



Using Learning Community to Leverage School Change:

A Taiwanese Case

Hui-Ling Wendy Pan, Fong-Yee Nyeu & Shu-Huei Cheng

Under the context of basic education reform in Taiwan – an extension from nine years of education to twelve years since 2014 and a new curriculum guideline to be enforced in 2018, the roles of teachers and students are changing. Students are expected to be active and life-long learners, while teachers are encouraged to collaboratively engage in professional learning to foster students' key literacies. To better lead schools for learning, a group of researchers and practitioners in 2013 initiated a project funded by the Ministry of Education to instill in schools an approach of learning community (LC) advocated by a Japanese scholar, Manabu Sato. An indigenous model developed by the project proposed leadership for learning as a superordinate concept of LC.

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivational factors for schools to participate in the aforementioned learning community project, the strategies adopted by the schools and the effects of leading learning by the means of a learning community approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight principals, eight directors of academic affairs, and 16 teachers from eight schools (five junior high schools and three elementary schools) across four cities/counties.

The following findings were obtained in terms of the motivational factors, strategies adopted, and effects of leading learning by the learning community approach. First,



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principals valued the mission and approach of learning community in order to foster students' learning outcomes in an era of policy change. Second, principals not only organized seminars but also encouraged teachers to participate in the workshops to enhance their understanding of learning communities, which focused on the teachers' role in fostering students' learning. The principals led teachers learning by forming reading groups, collaboratively preparing for the lessons, and openly observing and discussing instruction. These strategies facilitated the change of instruction to encourage students' inquiry, collaboration, and expression. Third, leading learning by the learning community approach facilitated professional interactions among colleagues. Teachers who were involved in learning communities not only increased their capability of guiding their students' inquiry and dialogue, they were also able to deepen their reflection on their curriculum design and instruction. Furthermore, interactions enhanced between the teacher and students, and amongst the students themselves after classrooms were developed into learning communities. Notably, the performance of students who were behind in learning improved by interacting with their peers. The results of this study suggest the great potential that the learning community approach has for principals in leading learning.

Keywords: leadership for learning, learning community, program implementation



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