

Professional learning communities in pre-vocational secondary schools: Effects of interdependency on differentiated teaching

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Abstract:

Teacher professional learning communities (PLCs) are claimed to contribute to improvement in the practices of teaching and schooling, at the level of both individual teachers and collective capacity of teams. Despite the growing knowledge base in this area, both empirical and reflective in nature, evidence-based insights into teacher interactions in PLCs as well as their effect on teaching processes are lacking. The current project examines interaction processes of teachers in PLCs and their effects on teacher professional development as related to differentiated teaching in pre-vocational schools.

Ongoing interaction in teacher communities both opens up and closes off opportunities for teacher learning and consideration of practice, but we do not know how and why. Therefore, this project, which is part of a larger project in which Erasmus University Rotterdam and Leiden University (ICLON) are also involved, focuses on the interaction processes between teachers in the three types of PLCs and on how these are related to teachers' perceptions of learning in the PLC. Video data of 15 PLCs is sampled and analyzed using a Nonlinear Dynamic Systems (NDS) approach, applying Orbital Decomposition to find interaction patterns. A teacher questionnaire is administered to measure the perceived learning effects, to connect interaction patterns to teacher professional development.