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Research Brief

EPL IMPACT

Presented by

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Professional Learning Communities Empower Teacher Leadership



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Introduction

Our research focuses on nurturing teacher via professional learning communities (PLCs) across Hong Kong primary and secondary schools. We aim to overcome issues reported in the literature on the challenges to teacher leadership posed by Chinese hierarchical school contexts. Traditionally, PLCs were formed to promote opportunities for teachers to learn together as they improve student learning. Our study shows that PLCs in Hong Kong schools today have extended from their traditional roles

to develop classroom teachers' informal teacher leadership capabilities. We tested via structural equation modelling of survey responses from 638 teachers the relationships among PLCs, informal teacher leadership, and teacher focus on improving student learning; and the influence of principal instructional leadership, and middle leadership (e.g., subject heads) on PLCs.

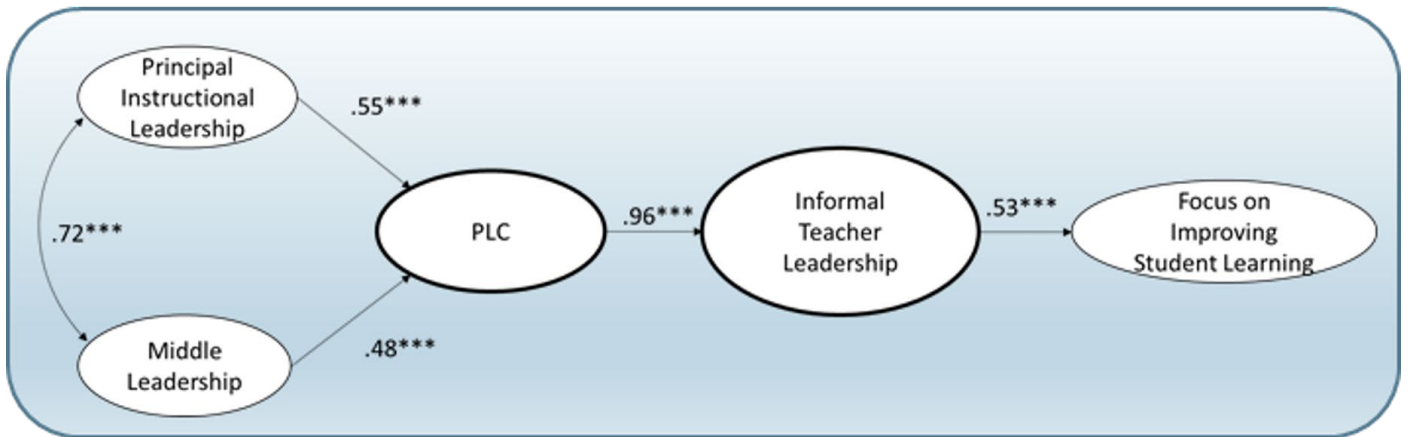




Key Issues and Significant Findings

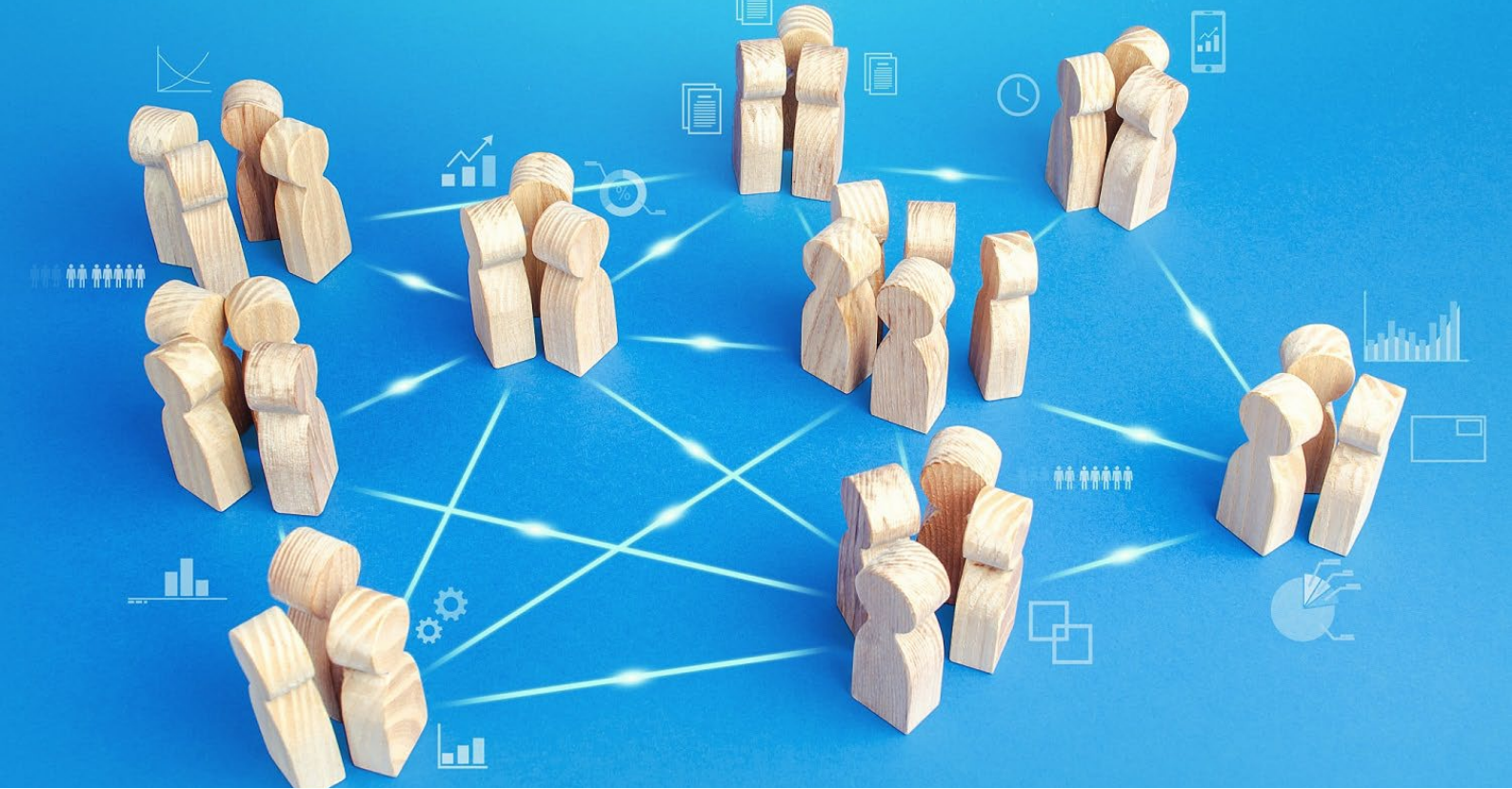
- 1** Overall, we found a positive influence among all factors in the study. Schools need PLCs to achieve the principals' hope for stronger teacher leadership capabilities.
- 2** PLCs are highly influential and very powerful platforms in developing informal teacher leadership. In turn, teacher leadership has a high positive influence on teachers' focus on student learning.
- 3** Importantly, the results show teacher leadership has a strong positive influence on teachers' focus on student learning. Student achievement results can only tell a part of the story. In this study, the results directly informed what teachers are doing and can do for student learning to be improved.
- 4** Principals in the study hope to do more in empowering teacher leadership to boost school improvement. Their instructional leadership has a high positive influence on PLC capacity.
- 5** Middle leaders (e.g., subject heads) have a moderate positive influence in this aspect.

- 6 The research highlights to schools strategic areas of concern needing their attention, and concrete examples of how research recommendations can be practiced.
- 7 The results support school leaders' proposals to their school management committee for a strategic plan that develops subject heads' capabilities.



Main Stakeholders and Engagement with Them

- Collaborations between EPL colleagues and school leaders as the “end-users”, co-designing with them what to focus on in research and sharing.
- Talk show style approach to present theories and research in a light-hearted way.



Research Impact and Recommendations

- More can be done by schools to promote both formal and informal teacher leadership to further encourage teachers' focus on improving student learning.
- Principals and middle leaders can do more to recognise contributions of informal teacher leaders to help them overcome barriers posed by Chinese hierarchical cultures (e.g., deference to authoritative figures).
- Principals and middle leaders should work more actively together to promote informal teacher leadership collaboratively with classroom teachers via PLCs.
- Promote dialogues that characterise PLC attributes involving school principals, middle leaders, and teachers, so school decision-making is based on authentic experiences of student learning of informal teacher leaders.
- Enhance middle leadership development to boost formal teacher leaders' capabilities in supporting informal teacher leaders.



For more Information:

- 1 Lee, D. H. L., & Ip, N. K. K. (2021). The influence of professional learning communities on informal teacher leadership in a Chinese hierarchical school context. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, doi 1741143220985159.
- 2 Lee, D. H. L., & Chiu, C. S. (2017). “School banding”: Principals’ perspectives of teacher professional development in the school-based management context. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 55(6), 686-701.
- 3 For enquiries, please contact Dr Daphnee Lee at dhlee@eduhk.hk.



Video Interview

