Title: Success factors behind Professional Learning Communities: A case study of an Early Childhood Educational Leadership Programme

References: Hord, S. M., & Summers, W. A. (2008). *Leading Professional Learning Communities: Voices from Research and Practice*. Thousand Oaks.

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Summary

Building leadership capacity has emerged as a key consideration within the early childhood profession in Singapore as the sector responds to recent national initiatives that gear towards raising standards and improving quality of early childhood care and education.

The Early Childhood Education Leadership (ECEL) certificate is a practice-oriented programme that aims to strengthen early childhood educational leadership by enabling leaders to construct and deepen their knowledge and skills, whilst applying their learning at the workplace.

We recognize that structures have to exist post-programme, to encourage continuous learning and application of learnt knowledge in leaders.

Program developers saw the opportunity to build a professional learning community (PLC) of EC leaders as an extension of the ECEL program to (1) deepen leaders' understanding of learnt knowledge and skills (2) strengthen the application of learning at the workplace and (3) amplify leadership impact to improve teachers' practices and children's learning outcomes.

For this PLC to succeed, we determined the measures of success as (1) Sustainability: the effectiveness of supportive conditions created, (2) Acceptability: the probability of returned participation, (3) Scalability: the plausibility of expansion and wider reach. These measures were constructed in reference to the organisational strategic focus and theory of implementation science.

This pilot phase study aims to explore:

1. How effective is the Professional Learning Community, in terms of sustainability, acceptability and scalability?

2. What other enabling factors contribute to the effectiveness of the Professional Learning Community?

This paper reports findings from 2 PLC sessions that were conducted during June and December 2022. 32 out of 41 participants and 20 out of 20 participants responded to the post-event surveys, respectively. These participants consist of Deputy Centre Leads or Lead Teachers and their supervisors (Principals), known as Reporting Officer (RO) mentors.

The surveys include likert scale items and free response items that were aligned to the identified PLC measures of success. Participation was by free will, and was compliant with the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) of Singapore.

The survey data were obtained and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Based on participants' responses, our findings strongly suggest an overall effectiveness of the two PLC events in the following areas: (1) Acceptability, (2) Scalability, (3) Sustainability. This affirms our approach in the design and structure of the PLC, and is well-received by members as a platform to support their professional growth and development. We identified additional enabling components which were reflected in Hord & Sommers (2008) work: (1)Shared and supportive leadership, (2)Collective learning and its application, (3) Supportive conditions- relationships and (4) Supportive conditions - structures which contributed to the success of the PLC.

The above clarifies our considerations in heightening the PLC. The considerations include: (1) engaging 'leaders of leaders' as members in the professional learning community to flatten hierarchy, (2)designing processes to examine applied practices at the workplace, (3)nurturing members' personal relationships with one another beyond the PLC construct, to create change and impact in the workplace and (4) "right-sizing" the structure to enable every voice to be heard meaningfully.

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