Mitchell and Sackney (2000)</i></p>	<p><i>Morrow (2010)</i> <i>Mitchell (2013)</i></p> <p>teachers enjoy PLCs, it enhances their CPD.</p> <p><i>Kline (2007)</i> <i>Hashmi (2011)</i></p> <p>Obligatory participation; challenging</p>	<p><i>Leonard and Leonard (2003)</i> <i>Yoon et al (2009)</i> <i>Senge (1992)</i> – Collaboration</p> <p><i>Wenger (1998)</i> CPD</p> <p><i>DuFour (2004)</i> Improved Students' Learning</p> <p><i>Aylsworth (2012)</i> Intrinsic motivation</p>	<p><i>Kwakman (2003)</i> Task and environment factors</p> <p><i>Bolam et al (2005)</i> Individual; group; school; external</p> <p><i>Candy (1991)</i> Personal Appraisal of participation in PLCs</p>

# PLCs: definition

Taking different definitions into account (*Hord, 1997; Little, 2001; Stoll at all, 2005; DuFour, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; Louis & Kruse, 1995*), I develop a working definition of a “professional learning community”.

**Professional learning community (PLC)** is an alliance of teachers sharing common goals, vision and mission, and who collaborate and contribute to each other’s professional development. Teachers in PLC operate as a team and respect and trust each other.



# Research Design

- Qualitative approach
  - Purposeful sampling (criteria: 5+ years teaching experience and 2+ years experience in PLCs)
  - One-on-one semi structured interviews with open ended questions 30-40 min each
  - Data analysis

# Criteria and Participants

Pseudonym	Subject	Experience (years)		PLC current
		Teaching	PLC	
Aizhan	English	15	2	Action Research Teaching gifted and talented
Aigul	ICT and Physics	20	2	Action Research
Diana	Biology	21	3	Action Research
Anar	Russian	28	3	Action Research
Makhabbat	Chemistry	22	2	Action Research
Saule	History	28	3	Lesson Study

# Findings of the Study and Discussions. RQ 1

Participant	Themes				
	<i>Sharing experience Collaboration</i> Hord (1997) Hord (2004) Leonard & Leonard (2003) Yoon (2009)	<i>Teacher networks alliances</i> Hord (1997) Yoon (2009)	<i>Improvement of practice</i> Senge (1992) Aylsworth (2012)	<i>Professional development</i> Morrow (2010) Hord (1997) Hashmi (2011) Mitchell (2013) Senge (1992) Wenger (1998)	<i>Sharing common goals</i> Hord (1997) Stoll et al (2005)
Aizhan	+		+	+	
Aigul	+	+	+	+	+
Diana	+	+	+		+
Anar	+	+	+	+	+
Makhabbat	+	+	+	+	+
Saule	+	+	+		+

## Findings of the Study and Discussions. RQ 2

Participant	Themes				
	<i>Learn new things / LLL</i> Fullan (2003) Hord (1997) Hargreaves & Fink (2006)	<i>Inner motivation / improving practice</i> Aylsworth (2012) Kwakman (2003) Candy (1991) Lencioni (2002)	<i>Critical friendship / collaboration</i> Mitchell (2013) Chiu (2000) Senge (1992)	<i>School support / emotional well-being</i> Hord (1997) Candy (1991) Kwakman (2003)	<i>Extrinsic influences</i> Candy (1991)
Aizhan	+	+	+		+
Aigul	+		+	+	
Diana	+	+	+	+	+
Anar	+	+	+		
Makhabbat		+			
Saule		+	+	+	

# Findings of the Study and Discussions. RQ 3

Participant	Themes				
	<i>Lack of time workload</i> Hord (1997)	<i>Extra paper work</i> (?)	<i>Obligatory participation</i> Kline (2007) Candy (1991)	<i>School's result-orientation</i> DuFour (2004) Bolam et al (2005)	<i>Lack of teacher autonomy</i> Bolam et al (2005)
Aizhan	+	+	+	+	+
Aigul	+	+			
Diana	+	+	+		
Anar	+	+			+
Makhabbat	+	+	+		
Saule	+		+		+

# Conclusion and Implications



- Suggested future research
- case study involving several intellectual schools
- to deeper explore hindrances of PLCs to develop them in secondary schools of Kazakhstan

- to explore effective ways of promoting PLCs in the school;
- to give more autonomy for teachers participating in PLCs;
- to involve teachers in decision making and goal setting of PLCs;
- to build more PLCs based on teachers' needs and interests;
- to minimize reporting in PLCs and focus more on the core components of learning communities

- to organize more workshops for teachers to learn the core components of PLCs;
- to provide intellectual schools with more time to analyze how PLC operate and then develop them



**Thank you for  
attention!**

**Any questions?**