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A Systematic Literature Review on Professional Learning Community Models

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ABSTRACT

Professional learning communities (PLC) is one of the strategies to enhance teacher learning which have gained attention in educational institutions all over the world. Professional learning community research has contributed various types of models to explain the ways PLC practiced in detail. We, hence, performed a systematic literature review on professional learning community models' dimensions in this paper using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). Databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, as well as Google Scholar were used to identify the papers for this study. These findings can guide teachers and assist stakeholders towards the implementation of Professional Learning Communities.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing related literature dimensions of the Professional Learning Community model in the western and local context.

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1. Introduction

Transformations in Malaysia's education policy mean that a teacher's career is becoming more and more difficult, particularly in the 21st century. Teachers should therefore prepare themselves by constantly searching for new teaching methods to enhance the education quality in Malaysia (Ministry of Education, 2013). The growth of teacher professionalism enables teachers to perform their tasks and roles more competently (Teacher Education Division, 2013). The Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) implements various initiatives to improve and encourage various Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities (Ministry of Education, 2016). The Professional Learning Community is one of the professional development activities which assist teachers in enhancing their teaching knowledge and eventually the quality of their teaching and learning processes.

In 2015, the Teacher Education Division (BPG), through the Continuous Professionalism Development Plan, initiated The Professional Learning Community (PLC). PLC is one of the processes that positively impacts teacher professional development, self-efficacy, and school improvement (Harris et al., 2017). PLC includes an interweaving of relationships among peers, principals, head teachers, senior assistants, senior teachers, and committee teachers to develop and enhance teacher teaching best practices, as well as their knowledge and skills in adherence to suitable competencies (Bahagian Pendidikan Guru, 2012). Apart from that, PLC produces learning values which give emphasis to cooperation among teachers, students, and principals to enhance the teaching and learning quality, including all school members' well-being (Aziah et al., 2015). Additionally, the PLC practice can build school communities which create positive relationships with the internal or external environment in solving student issues and establishing effective schools. PLC gives added value to teaching patterns of teachers that are more effective and teacher quality through new knowledge learned (Dima Mazlina@SitiAishah & Abdul Rashid., 2016).

Although many studies focus on professional learning community implementation at school, the existing studies have not been reviewed systematically by many scholars. The existing and related systematic literature review focuses on practices among mathematics teacher globally.

2. Literature Review

The Professional Learning Community idea was drawn from Senge's (1990) organizational learning theory. No extensive agreement can be found in the literature regarding the definition of PLC (Lomos, 2011; Vescio et al., 2007; Stoll et al., 2006; Lokman Mohd. Tahir & Mohammed Borhandden Musah, 2020). However, majority of researchers admit that teachers should work together to enhance student learning by challenging their practice in ways that are continuous, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, and growth-promoted (Stoll & Louis, 2007; Stoll et al., 2006; Toole & Louis, 2002; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). Due to the different backgrounds of researchers from different cultures and countries, there are different understandings of the concept of PLC (Zhang & Sun, 2018).

Numerous models of professional learning communities came into being to account for their implementation in schools. The literature review found that past researchers have referred to the dimensions of the PLC model either from western or models developed

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according to the local context in their studies. Among the western PLC models that have been adapted are from the Hord (1997), Dufour and Eaker (1998), Kruse et al. (1994) and Huffman and Hipp (2003) models. Apart from adapting western PLC models, some local researchers have developed their own PLC models such as Siti Nafsiah et al. (2020), and Tai and Omar (2018).

The PLC model of Kruse et al. (1994) comprises of five dimensions that can be effective when practised by teachers. These dimensions include (i) Sharing of Values & Norms, (ii) Collective Focus on Student Learning, (iii) Collaboration, (iv) Sharing of Personal Practice, and (iv) Reflective Dialogue.

A study by Hord (1997) discussed the emergence and functioning of professional learning communities, their significance to school staff and students, as well as their establishment and development in organisations. The outcome of Hord's discussion is one of the fundamentals for forming professional learning communities, as well as elaborating the practices of mobilising them in schools (Chong et al., 2016). Hord (1997) listed down five dimensions that explain an effective professional learning community. The dimensions are (i) shared values and vision, (ii) shared and supportive leadership, (iii) collective learning, (iv) shared personal practice and (v) supportive conditions. This model guides educational leaders regarding the lifelong learning culture which takes place in schools. The PLC model by DuFour and Eaker (1998) became the basis for the formation of advanced models for other researchers (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Blankstein, 2004). Dufour and Eaker's (1998) model includes six dimensions.

The model of Siti Nafsiah et al. (2020) which was developed using the fuzzy Delphi method lists the PLC dimensions and teaching dimensions based on the context of Malay language education in Malaysia. It includes twelve dimensions that constitute PLC in Malaysia. This model merely undergoes three phases: the needs analysis; design and development, and model evaluation. The implementation phase, which is to test the model from the aspect of PLC practice as well as the teaching of Malay language teachers, has not yet been implemented (Siti Nafsiah et al., 2020).

The PLCM model by Tai and Omar (2018) was developed based on the background of secondary schools in Malaysia. This model is separated into two main dimensions: organizational factors and non-organizational factors. Under the organizational factors and non-organizational factors, there are four sub-dimensions. This model has been used by local scholars in their research (Mohd Aizat et al., 2019; Tai & Omar, 2021). Each of these models own dimensions are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Dimensions of Professional Learning Community Models

Researcher	PLC Dimensions
Kruse et al. (1994)	Shared values & Norms Collective Focus on Student Learning Collaboration Deprivatization of Practice Reflective Dialogue

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Hord (1997)	Shared values & vision Supportive & Shared leadership Collective Creativity Shared personal practice Supportive conditions
Dufour and Eaker (1998)	Shared Mission Vision, Value & Goals Collective Inquiry Collaborative Culture Action Orientation Commitment to Continuous Improvement Results Orientation
Huffman and Hipp (2003)	Shared Values and Vision Shared and Supportive Leadership Collective Learning and Application Shared Personal Practice Supportive Conditions – (Relationships & Structure)
Tai and Omar (2018) PLCM	Shared Norms and Vision Principals' Commitment & Support Structural Support Collegial Understanding & Trust Collaborative Learning Reflective Dialog Collective inquiry External Support System
Siti Nafsiah et al. (2020)	Leadership Sharing and Supporting Leadership Shared Norms,Values, Vision & Mission Creative, Collective and Application Learning (PKKA) Private Practice Sharing (PAPE) Support from Relationships and Structure (SAPS) Reflective Dialogue Focus on Student Learning (FTPM) Collaborative Culture (BUKO) Inquiry Culture and Best Practices in Teaching (BIAP) Action through Observation (TMPE) Commitment to Continuous Improvement Decision-oriented (BKEP)

Source: Kruse et al. (1994), Hord (1997), Dufour and Eaker (1998), Huffman and Hipp (2003), Tai and Omar (2018), Siti Nafsiah et al. (2020)

3. Methodology

This section is separated into five main sub-sections. These include PRISMA, resources, the process of systematic review, as well as data abstraction and analysis that were adopted in the present study.

3.1. PRISMA

PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis) is a guide to writing this systematic literature review (SLR). This method is a relatively arduous and thorough process involving large amounts of data, and is therefore a guideline for a qualitative review of the literature. The plus point of PRISMA is the ability to produce

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qualitative research reports through certain processes, demonstrating transparency, consistency, and high standard elements (Flemming et al., 2019). This process involves a systematic and clear procedure in how it is produced and a wide spectrum which contains all relevant materials that can be reutilised (simulated) by other researchers who use similar approach in discussing a topic (Okoli, 2015).

PRISMA assists authors to identify research findings with precise literature based on the research objectives through three processes: identification and eligibility (Gillath & Karantzas, 2019). These three sub-sections describe a comprehensive search process based on keywords, the use of more databases and using various search techniques to find relevant articles or references. In addition, the writing of this section will also focus on the criteria that the writer uses to select appropriate articles or references to be referred to in SLR.

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses contain a report on a minimum set of evidence-based items known as the PRISMA guidelines. Its purpose is to assist authors in enhancing their reporting of a systematic review. It contains 27 items which can be adhered to in the process of producing a systematic review of literature (Moher et al., 2009). The guidelines are shown in order in Table 2:

Table 2: PRISMA Guidelines

PRISMA Items	
Title	Title
Abstract	Abstract
Introduction	rationale
	Objectives
Methods	Eligibility criteria
	Information sources
	Search strategy
	Selection process
	Data collection process
	Data items
	Study risk of bias assessment
	Effect measures
	Synthesis methods
	Reporting bias assessment
	Certainty assessment
Results	Study selection
	Study characteristics
	Risk of bias in studies
	Results of individual studies
	Results of syntheses
	Reporting biases
	Certainty of evidence
Discussion	Discussion
	Conclusion
Other Information	Registration and protocol
	Support
	Competing interests
	Availability of data, code and other materials

Source: Moher et al. (2009)

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3.2. Resources

Websites such as Scopus, Google Scholar and Science Direct facilitate researchers to produce articles for analysis, but all of these articles need to go through a screening process. The Scopus database has advantages in terms of quantity control as well as a systematic indexing system (Martín-Martín et al., 2018). After that, all the selected articles are read carefully. Information about the name of the article's author, title, date of publication, research objective, methodology, and findings are systematically recorded. Then, the adjusted findings are discussed in the next section.

3.3. The systematic review process for selecting the articles

The literature collected from the search process will undergo several screenings and categorization processes. Screening is a process where the writer sets inclusion and exclusion criteria that can be used to select articles or references that match the SLR to be formed. Table 3 shows the inclusion criteria used.

Table 3: The inclusion criteria

Criterion	Inclusion criteria
Time line	2018-2022
Language	Malay and English
Study scope	Professional learning community, Professional learning community model And Professional learning community dimensions
Countries and territories	Malaysia
Literature type	Journal (research articles)

Source: Adapted from Hayrol et al. (2019)

3.3.1. Identification

Choosing the related articles for this study involved three main stages of the systematic review process. Articles related to the study were screened using keywords namely "professional learning community model", "professional learning community" and "professional learning community dimensions". The use of these keywords makes it easier for researchers to find relevant articles through websites such as Scopus, Google Scholar and Science Direct. In addition, manual searches using the handpicking method on Google Scholar and Science Direct, as well as the snowballing method on the selected articles were used. From the first phase of the systematic review process, an amount of 91 articles were gathered.

3.3.2. Screening

Duplicate items were removed in the first screening phase. Hence, twelve articles were omitted in the first phase, whereas 79 articles were screened in the second phase using investigator-specified inclusion and exclusion criteria. The first criterion involved the literature type that the researchers chose to focus exclusively on the journal (research articles) as it functions as the main source of empirical data. This too means that publications in the form of systematic reviews, reviews, meta-analyses, meta syntheses, book series, books, book chapters, and conference reports are excluded from the present study. Besides that, it should be highlighted that the review mainly emphasized on articles featured in English and Malay. The data period 2018-2022 was chosen for the timeline.

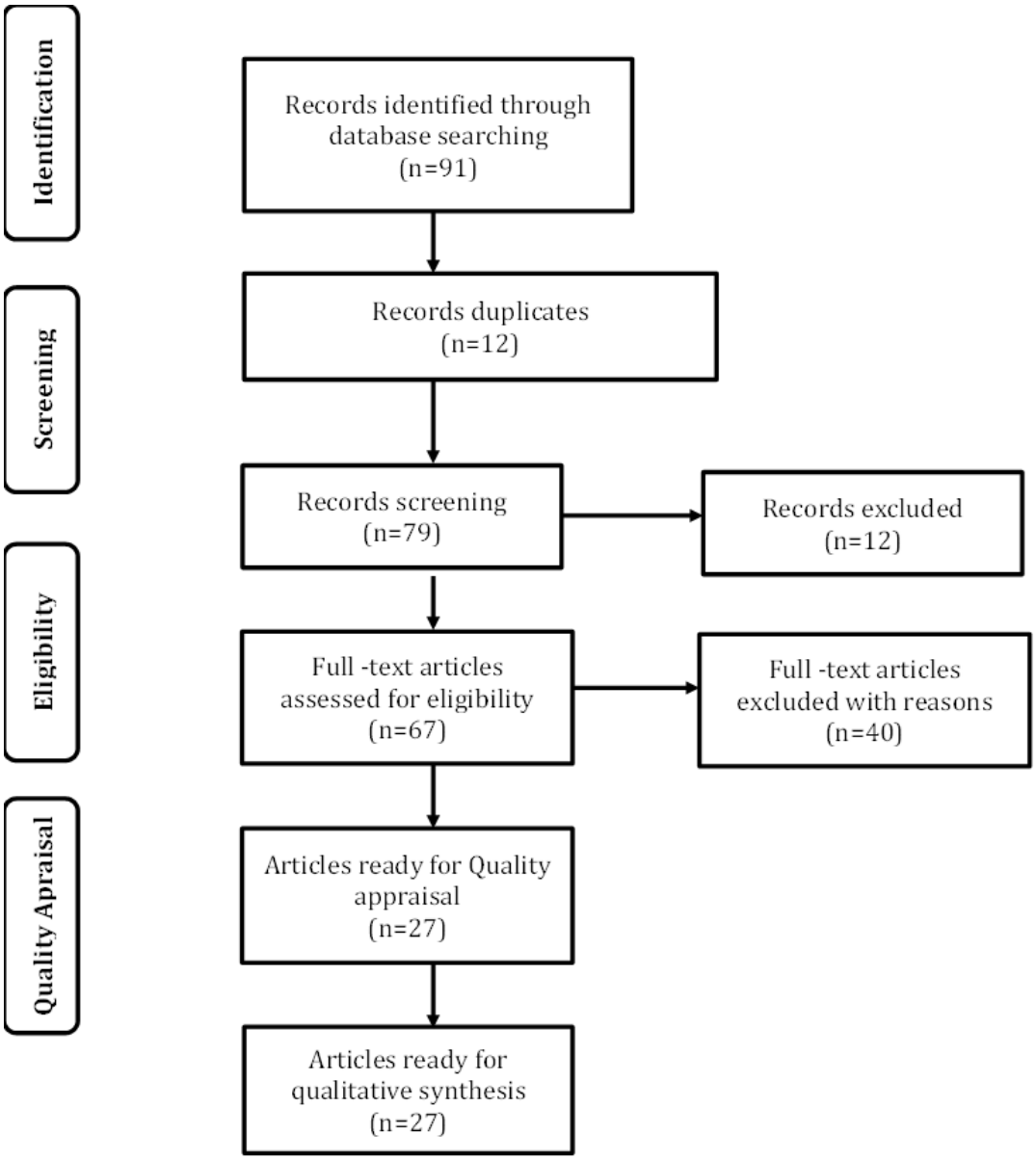
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Besides that, only studies done in Malaysia were included as they are consistent with the review objective. On the whole, an amount of twelve articles were omitted according to these conditions (See Table 3).

3.3.3. Eligibility

The literature search results on Scopus, Google Scholar and Science Direct are as many as 91 articles. However, the articles will go through the screening process by referring to Figure 1. A total of twelve duplicate articles will also be released. After the screening process was completed, an amount of twelve articles were omitted for not meeting the set criteria, leaving 79 remaining articles. The next process is to conduct eligibility on the remaining 67 articles selected from the screening process earlier. An amount of 40 articles were omitted as the emphasis was not on the professional learning community model. Based on this process, 27 articles were selected to go through the next process which is quality assessment.

Figure 1: Flow Diagram of PRISMA



Source: Adapted from Hayrol et al. (2019)

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The results of the Quality Assessment in the selected literature that can be used as a reference to answer the research questions can be seen in Table 4. The Quality Assessment is:

i. RQ1: Are all articles or journals with regards to the professional learning community model published between 2018 and 2022?
ii. RQ2: Do all articles or journals state the dimensions of the professional learning community model between 2018 and 2022?
iii. RQ3: Do all articles or journals state the need for the implementation of the professional learning community in schools?

From each literature, the answer score will be given below for each question above.
Y (Yes): For criteria found between 2018 and 2022.
T (No): For criteria that are not listed between 2018 and 2022.

Table 4: Findings of Quality Assessment

No	Researcher	Title	Year	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3	Model
1.	Mohd Izham Mohd Hamzah et al.(2018)	Kepimpinan Instruksional dan Hubungannya dengan Amalan Komuniti Pembelajaran Profesional Guru Besar di Sekolah Rendah Daerah Klang	2018	Y	Y	Y	Hord (1997)
2.	Zalina Zakaria et al. (2018)	The Influence of Distributed Leadership towards PLC Implementation in Kelantan Residential Secondary School	2018	Y	Y	Y	Huffman and Hipp (2003)
3.	Siti Nafsiah Ismail et al. (2018)	Amalan Komuniti Pembelajaran Profesional dalam Kalangan Guru Bahasa Melayu di Selangor	2018	Y	Y	Y	Siti Nafsiah et al (2020)
4.	Tai Mei Kin et al. (2019)	Examining Professional Learning Communities in National-Type Chinese Primary Schools in Perak, Malaysia	2019	Y	Y	Y	Tai and Omar (2018)
5.	Mohd Izham & Mohd Fadzil (2019)	The effects of distributed leadership on teachers' collective efficacy and professional learning community	2019	Y	Y	Y	Hord (1997)
6.	Nor Azlin Ibrahim et al. (2019)	The effect of emotional intelligence as a mediator of the relationship between transformational leadership and professional learning community	2019	Y	Y	Y	Hord (1997)

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7.	Abdul Ghani Kanesan Abdullah et al. (2019)	Pengaruh moderator bagi komuniti pembelajaran professional terhadap kepimpinan instruksional pengetua dan efikasi kolektif guru	2019	Y	Y	Y	Huffman and Hipp (2003)
8.	Jeffri Mat Yasim et al. (2019)	Kepimpinan instruksional abad ke-21 dan amalan komuniti pembelajaran profesional dalam kalangan guru besar di malaysia	2019	Y	Y	Y	Huffman and Hipp (2003)
9.	Roslizam et al. (2019)	Instructional Leadership Practice and Professional Learning Community in the Southern Zone of Malaysia	2019	Y	Y	Y	Hord (1997)
10.	Mohd Aizat Abu Hassan et al. (2019)	Professional learning community: A pilot study	2019	Y	Y	Y	Tai and Omar (2018)
11.	Absha Atiah Abu Bakar & Mohd Isa Hamzah (2019)	Professional Learning Community Practices in Improving Self-Efficacy of Elementary School Islamic Education Teachers at Melaka Tengah, Melaka	2019	Y	Y	Y	Hord (1997)
12.	Omar Abdull Kareem et al. (2019)	Professional Learning Communities in Peninsular Malaysia: Comparing Day Secondary School and National Religious Secondary School	2019	Y	Y	Y	Tai and Omar (2018)
13.	Mohd Izham & Mohd Fadzil (2019)	The Relationship of Distributed Leadership and Professional Learning Community	2019	Y	Y	Y	Hord (1997)
14.	Syed Syahrul Zarizi (2020)	Pengaruh Kepimpinan Distributif Terhadap Komuniti Pembelajaran Profesional Dalam Kalangan Pemimpin Sekolah Menengah Di Negeri Johor	2020	Y	Y	Y	Huffman and Hipp (2003)
15.	Lokman Mohd. Tahir & Mohammed Borhandden Musah (2020)	Implementing professional learning community in rural Malaysian primary schools: exploring teacher feedback	2020	Y	Y	Y	Hord (1997)

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16.	Puspanathan Mayan & Mahaliza (2020)	Hubungan Antara Amalan Kepimpinan Distributif Dengan Efikasi Kendiri dan Komuniti Pembelajaran Profesional Guru di Kuala Lumpur	2020	Y	Y	Y	Huffman and Hipp (2003)
17.	Siti Nafsiah Ismail et al.(2020)	Komuniti Pembelajaran Profesional Guru Bahasa Melayu Malaysia	2020	Y	Y	Y	Siti Nafsiah et al. (2020)
18.	Mohd Aizat Abu Hassan et al. (2020)	Implementation of Professional Learning Community Among Teachers in Malaysia	2020	Y	Y	Y	Kruse et al. (1994)
19.	Norfarahin Mohd Zamri et al. (2020)	The Effectiveness of Islamic Education Through Professional Learning Community (PLC) Among Teachers	2020	Y	Y	Y	Hord (1997)
20.	Heng Zhen Ming et al. (2020)	Transformational Leadership of Headmasters and Professional Learning Communities in Primary Schools, Manjung, Perak	2020	Y	Y	Y	Huffman and Hipp (2003)
21.	Noor Diyana Sidi Ahmad & Jamalul Lail Abdul Wahab (2021)	Hubungan antara Kepimpinan Instruksional Pengetua dengan Amalan Komuniti Pembelajaran Profesional Guru di Sekolah Menengah	2021	Y	Y	Y	Hord (1997)
22.	Siti Noor Ismail et al. (2021)	Hubungan antara Komuniti Pembelajaran Profesional (kpp) dengan Motivasi Guru di Sekolah Menengah Harian Daerah Jeli	2021	Y	Y	Y	Huffman and Hipp (2003)
23.	Mohamed Khirul Nizzuan Hamzah & Rosnah Ishak (2021)	Analisis Penerokaan Faktor (efa) Kepimpinan Berpusatkan Pembelajaran, Komuniti Pembelajaran Profesional dan Efikasi Kendiri Guru	2021	Y	Y	Y	Tai and Omar (2018)
24.	Victor Jibson Anthony et al. (2021)	Peranan komuniti Pembelajaran Professional dalam Efikasi Kendiri Guru Sekolah Rendah Sarawak	2021	Y	Y	Y	Huffman and Hipp (2003)

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25.	Tai Mei Kin & Omar Abdull Kareem (2021)	An Analysis on the Implementation of Professional Learning Communities in Malaysian Secondary Schools	2021	Y	Y	Y	Tai and Omar (2018)
26.	Zalina Zakaria & Siti Noor Ismail (2021)	Readiness for Organizational Change as a Mediator of Distributed Leadership Relationships and the Implementation of Professional Learning Community	2021	Y	Y	Y	Huffman and Hipp (2003)
27.	Azura Pun & Mahaliza Mansor (2022)	Komuniti Pembelajaran Profesional di Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan di Malaysia	2022	Y	Y	Y	Tai and Omar (2018)

4. Findings

According to the professional learning community model being compared in the present study, PLCs engage in professional development beyond acquiring new knowledge and skills (Vescio et al., 2007), with an emphasis on intergroup collaboration and reflection among teachers (DuFour, 2004). It is one way to familiarize teachers with fresh ideas and practices so that their teaching methods can be improved via a critical inquiry process.

There are six dimensions of professional learning community as suggested by literature: (i) shared and supportive leadership, (ii) shared values and vision, (iii) collective learning and application, (iv) shared personal practice, (v) supportive conditions: relationships and structures (Hord, 1997; Huffman & Hipp, 2003). The core principles of PLCs are professionalism, community, accountability and learning (Hord & Sommers, 2008) although the dimensions vary from one to another. The six dimensions are defined below.

4.1. Shared and Supportive Leadership

Teachers and administrators work together to make decisions as a group in a safe environment under the guidance of shared supportive leadership (Hord, 1997). Collaborative leaders lead by focusing on learning, coordinating, and guiding rather than controlling, intimidating, and directing (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). School leadership supports teacher ownership of professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing student learning (Louis et al., 1995).

4.2. Shared Values, Vision and mission

A major key to PLC in schools is a shared mission and vision for maintaining a culture of learning among school members (Hord, 1997). The main purpose of the vision and mission is to enhance student learning activities and enable students to collaborate (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Reichstetter, 2006; Siti Nafsiah et al., 2020). The school's vision and mission too are utilized as measuring standards of quality teaching and teacher effectiveness in student learning. Henceforth, the shaping of a school's vision and mission must mirror the cooperation and shared obligation among school community members

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and consider student learning process (Bolam et al., 2005; Kruse et al., 1994; Louis et al., 1996).

4.3. Collective Learning and Application

Collective learning and application necessitate that new knowledge be discovered and implemented in the classroom (Hord, 1997). In addition, DuFour (1998, 2004) discovered collective learning to be a continuous process which encourages student learning and problem-solving in school. The collective learning process helps teachers increase their expertise in the subject matter, increase their knowledge, and improve teacher skills and training to ensure that student academic achievement and school quality can be improved (Kruse et al., 1994; Hord, 1997; Bolam et al., 2005; Siti Nafsiah et al., 2020).

Collective learning and application also generate knowledge for individuals and for the common good (Kruse & Louis, 1994). Collective learning requires collaboration among school members. The vision of the professional learning community cannot be realised without the school community's cooperation. Teachers can identify the best teaching strategies to improve achievement of their students through collaborative practice (Dufour, 2004; Muhammad Faizal & Crow, 2013).

4.4. Shared Personal Practice

Shared personal practice is a dimension that highlights the consistency in sharing knowledge, expertise and experience, reflecting on teaching and learning issues, collaborating with other teachers, and exchanging teaching aids and approaches to enhance student learning quality (Kruse et al., 1994; Hord, 1997; Bolam et al., 2005). Reflective dialogues and deductive practices too fall into this dimension. Reflective dialogues involve pair or group reflective conversations which assist teachers in obtaining new views regarding classroom practices. The views are typically shared in a jointly supportive way (Tai & Omar, 2021).

4.5. Supportive Conditions

Relationships and structures are two types of supportive conditions which are essential for PLC (Hord, 1997). Hord (1997) also mentioned maintaining a positive attitude toward colleagues, trust, and cognitive and affective abilities as human elements support. The physical elements that assist PLCs in performing well are referred to as structures as supportive conditions (Kruse & Louis, 1993). According to research, this category includes several structures, including times for collaboration, gathering spots at school, ' proximity of instructors to one another, and channels for teacher communication (Hord, 2008).

5. Conclusion

This study's main aim is to review the dimensions of professional learning community models systematically. Overall, various models have been developed since PLC was implemented and they serve as a guide and reference for scholars in conducting research. Although there are various types of models from the western context, there is no denying that the development of PLC models based on the local context has also been worked on. The development of models from the local context is very important to understand the effective implementation and practice of PLC. In addition, some elements such as school

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culture and climate should be included in the local context model due to the diversity of the institution in Malaysia. Therefore, the Ministry of Education needs to coordinate a specific model for PLC in the local context due to the diversity of backgrounds of schools in Malaysia.

Professional Learning Community is an increasingly popular approach implemented in schools as one of the strategies to increase the capacity of teachers' professionalism as well as strategies that affect student achievement. In practice, however, implementing professional learning communities in schools presents numerous obstacles and challenges. Studies show that school leaders still do not provide support in developing PLC culture in schools (Ai, 2018; Chong et al., 2019; Khairul Anuar, 2019). Chong et al.'s (2019) study too discovered that some school leaders practice autocratic leadership styles.

Negative school culture, such as teachers' reluctance in sharing knowledge to their peers, is also a barrier to implementing PLC in schools (Chong et al., 2019). One of the reasons is the lack of understanding and clear knowledge about PLC among leaders and committee heads which causes teachers to think that PLC activities do not bring benefits (Ai, 2018). In addition, poor organizational structures such as lack of collaborative time (Ai, 2018; Chong et al., 2019; Khairul Anuar, 2019; Khairul Anuar et al., 2017) pose a challenge to PLC practices. In relation to that, the goals of PLC can be realized if there is understanding, support and cooperation from leaders, teachers and all members of the school community.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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