



The Implementation of Professional Learning Community at Mutiara Harapan Junior High School and Global Andalan Junior High School, Riau

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the implementation of professional learning communities at Mutiara Harapan and Global Andalan Riau Junior High Schools, focusing on factors supporting and inhibiting the process, its impacts, and strategies to address challenges. Using a qualitative approach, data were gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Findings show both schools align with professional learning community principles, emphasizing educator collaboration and student learning outcomes. Mutiara Harapan uses Google Drive for document monitoring, while Global Andalan adopts the Visual Management Board method. Supporting factors include leadership support and technology use, while obstacles involve limited time and varying teacher motivation. Positive impacts include improved educator competence, classroom management, and student participation.

INTRODUCTION

Every educational institution strives to enhance the quality of education to achieve high standards. One key factor influencing educational quality is the educators, as they are at the forefront of implementing education. According to M. Noor (2023), the development of human resources is crucial for achieving the nation's educational goals. Investment in the professional development of educators is essential for improving education quality. One approach to professional development is the Professional Learning Community (PLC), which is a structured and continuous collaboration among teachers with clear goals to improve teaching quality and, ultimately, student learning outcomes.

Mutiara Harapan and Global Andalan Riau Junior High School is one of the schools in Riau that adopts the Cambridge Curriculum since 2008 and officially opened in 2012. Meanwhile, Global Andalan High School is a national school under the management of Yayasan Kerinci Citra Kasih (YKCK) that applies the Merdeka Curriculum. Research on the implementation of PLC in various regions has shown significant benefits, although challenges also arise. As mentioned by Chua et al. (2020), challenges include increased responsibilities, lack of teacher participation, unfavorable conditions, and a lack of deep understanding of PLC. This aligns with Suglo et al. (2024), who highlighted the lack of a clear understanding of PLC concepts in secondary schools in Ghana, Africa.

Collaboration among educators in implementing PLC can be successful if the education authorities create a supportive learning environment. Aisah et al. (2024) emphasized the need for continuous training, mentorship, and collaboration to improve educators' professionalism. Similarly, M. Fadhli et al. (2024) pointed out that teamwork, creativity, and innovation are essential to enhance educators' professionalism, highlighting the importance of collaboration, incentives, and team cohesion. Therefore, fostering a collaborative culture in schools is crucial for the effective and sustainable implementation of PLC.

One significant challenge in implementing PLC is the lack of participation from educators and their heavy workload. Preliminary interviews with the PLC coordinator at Mutiara Harapan and Global Andalan Riau Junior High School and Global Andalan Junior High School revealed that educator participation was still suboptimal. This finding supports Suglo et al. (2024), who stressed that active participation significantly impacts the success of PLC activities. This suggests that greater active involvement from teachers is key to ensuring the success of PLC initiatives.

This study aims to explore the implementation, challenges, and strategies of the Professional Learning Community carried out by educators at Mutiara Harapan and Global Andalan Riau Junior High School and Global Andalan Junior High School. The findings from this research are expected to contribute to the implementation of PLC, helping to create schools with high-quality education. A clear understanding of PLC practices will provide valuable insights for school management and educators alike, enhancing overall educational quality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Professional Learning Community

A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a group of educators who collaborate to improve student learning outcomes. According to the Directorate General (Ditjend) in 2004, "A learning community is a group of educators who learn together, collaborate on a scheduled and continuous basis with clear and measurable goals to enhance the quality of learning, thus impacting student outcomes." This definition emphasizes collaboration and ongoing professional development aimed at improving teaching practices and student performance.

However, as noted by Stoll et al. (2006), there is no universally accepted definition of PLC, and its meaning can vary depending on the context. They describe it as a group of educators, both within and outside of schools, who work together to improve themselves, student learning, and school quality. Similarly, Bunnaen et al. (2022), citing Hoover and Love (2011), define PLC as a group of stakeholders who develop timely, intervention-based solutions to address student challenges while executing high-quality, evidence-based practices.

Another definition by Dufour (2020) describes PLC as a continuous process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for students. Despite its frequent use, the term PLC may become unclear due to its overuse. From these definitions, it can be concluded that a PLC is a group of educators who regularly collaborate, share experiences, reflect, and evaluate their practices, while also addressing student learning needs based on data.

Purpose of the Professional Learning Community

According to the Directorate General of GTK (2024), the goals of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) are outlined as follows: optimizing educators' capabilities, creating a culture of continuous collective learning, fostering relationships and cooperation among educators, increasing educators' self-confidence, implementing group discussion outputs into daily teaching practices, and reflecting on teaching practices to receive feedback for more effective future practices.

Meanwhile, Caudill (2024) highlights two key objectives of a PLC: "First, they work to improve student achievement and their educational goals. Next, they work to improve educators' knowledge and skills." From this explanation, it is clear that the primary goal of a PLC is to enhance student outcomes, followed by the improvement of educators' competencies. Therefore, the focus of discussions and collaboration among educators should prioritize addressing the needs of students.

Basic Principles of Professional Learning Communities

The basic principles of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are explained by Dufour (2020) as follows: Big Idea #1: Ensuring That Students Learn, Big Idea #2: A Culture of Collaboration, and Big Idea #3: A Focus on Results. The first principle emphasizes a shift in the assumption of educational

goals, moving from merely ensuring that students are taught to ensuring that students truly learn, which significantly impacts the quality of the school. Educators must reflect on their teaching practices by asking questions such as: What practices most effectively help students achieve high-quality outcomes? How can educators apply these best practices in schools? What commitment needs to be nurtured to realize such a school? What indicators can be used to ensure success? In the implementation of PLCs, educators must collectively recognize how to assist students struggling with learning, as seen in Stevenson School in Illinois, where educators collaborate to provide direct interventions rather than waiting for remedial sessions.

The second principle focuses on collaboration among educators toward a shared goal. Educators collaboratively analyze effective ways to enhance classroom teaching implementation, aiming for high-quality outcomes. For example, at Boones Mill Elementary School in Virginia, third-grade teachers work together to map learning achievements in language knowledge and skills by studying national standards, curricula, and student learning data. They also collaborate with fourth-grade teachers to determine what third-grade students should achieve and monitor their progress by creating formative assessments and relevant evaluation criteria. After the assessments are conducted, they analyze the overall student results and seek solutions to address both strengths and weaknesses. This process is repeated every year. In this school, the focus is not only on summative assessments (who succeeded or failed) but also on using formative assessments to improve student learning outcomes and teaching practices.

The third principle emphasizes student learning outcomes, where educators focus collaboration on student results. Student learning data can be used for comparisons through shared formative assessments. Educators can share successful strategies for implementing learning and identify areas that need reinforcement. The continuous formative assessments provide evidence of the learning practices in action. According to Caudill (2024), "Formative gives you the data-collection tools you need for a results-oriented PLC," highlighting that formative assessments lead to the most powerful learning outcomes when actions are taken. This indicates that after PLC meetings, educators must take concrete action based on discussions and analyses, applying improvements in their classrooms, and then reconvene to repeat the PLC steps. Shirley M. Hord (2004) elaborates on five dimensions of PLCs, focusing on supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning, supportive conditions, and shared practice. This underscores the importance of leadership in PLCs, with the paradigm shift from the omnipotent school leader to a lifelong learner leader alongside educators. These principles are further emphasized by Zameer (2023), who highlights collaboration, inquiry, and continuous learning as foundational elements of PLCs.

In conclusion, several principles or concepts within PLCs can be identified: 1) ensuring students learn, 2) creating a culture of collaboration, 3) focusing on results, 4) committing to joint analysis, 5) committing to continuous change, 6)

taking concrete actions, 7) supporting shared leadership, 8) sharing values and vision, 9) sharing best practices, and 10) creating supportive conditions.

The Importance of Professional Learning Communities

In the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), educators play a vital role. They conduct the teaching and learning process, assess student progress through diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, and identify students' learning outcomes. During PLC meetings, educators collaborate to discuss the data gathered from their teaching practices. This collaboration involves sharing student learning data, experiences, and best practices, providing feedback to colleagues, finding solutions to improve understanding or skills for students needing assistance, and discussing challenges for advanced students. Through these discussions, educators improve their pedagogical competence, including managing effective, student-centered learning environments, assessment, and feedback practices.

Reflection activities are also part of PLC implementation, where educators compare their students' learning outcomes with standards or other students' performance. This reflective process enhances educators' personal competence, seen through indicators such as moral, emotional, and spiritual maturity, development through reflection, and a student-centered approach. Collaboration also fosters effective communication among educators, boosting trust and a culture of continuous improvement, which in turn enhances social competence. Educators actively engage in analyzing data, setting goals, learning both individually and in groups, applying new strategies, and monitoring their practices. Research by Raymond et al. (2024) suggests that PLCs contribute to student achievement when educators and stakeholders collaborate to identify and address factors hindering student success. ar peserta didik, mendiskusikannya, mencari solusi, dan melakukan refleksi.

The success of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) depends on the support of all parties involved. Amoozadeh et al. (2023) identify four key factors that influence the successful implementation of PLCs: school leadership support, organizational culture, collaborative learning, and organizational structure, all of which significantly impact educator development, job satisfaction, and a sense of ownership. Cann (2021) further outlines effective PLC practices, emphasizing clear membership and focus, well-defined structures and processes, skilled facilitators, encouragement for conversation and collaboration, and the use of student learning data. Successful PLCs require strong leadership, competent educators, committed facilitators, a clear focus, and a regular schedule. However, challenges such as weak leadership, limited collaboration, unclear focus, and insufficient monitoring can hinder PLC effectiveness, while issues like time conflicts, low trust, and lack of participation can undermine success. Inadequate discussions, lack of commitment to shared goals, and ineffective time management also contribute to PLC failure. Effective PLCs demand proactive leadership, deep collaboration, and a continuous commitment to improving student learning.

METHODS

This study applies a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, aiming to provide a detailed description of the phenomena in the field, specifically the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) at Mutiara Harapan Junior High School and Global Andalan Junior High School, as well as the challenges encountered during the implementation. Creswell (2018) states, "Qualitative approaches are used to understand human experiences in depth and contextually, where the researcher becomes part of the process to interpret the phenomenon." Nasution (2021) also emphasizes, "Qualitative research methodology is crucial in understanding experiences and phenomena in deep social contexts, providing broader insights into the complexity of the issues being studied."

The researcher will collect as much data as possible from various sources to gain an in-depth understanding of the PLC implementation at the schools being studied, using planned techniques such as interviews (with school leaders, facilitators, and educators), observations, and document analysis. The researcher will transcribe the interview and focus group data, then analyze it through coding, categorization, and thematic interpretation to identify patterns, themes, or significant challenges in the implementation of PLC at each school. Once this process is completed, to ensure the data is validated and consistent, the researcher will use triangulation techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings were compiled based on results from in-depth one-on-one interviews, observations of PLC (Komunitas Belajar Profesional) implementation, and document studies. Interviews were conducted with 16 participants, consisting of 2 school principals, 2 mentors or facilitators, and 12 educators representing different teacher groups at each school's PLC. These educators had varying teaching experiences, with some having more than 5 years of teaching experience and others with fewer than 2 years. The findings show that the PLC implementation at both schools follows stages of reflection, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The primary activities involve discussions, sharing best practices, and providing feedback.

Several school supports such as facilities, time allocation, and facilitators or mentors contributed to the successful continuation of the PLC activities. Monitoring the PLC's progress is a key element for leaders to observe the implementation status. Mutiara Harapan School uses a flexible system like Google Drive, while Global Andalan School applies a more structured system such as a Visual Management Board (VMB), which is adapted from a corporate monitoring model.

However, some barriers to the effective implementation of PLC at both schools include: time constraints due to the distant locations of PLC meetings, afternoon schedules, teacher absences, and external school activities that disrupt the sessions. Another issue is the lack of motivation among educators, even though the schools provide the necessary facilities for PLC activities. Additionally, teacher grouping challenges arise when educators are paired with

others who are not familiar or aligned with their subject areas. The lack of competency among mentors, the need for expert speakers to address specific issues, and unclear goals for each PLC meeting also contribute to the challenges.

The impact of PLC implementation resulted in improvements in teacher competencies. The activities enhanced pedagogical competence (designing lessons according to student needs and planning assessments), personal competence (through reflection), social competence (through collaboration and sharing best practices), and professional competence (identifying content knowledge based on student needs). Furthermore, the implementation of PLC positively affected students, improving both their hard and soft skills

The discussion of the research findings is structured based on the study's focus on the implementation of PLC (Komunitas Belajar Profesional), its challenges, and strategies. According to Dufour (2020), the core principle of Professional Learning Communities is to ensure student learning, foster a culture of collaboration, and focus on outcomes. Based on observations, documentation, and interviews with participants, the implementation of PLC in both schools is structured and involves stages such as reflection, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Each school conducts PLC meetings once a week, with school leaders allocating one hour either in the afternoon or incorporated into lesson schedules. This aligns with Dufour's (2020) assertion that schools should allocate time during working hours for collaboration.

The planning process involves forming teams, socializing the importance of PLC, mapping educators' needs, providing a conducive learning environment, and establishing flexible monitoring systems via tools such as Google Drive or a more structured VMB (Visual Management Board). This is consistent with Mulatsih (2021), who claims that PLCs work best when supported by effective planning, organization, implementation, and supervision. The collaboration at both schools is interdisciplinary, where educators from different subjects contribute by creating teaching modules, designing learning strategies, solving classroom management issues, and focusing on student learning outcomes. According to Dinama et al. (2021), such interactions optimize teacher competencies, aligning with Dufour (2020), who emphasizes shared responsibility and collaboration to improve student outcomes.

The second aspect focuses on challenges faced during PLC implementation, including limited collaboration within the community. Despite activities such as creating teaching modules and discussing challenges, some educators have not fully embraced collective responsibility for student outcomes or made effective use of reflective questions. As Putri (2023) suggests, teachers have not maximized the community to develop their competencies, and Power (2019) indicates that educators are not using instructional time and reflection questions effectively. Additionally, time constraints and unclear PLC goals are hindering progress, as discussed by several researchers (Ardhi, 2024; Aisah, 2024). Furthermore, the shortage of competent mentors and expert speakers to help resolve group issues, as noted by Aisah (2024) and Miller (2020), remains a challenge.

The strategies adopted by the schools to address these issues include leadership support through systematic evaluation methods, such as Google Drive and VMB. Leadership support has been found to be crucial for PLC success, as stated by Amoozadeh et al. (2023) and Lei et al. (2024). In terms of the impact of PLC on educators and student learning, the research highlights improvements in pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies. Teachers have been able to design lessons tailored to student needs, engage in reflection, collaborate to share best practices, and identify content knowledge gaps. Additionally, students' knowledge, hard skills, and soft skills have improved through interventions planned by teachers.

The novelty of this study lies in the systematic monitoring systems used at both schools, which are under the auspices of the PT RAPP corporation. Mutiara Harapan School uses Google Drive for flexible monitoring, while Global Andalan School utilizes the VMB model, which is borrowed from corporate monitoring practices. These tools could serve as models for other schools in need of a flexible or structured approach to monitoring PLCs. The study's limitations include its reliance on a qualitative descriptive approach, which prevents statistical measurement of the impact on student learning outcomes. Additionally, the research is limited by the small number of schools and interview samples, meaning the findings cannot be generalized. There is also potential bias due to purposive sampling, where participants were chosen based on relevance to the study, and the possibility of bias in data collection, where respondents may have provided answers they believed were expected by the researcher.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides insights into the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) at Mutiara Harapan Junior High School and Global Andalan Junior High School. The findings reveal that PLC at both schools follows stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation. At Mutiara Harapan Junior High School, a flexible approach using Google Drive allows easy access and collaboration without time constraints. In contrast, Global Andalan Junior High School uses a structured approach with the Virtual Management Board (VMB), facilitating monitoring and formal reporting. Key supporting factors include school leadership's support, educator collaboration, and the use of technology, while challenges include time constraints, location issues, educator motivation, workload, and the lack of expert mentors.

The study suggests several recommendations: For school leaders, it is essential to ensure clear PLC goals aligned with a collaborative vision, optimize time for PLCs, consistently evaluate PLC activities, and ensure the presence of competent and committed facilitators. Educators should consistently attend meetings, actively participate, use essential reflective questions, and apply strategies from discussions to improve student learning outcomes through formative assessments. For future researchers, it is recommended to quantitatively assess the impact of PLC on student learning, compare its effectiveness across various school types, and explore the use of other technologies like Learning Management Systems (LMS) to support PLCs.

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