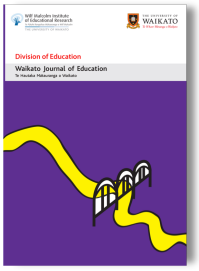


Waikato Journal of Education

Journal website: http://wje.org.nz

ISSN 2382-0373

Published by the Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research

Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research
Te Pūtahi Rangahau Mātauranga o Wilf Malcolm
THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO

Volume 24, Issue 2, 2019

A comparative study of urban, rural and remote teachers' de-privatised practices

Parmeshwar Prasad Mohan, Karen Swabey, & John Kertesz

Editor: Noeline Wright

To cite this article: Mohan, P. P., Swabey, K., & Kertesz, J. (2019). A comparative study of urban, rural and remote teachers' de-privatised practices. *Waikato Journal of Education, 24*(2), 83-94. https://doi.org/10.15663/wje.v%vi%i.662

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.15663/wje.v%vi%i.662

To link to this volume: https://doi.org/10.15663/wje.v24i2

Copyright of articles

Authors retain copyright of their publications.

Articles are subject to the Creative commons license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/legalcode

Summary of the Creative Commons license.

Author and users are free to

Share—copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format

Adapt—remix, transform, and build upon the material

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms

Attribution—You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use

Non-Commercial—You may not use the material for commercial purposes

ShareAlike—If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original

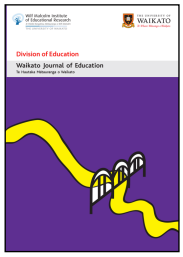
No additional restrictions – You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

Open Access Policy

This journal provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge.

Waikato Journal of Education
Te Hautaka Mātauranga o Waikato

Volume 24, Issue 2 2019



A comparative study of urban, rural and remote teachers' de-privatised practices

Parmeshwar Prasad Mohan, Karen Swabey & John Kertesz
University of Tasmania
Australia

Abstract

De-privatisation of classrooms is characterised by formal and informal invitations to colleagues to access classroom management, pedagogical approaches and teaching practices. This case study of six secondary schools examined the perceptions and practices of de-privatised practice amongst Fijian urban, rural and remote area teachers. Quantitative and qualitative data was generated from a total of 197 online questionnaires and 48 face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Key findings of the research were, firstly, that school geographical locations had no impact on teachers' perceptions and practices of classroom de-privatisation. Secondly, de-privatised practices are impacted on by individual, group, school and governmental factors. Thirdly, in Fiji the consistent drive to de-privatise classrooms is lacking, as the policies do not support such reforms. Nonetheless, teacher perceptions validated the belief that classroom de-privatisation enhances teacher professional growth that promotes improved student learning. These findings have implications for the design of teachers' professional learning communities (PLCs) in Fiji and beyond.

Keywords

De-privatised practice; professional learning community; comparative study; teachers' professional growth; secondary schools; Fiji

Introduction

Classroom de-privatisation, through formal and informal invitations to colleagues to access classroom management, pedagogical approaches and teaching practices, has been advocated to overcome classroom isolation and enhance teachers' professional growth (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Stigler & Hiebert, 2009; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). Stigler and Hiebert (2009) argued that classroom de-privatisation promotes embedded learning and stable teaching practices that improve teacher quality and, ultimately, student learning. This paper mainly focuses on teachers' de-privatised practice that includes sharing personal practice through classroom observations and team teaching.

A number of international studies (DuFour, 2004; Ning, Lee, & Lee, 2015; Owen, 2015; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006) have discovered the benefits of teachers' de-privatisation of classrooms but this has largely focused on developed countries. There has been little research

Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research, Division of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand
ISSN: 2382-0373
Contact details: Parmeshwar Mohan parmeshwar.pmohan@gmail.com
(pp. 83–94)

undertaken on developing countries like Fiji. The archipelagic and scattered geographical structure of Fiji means that it faces its own challenges in regard to teachers' professional learning activities. Rural and remote teachers have to travel long distances to attend Ministry of Education organised professional learning programmes and therefore lose a lot of teaching time (Tuimavana, 2010). This is accentuated by some teachers having to spend almost a week waiting for return transport. Meanwhile, research in Fiji has affirmed that the majority of organised professional learning programmes run by the school heads are not meeting teacher needs because they are conducted using a top-down approach (Mohan, 2016; Sharma, 2012). Professional learning initiatives often apply a 'one size fits all' approach that have short-term objectives and are disconnected from the realities of teachers' classrooms (Rivero, 2006).

The most recent Fiji Islands Education Commission report (Fiji Islands Education Commission/Panel, & Fiji Ministry of Education, 2000) indicated the quality of teachers teaching in schools had not significantly changed until 2000, so the Commission concluded that there was a need for the government to assign very high priority to the importance of teacher education. The Fijian government, with the assistance of foreign aid programmes and through the use of a good proposition of its national budget, continues to embark on its vision to provide quality education to the children of Fiji through various reforms (Ministry of Education, 2014; Ram, 2009). It is well aware that teachers are the focal point for any reforms to the education system. To embrace high-quality education, good-quality teachers are essential because the teachers are the greatest factor influencing student achievements in the classroom (Hattie, 2003). Developing good-quality teachers requires the Ministry of Education and the school leaders to focus on teacher professional learning (PL), transforming schools and classrooms to professional learning communities (PLCs) (Fullan, 2010), and one of the ways to do it is through de-privatisation of classrooms, the main focus of this study.

Exploring the literature

De-privatisation of classrooms encourages collegial learning and reflection about content and student learning (Stigler & Hiebert, 2009). It has the potential to be a powerful tool to facilitate teacher professional growth in terms of content knowledge and understanding of student learning, pedagogy, and curriculum, and for the development of critical observation, analytical and reflective practices (Burroughs & Luebeck, 2010; Stigler & Hiebert, 2009). Classroom observation of both experienced and novice teachers is acknowledged as a valuable practice for teacher professional growth (Mohan, 2016) which is an important characteristic of a PLC (DuFour, 2004).

Although much of what we learn might be the result of explicit observation of others (Hanken, 2015), teacher mutual observation is enhanced by collegial reflection and critique that supports the integration of knowledge and builds stronger coherence into practice (Desimone, 2009). Observing colleagues and sharing best practices increases teacher morale and facilitates experimentation with new teaching strategies (Almanzar, 2014). Teacher professional learning literature (Lewis, Perry, & Hurd, 2009 ; Olson, White, & Sparrow, 2011) argues that the improvement of student learning through effective teacher lesson observation backed by collegial reflection and constructive feedback is a common feature in teachers' professional learning.

Mutual observation and de-privatisation are more likely to occur under a supportive school leadership that provides mutual learning opportunities and creates conditions where teachers do not feel threatened and are allowed to make errors in the interests of improvement (Gutierez, 2016; Lewis, Perry, Hurd, & O'Connell, 2006). Hadar and Brody (2010) found teachers working together continuously share their expertise through mutual observation and constructive reflection, enhances collegiality and contributes to the formation of a professional learning community (PLC); however, Gutierez (2016) found that finding suitable meeting times was a common challenge. Consequently, mutual lesson observation also depends greatly on the support given to teachers by school administrators (Lewis et al., 2006). DuFour and Mattos (2013) have commented that the administrators need to appreciate that a mathematics teacher is more likely to improve their instructional practices when collaborating with other mathematics specialists rather than through occasional observation by an administrator with no discipline expertise.

Conversely, Tenenberg and Knobelsdorf (2014) argued that due to teaching practices deeply rooted in departmental-level cultures, disciplinary focus can sometimes hinder deep reflection about teaching practices and limit teacher's awareness of differences emanating from diverse fields of knowledge. Torres, Lopes, Valente, and Mouraz (2017) in their research on multidisciplinary peer observation found that intra-disciplinary observations can be valuable in framing in a disciplinary culture or identifying specific problems in a familiar context that is not easy to detect whilst in the teacher role. However, unbalanced power relationships and feelings of loss of control during peer observation experiences also can hamper genuine collaboration between the observer and observed teacher (McMahon, Barrett, & O'Neill, 2007).

The juxtaposition of perspectives from different disciplines encourages observers to examine aspects of teaching and learning beyond the mere content and mechanics of the lesson (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005) and to build critical and constructive feedback around common pedagogical concerns (Torres et al., 2017). Such research findings underpin the argument that multidisciplinary peer observation supports teachers in moving beyond lesson content into consideration of those pedagogies increasingly associated with genuine classroom impact (Kinchin & Hay, 2005; Mouraz, Lopes, & Ferreira, 2013), namely teacher-student interactions and relationships, and student motivation and engagement. Therefore, classroom teaching and learning could benefit from the combination of intra and inter-disciplinary observation.

Another way in which teaching and learning could benefit is through team teaching, as Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger (2010) had established that it was a unique collaborative approach to develop student knowledge and skills development. It involves a group of two or more practitioners working collaboratively and regularly with purpose to support student learning (Sundarsingh, 2015). As a team, teachers discuss and design curriculum, set learning goals, prepare lesson plans, teach together and evaluate the outcomes (Yanamandram & Noble, 2005).

Joint efforts and mutual adjustments mean that team teachers benefit pedagogically more than their individual counterparts (Reeve & Jang, 2006; Sundarsingh, 2015). They feel better about their profession when they work with colleagues to identify, plan, teach and assess student learning (Almanzar, 2014). The most rewarding is where each team member can showcase their professional strengths for the betterment of the team (Foord & Haar, 2008; Olivier & Huffman, 2016). Mandel and Eiserman (2016) claimed that teaming encourages teacher innovation; individual confidence to try new strategies is boosted by awareness that another person is present continually to help. Once teachers know each other's strengths and weaknesses, they can work effectively together to design classroom materials and assessments that allow for the development of innovative ideas to enhance teaching and learning (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Administrative support is essential for schools to build a collaborative culture (Lewis, Perry, Friedkin, & Roth, 2012). Without it, teachers will struggle to find time for planning, professional development, classroom observation and team teaching; hence, in short, it will be difficult to cope (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Mandel and Eiserman (2016) argue that administration support for teaming allows good teachers to become great teachers because teaming provides invisible support to individual teachers to the eventual benefit of students. When stakeholders work together in PLCs, teachers improve their practice and students benefit (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). However, teachers need to voluntary enter into team relationships if they are to avoid conflicts (Mandel & Eiserman, 2016).

As Fiji consists of many small islands and widely scattered schools, any study of the Fijian education system would be incomplete without considering the different localities. This study addresses both a gap in the research and provides a mechanism to promote teacher engagement with the benefits of teacher de-privatisation in Fiji. However, in the first instance, it was essential to determine Fijian teachers' perceptions of de-privatisation and evidence current practices. In addition, identification of the enablers and the challenges should support measures promoting sustainability. Thus, the study could provide an insight for decision-makers in schools and the Ministry of Education to consider teacher development opportunities and take measures to improve and make it sustainable.

Participants

The study involved teachers at six Fijian schools: two urban, two rural and two remote. A total of 197 teachers (71 urban, 63 rural and 63 remote), including classroom teachers and those in leadership positions, completed an online questionnaire. Forty-eight participants (16 from each category of urban, rural and remote) participated in a semi-structured interview. Participants were from all the subject areas taught in Fijian secondary schools and qualifications ranged from diplomas to postgraduate degrees. Table 1 provides a demographic breakdown of the participants.

Table 1. ***Demographic Information of the Participants***

Survey							Interview					
Gender		Experience (Years)				Total	Gender		Teacher	HOD	Admin	Total
M	F	1–3	4–6	7–9	10+	197	M	F	18	18	12	48
92	105	12	68	63	54		30	18				

Ethics Approval

As part of the research ethics, approval was sought from the University of Tasmania, Fiji Ministry of Education Research and Ethics Council and later from the participants. Before taking consent from the participants, information sheets were distributed to all the staff members of the six case study schools informing them of the objectives and scope of the research. All the participants were given the assurance that the data collected were only for the purpose of research and would be kept confidential. Assurance was also given for the anonymity of the participants and the school.

Data collection and analysis

Data collection utilised questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire on de-privatised practice was adapted from Vanblaere and Devos (2016), and utilised the *Qualtrics* online survey platform. The questionnaire consisted of 13 items that were divided into three parts. The first part asked for demographic details such as gender, location of school, qualifications and teaching experience. The second asked for teacher perceptions of de-privatised practice with answers on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1—strongly disagree to 5—strongly agree. The third part of the questionnaire surveyed current de-privatised practices, again on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1—never to 5—always.

Purposeful sampling was used for the semi-structured interviews conducted in each school—three teachers, three heads of department (HOD) and two administrators—resulting in 16 interviews from each geographical school category: urban, rural, and remote. The interviews for the study lasted for up to an hour and were digitally recorded with the permission of the participants to ensure accuracy of the data.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis was undertaken on the questionnaire data using SPSS version 24. The dependent variables in the study were not normally distributed for each sample, hence non-parametric analysis was used. The Mann-Whitney U test was performed to see if there were any significant difference between the urban, rural and remote teachers' perceptions and practices.

After the transcription and member checking, the interviews were analysed using a thematic approach based on open coding, axial coding and selective coding for the development of themes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The qualitative findings were used to expand the quantitative results.

Findings and discussion

The findings are organised into two sections: observation and team teaching. A and B are urban schools, C and D are rural, and E and F are remote schools. The quotes from the interviews are notated as follows: A T3 = School A, teacher 3, C HOD1 = School C, Head of Department 1, E A2= School E, Administrator 2, and so forth.

Observation

Observation consists of two parts. The first part covers the importance of inviting colleagues to observe instruction and the second reveals the importance of visiting other teachers' classrooms to observe instruction.

On the question of the importance of inviting colleagues to observe instruction, the questionnaire data analysis revealed that 63% (n = 124) of teachers saw inviting colleagues to observe their instruction as important, whilst 22.4% (n = 44) disagreed. However, analysis of practice revealed that a majority of teachers, 126 out of 197 (64%), never invited their colleagues to observe them. Nonetheless, the Mann-Whitney U test (Table 2) revealed no significant difference between urban, rural and remote teachers' perceptions and practices since the computed p-values were greater than 0.05 ($p > .05$).

Table 2. ***Mann-Whitney U Test for Inviting Colleagues to Observe Instruction***

School	N	Perceptions			Practices		
		Mann-Whitney U	Z	p-value	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p-value
Urban Rural	71 63	1871.000	-1.737	.082	1923.500	-1.651	.099
Urban Remote	71 63	2104.500	-.626	.531	2171.500	-.333	.740
Rural Remote	63 63	1825.500	-.812	.417	1781.000	-1.202	.230

This was validated by the interview responses.

An urban teacher shared:

> It is a very good idea. The close colleagues can observe and give critical feedback which other colleagues or leaders may not be able to do it. The challenge is the time factor. We hardly get time to do such things due to our workload. (A T3)

A rural HOD commented:

> It is good, but in this school the HOD and admin observe classes. No one invites them, but it is the requirement of the school that at least two per term the teacher's lessons are to be observed, recorded and feedback are to be given. (C HOD 1)

A remote administrator mentioned:

> It is a good idea. I feel teachers can learn from their close colleagues better as they will feel more confident to share ideas. Sometimes we only give them the general feedback as we don't have the content knowledge. HODs are in a better position to discuss content. However, currently it is not practiced because the culture is such that teachers are bit reserved to invite their colleagues. (E A1)

The teachers in this study thought that inviting colleagues to observe instruction was important as they felt that close colleagues could be more critical in feedback than school leaders, supporting the findings of DuFour and Mattos (2013) who commented that the administrators should appreciate the potential for greater improvements in instructional practices from regular departmental collaboration than occasional observation by an administrator with little subject knowledge. Similar sentiments were also shared by Tenenberg and Knobelsdorf (2014).

Teachers felt that time and heavy workloads limited their opportunities for peer observation of same discipline, suggesting that school management is a key factor in facilitating such collegial learning (Lewis et al., 2006). Gutierez (2016) goes further, emphasising that the role of administrators in de-privatisation extends beyond time management, to the creation of conditions where teachers feel safe to make errors in the interests of improvement. However, some did not see this as their responsibility, such as this the rural HOD:

> As HODs, we should set examples. In Fiji, the culture is such we never invite other teachers to come, observe our lesson, and give feedback. It only happens when someone comes for assessment. (D HOD 1)

The data revealed that the school culture was not supportive of class observation by colleagues. If these schools were to transform into (PLCs), the professional culture would need to change, and by extension there would also need to be a fundamental shift in teacher habits. Ahn (2016) indicated that as long as fresh evidence indicates that students and teachers are learning, the initiatives to create caring communities continue in turn. However, it may not be easy to break free from existing cultures and put aside or overturn well-established attitudes and habits, when the functioning of an educational organisation is based on specific and institutionally defined structures (Flogaitis, Nomikou, Naoum, & Katsenou, 2012). School administrators would need to step beyond their bureaucratic responsibilities and help teachers to develop the positive and collaborative school cultures by focusing on a common vision, mission, values and goals (Lai, Luen, & Hong, 2011).

Suspicions remain, as expressed by this remote HOD:

> I feel this will take away the independence of the teacher. Even though, occasionally inviting colleagues to observe lessons could help teachers improve instruction. (E HOD 1)

Despite the majority of teachers seeing peer observation as important, a number of teachers did express concerns that observation would undermine teacher independence (e.g., E HOD 1 above). However, research has established that classroom de-privatisation is essential to overcome classroom isolation that has deprived teachers of collegial learning (Stigler & Hiebert, 2009). Stigler and Hiebert (2009) have argued that achievement of such cultural change is characterised by embedded and stable teaching practices that can improve teacher quality and ultimately student learning. De-privatised practice provides opportunities for teachers to learn from one another as it allows them to reflect on teaching and learning. Hence, de-privatised practice can be a powerful tool for facilitating teachers' professional growth in terms of content knowledge, pedagogy and curriculum.

On the question of the importance of visiting other colleagues' classrooms to observe instruction, the questionnaire data analysis revealed that 70% (n = 139) of the teachers perceived visiting colleagues' classrooms to observe instruction as important; however, 15.7% (n = 31) disagreed. Analysis of teachers' practice revealed that most, 121 out of 197 (61.4%), never visited their colleagues' classrooms to observe their instruction. However, there was no significant difference (Mann-Whitney $U = p > .05$) between urban, rural and remote teachers' perceptions and practices (Table 3).

Table 3. ***Mann-Whitney U Test for Visiting Other Teachers' Classrooms to Observe Instruction***

School	N	Perceptions			Practices		
		Mann-Whitney U	Z	p-value	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p-value
Urban Rural	71 63	1909.000	-1.574	.116	2208.500	-.145	.885
Urban Remote	71 63	2042.500	-.931	.352	2176.000	-.308	.758
Rural Remote	63 63	1866.000	-.609	.542	1959.500	-.141	.888

The interview responses of teachers reflected similar procedural perspective to the one exemplified below:

An urban administrator:

> In our HOD meeting and the staff meeting, I have asked teachers to observe other teachers to learn from them. I feel the new teachers who are now coming out from teacher colleges are not of the standard when we were trained. The cut-off marks to become a teacher now is 200 before it was 280 plus. The teacher standards are very low nowadays, therefore, learning from colleagues will really help improve their teaching. (B A1)

A rural HOD:

> It is a good idea. If done at a professional level it could be very effective. It is not happening in this school. The challenge is we need to break the culture that inferior can't observe superior's class. This can be done through admin support. (School C HOD 2)

A remote administrator:

> Yes, it is important. The current practice is that the HODs and the admin go and sit in a teacher's class to observe and assess the teacher. This is a ministry's requirement and we do it at least three times a term. However, the junior teachers are not given a chance to observe senior teachers class. (F A2)

The data revealed that in line with Ministry of Education policy, only HODs and the school administrators are required to enter classrooms to observe and assess instruction; hence, it is not helping teachers to engage in PLCs. The paradigm shift from theory to practice through supportive policy reform has been unsatisfactory. This reflects the point made by Fullan (1993):

> On the one hand, schools are expected to engage in continuous renewal, and change expectations are constantly swirling around them. On the other hand, the way teachers are trained, the way schools are organized, the way the educational hierarchy operates, and the way political decision makers treat educators results in a system that is more likely to retain the status quo. (p. 3)

Policy-oriented change can place major demands on the learning capacity of the organisation (Karsten, Voncken, & Voorthuis, 2000). Teachers and school leaders in Fiji claim they understand the importance of PLCs, but stumble across organisational and attitudinal obstacles, most notably the dictates of the Ministry of Education, that hinder their successful creation (Schechter, 2012). If schools are to transform into PLCs, literature suggests that neither the government nor the Ministry of Education

should dictate how this is to occur (Schechter, 2012), but work with, and promote collaboration, amongst all relevant stakeholders.

Team teaching

The questionnaire data analysis revealed that 144 out of 197 (73.1%) teachers perceived engaging in team teaching as important, with only 7.6% (n = 15) thinking otherwise. However, only 24.9% (n = 49) engaged in team teaching either weekly or more frequently, whilst 33% (n = 65) had never engaged in team teaching with colleagues. Yet there was no significant difference found between the perceptions of teachers in urban, rural and remote schools on the importance of engaging in team teaching (Mann-Whitney U = p > .05) (Table 4).

Table 4. ***Mann-Whitney U Test for Team Teaching***

School	N	Perceptions			Practices		
		Mann-Whitney U	Z	p-value	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p-value
Urban Rural	71 63	2100.500	-.643	.520	1992.000	-1.162	.245
Urban Remote	71 63	2052.500	-.869	.385	2172.000	-.308	.758
Rural Remote	63 63	1956.000	-.146	.884	1830.000	-.797	.426

This was validated by the interview responses. Teachers had shared sentiments similar to the following:

An urban teacher:

> Some concepts if I know I am not able to teach well, I can ask my colleague to teach if I know, he/she does it better than me. E.g. I am teaching Year 13 Maths and I am not very comfortable teaching Calculus II, so I requested my colleague who teaches the other class to come and teach with me. With his presence, I felt more confident and we together were able to answer the students' queries. (A T3)

A rural teacher:

> It is a good idea. We usually have it in the third term when the syllabus is over. The first two terms are used to cover the syllabus as the Ministry wants the coverage to be completed in two terms, so we work against time. But in the third term we exchange classes and teach or sometimes instead of one teacher two teachers go to help students. (D T3)

A remote administrator:

> It happens in the third term. More than one teacher goes in one form in revision class. We do this to cater for slow learners, average learners and smart students. We group them according to ability and teachers go and guide different groups. (F A1)

The teachers felt that it was important for them to engage in team teaching. Teachers feel better about their profession when they work with colleagues to identify, plan, teach and assess student learning (Almanzar, 2014). The most effective teacher teams are those where members can contribute their individual strengths for the betterment of the whole (Olivier & Huffman, 2016). The data highlights

that one reason team teaching is helpful is that it ensures students have access to sufficient content knowledge in specific areas. It also reveals that team-teaching gives teachers confidence to try new things. This aligns with Mandel and Eiserman (2016) who noted that team teachers feel confident to try new strategies because they are aware another person continually is present to help. If teachers understand each other well, collegiality will be stronger; hence, they will be able to work effectively together to design classroom materials and assessments that allow for the development of innovative ideas to enhance teaching and learning (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

However, school administrators need to support team teaching and the construction of the associated collaborative culture (Lewis et al., 2006). Without such support, teachers will have difficulty finding the time for, or ability to cope with, the demands of team teaching. These demands include planning, professional development and classroom observation. The volume of teachers' daily workloads means that leadership support for PLCs is more than to simply create opportunities within a school day for teachers to come together (Smit & Scherman, 2016). Instead, it requires school leaders and the Ministry of Education working together to promote a collaborative school culture and provide the kind of support that establishes and sustains teacher PLCs. If stakeholders work together in PLCs, students could ultimately benefit: teachers can develop their practice, whilst team teaching plus the kind of mutual support that occurs to make such team teaching happen, can shift good teachers into great teachers (Mandel & Eiserman, 2016).

Conclusion

The study's findings demonstrate that schools' geographical location does not have a significant impact on teachers' perceptions and practices regarding de-privatising educational practices in Fiji. However, because educators have tended to not realise the benefits of PLCs in Fiji, consistent efforts in reforming practices through moves like de-privatising education, appear to be missing; policies appear to be unsupportive of such reforms. As Stoll et al. (2006) point out, the progress of any educational reform, like de-privatising classrooms, depends on links between teachers' individual and collective capacity for change. It also rests on their ability to connect with the broader school community to promote its value to student learning. When teachers observe how classroom practices affect student learning, their attitudes and beliefs change, and when teachers play an active role in collective decision making, it has a positive impact on collegial learning and teacher professionalism.

The literature is clear that it is important to create opportunities for teachers to improve their pedagogical practices by sharing professional expertise. When school leaders allocate time, space and resources to allow a collaborative culture to develop, then such opportunities can flourish. Evidence in this study suggests that education leaders, both principals and the Ministry of Education, need to understand the benefits and facilitate teamwork, promote openness and delegate responsibility to create PLCs (DuFour, 2004) that will promote de-privatising practice and enable professional growth.

References

Ahn, J. (2016). Taking a step to identify how to create professional learning communities: Report of a Case Study of a Korean Public High School on how to create and sustain a school-based teacher professional learning community. *International Education Studies, 10*(1), 82–92. http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ies.v10n1p82

Almanzar, A. (2014). Impact of professional learning community practices on morale of urban high school teachers. (Doctoral dissertation). Nova Southeastern University, Florida. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED545597.pdf

Burroughs, E. A., & Luebeck, J. L. (2010). Pre-service teachers in mathematics lesson study. *The Mathematics Enthusiast, 7*(2), 391–400.

Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational Researcher, 38*(3), 181–199. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08331140

DuFour, R. (2004). Schools as learning communities. *Educational Leadership, 61*(8), 6–11.

DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

DuFour, R., & Mattos, M. (2013). Improve schools? *Educational Leadership, 70*(7), 34–39.

Fiji Islands Education Commission/Panel, & Fiji Ministry of Education. (2000). Learning together: Directions for education in the Fiji Islands. A report of the Fiji Islands Education Commission Suva, Fiji: Ministry of Education.

Flogaitis, E., Nomikou, C., Naoum, E., & Katsenou, C. (2012). Investigating the possibilities of creating a Community of Practice. Action Research in three educational institutions. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies (JCEPS), 10*(1), 217–233.

Foord, K. A., & Haar, J. M. (2008). *Professional learning communities: An implementation guide and toolkit*. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education.

Friend, M., Cook, L., Hurley-Chamberlain, D., & Shamberger, C. (2010). Co-teaching: An illustration of the complexity of collaboration in special education. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 20*(1), 9–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474410903535380

Fullan, M. G. (1993). Why teachers must become change agents. *Educational Leadership, 50*(6), 12–17.

Fullan, M. (2010). *All systems go: The change imperative for whole system reform*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Gutierez, B. S. (2016). Building a classroom-based professional learning community through lesson study: Insights from elementary school science teachers. *Professional Development in Education, 42*(5), 801–817. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2015.1119709

Hadar, L., & Brody, D. (2010). From isolation to symphonic harmony: Building a professional development community among teacher educators. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26*(8), 1641–1651. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.06.015

Hammersley-Fletcher, L., & Orsmond, P. (2005). Reflecting on reflective practices within peer observation. *Studies in Higher Education, 30*(2), 213–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070500043358

Hanken, I. M. (2015). Listening and learning in a master class. *Music Education Research, 17*(4), 453–464. https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2014.930121

Hattie, J. (2003, Oct). Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence? Paper presented at the Building Teacher Quality: What does the research tell us ACER Research Conference, Melbourne, VIC., Australia Abstract retrieved from http://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference_2003/4/

Karsten, S., Voncken, E., & Voorthuis, M. (2000). Dutch primary schools and the concept of the learning organization. *The Learning Organization, 7*(3), 145–156. https://doi.org/10.1108/09696470010335863

Kinchin, I., & Hay, D. (2005). Using concept maps to optimize the composition of collaborative student groups: A pilot study. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 51*(2), 182–187. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2005.03478.x ·

Lai, T. T., Luen, W., & Hong, N. (2011). School principal leadership styles and teacher organizational commitment. A research agenda. Paper presented at the 2nd International Conference on Business and Economic Research (2nd ICBER 2011) Proceeding (pp. 165–176. Retrieved from https://core.ac.uk/reader/6545888

Lewis, C. C., Perry, R. R., Friedkin, S., & Roth, J. R. (2012). Improving teaching does improve teachers: Evidence from lesson study. *Journal of Teacher Education, 63*(5), 368–375. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487112446633

Lewis, C. C., Perry, R. R., & Hurd, J. (2009). Improving mathematics instruction through lesson study: A theoretical model and North American case. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education, 12*(4), 285304. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10857-009-9102-7

Lewis, C., Perry, R., Hurd, J., & O'Connell, M. P. (2006). Lesson study comes of age in North America. *Phi Delta Kappan, 88*(4), 273–281.

Mandel, K., & Eiserman, T. (2016). Team teaching in high school. *Educational Leadership, 73*(4), 74–77.

McLaughlin, M. W., & Talbert, J. E. (2006). *Building school-based teacher learning communities: Professional strategies to improve student achievement* (Vol. 45). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

McMahon, T., Barrett, T., & O'Neill, G. (2007). Using observation of teaching to improve quality: Finding your way through the muddle of competing conceptions, confusion of practice and mutually exclusive intentions. *Teaching in Higher Education, 12*(4), 499–511. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510701415607

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ministry of Education. (2014). *Annual Report*. Suva, Fiji: Government Printery.

Mohan, P. P. (2016). A study on novice and experienced teacher perceptions of professional development in Fiji. *Waikato Journal of Education, 21*(1), 167–174. https://doi.org/10.15663/wje.v21i1.265

Mouraz, A., Lopes, A., & Ferreira, J. M. (2013). Higher education challenges to teaching practices: Perspectives drawn from a multidisciplinary peer observation of teaching program. *International Journal of Advanced Research, 1*(6), 377–386.

Ning, H. K., Lee, D., & Lee, W. O. (2015). Relationships between teacher value orientations, collegiality, and collaboration in school professional learning communities. *Social Psychology of Education, 18*(2), 337–354. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-015-9294-x

Olivier, D. F., & Huffman, J. B. (2016). Professional learning community process in the United States: Conceptualization of the process and district support for schools. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 36*(2), 301–317. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2016.1148856

Olson, J. C., White, P., & Sparrow, L. (2011). Influence of lesson study on teachers' mathematics pedagogy. In L. C. Hart, A. Alston, & A. Murata (Eds.), *Lesson study research and practice in mathematics education* (pp. 39–57). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Owen, S. (2015). Teacher professional learning communities in innovative contexts: 'Ah hah moments', 'passion' and 'making a difference' for student learning. *Professional Development in Education, 41*(1), 57–74. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2013.869504

Ram, A. R. (2009). *The long arm of globalisation: Foreign aid impact on the curriculum and management of a semi-rural secondary school in Fiji* (master's thesis). University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji. Retrieved from http://digilib.library.usp.ac.fj/gsdl/collect/usplibr1/index/assoc/HASH5818.dir/doc.pdf

Reeve, J., & Jang, H. (2006). What teachers say and do to support students' autonomy during a learning activity. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*(1), 209–218. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.98.1.209

Rivero, V. (2006). Teaching your staff. *American School Board Journal, 193*(9), 54–55.

Schechter, C. (2012). Developing teachers' collective learning: Collective learning from success as perceived by three echelons in the school system. *International Journal of Educational Research, 56*, 60–74. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2012.06.005

Sharma, L. R. (2012). Effectiveness of school teaching professional development programmes (master's thesis). University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji. Retrieved from http://digilib.library.usp.ac.fj/gsdl/collect/usplibr1/index/assoc/HASH01b3.dir/doc.pdf

Smit, B., & Scherman, V. (2016). A case for relational leadership and an ethics of care for counteracting bullying at schools. *South African Journal of Education, 36*(4), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v36n4a1312

Stigler, J. W., & Hiebert, J. (2009). Closing the teaching gap. *Phi Delta Kappan, 91*(3), 32–37. https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170909100307

Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M., & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional learning communities: A review of the literature. *Journal of Educational Change, 7*(4), 221–258. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-006-0001-8

Sundarsingh, J. (2015). Team teaching strategy for conducive classroom learning. *IUP Journal of English Studies, 10*(2), 64–72.

Tenenberg, J., & Knobelsdorf, M. (2014). Out of our minds: A review of sociocultural cognition theory. *Computer Science Education, 24*(1), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/08993408.2013.869396

Torres, A. C., Lopes, A., Valente, J. M., & Mouraz, A. (2017). What catches the eye in class observation? Observers' perspectives in a multidisciplinary peer observation of teaching program. *Teaching in Higher Education, 22*(7), 822–838. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2017.1301907

Tuimavana, R. W. R. (2010). Developing and retaining quality teachers in rural Fiji primary schools (unpublished master's thesis). University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji.

Vanblaere, B., & Devos, G. (2016). Relating school leadership to perceived professional learning community characteristics: A multilevel analysis. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 57*, 26–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.03.003

Yanamandram, V. K., & Noble, G. I. (2005). Team teaching: Student reflections of its strengths and weaknesses. In R. Atkinson & J. Hobson (Eds.), *Teaching and learning forum: The reflective practitioner* (pp. 1–10). Perth, WA, Australia: Murdoch University.