

## Abstract

# A Study on Teacher Learning Community Support for Enhanced School Capacity

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The purpose of this study is to identify the elements that support effective Teacher Learning Community(TLC) of which enhance school education through analyses of domestic and international cases and needs analysis of TLC.

This study had set five research questions: First, what do the previous research identify as attributes and requisites of TLC? Second, how are the TLCs in and out of schools operated, and what are the supports from the offices of education? What are the problems, if any? Third, what are the best practices of TLC, and what are the differences of support requisites by types of school, by region, and by teachers' experiences? Fourth, what are the attributes and directional nature of TLCs in other countries, and what are the implications? Fifth, what are the strategies for TLCs disseminate and diffuse for enhanced school capabilities, and how should it be supported at National and regional level?

With the five research questions, this study comprises ① analysis of recent research on effective TLC, ② identification of current TLC operation and problems, if any, ③ analysis of best practices of TLCs, ④ analysis of requisites of TLC, ⑤ implications from other countries, and ⑥ measures for TLC support.

This study applied eight methods: ① literature review, ② conference with experts, ③ interview, ④ focus group interview, ⑤ case studies, ⑥ conference with government personnel, ⑦ survey, ⑧ policy forum.

Summary of the study is as the following.

Chapter 2 provides information and trends on recent studies of TLC and identify requisites. This study defined TLC as 'a professional community of teachers that engage in critical thinking for students growth and academic achievement. In the previous research, it was found that development of collective professionalism is an important role of TLC and building school network for dissemination of best practices is also important. Requisites for TLC that could enhance school capabilities were identified. They are democratic school operation, student guidance based on care and consideration, development and operation of school curriculum through cooperative process, lesson development and practice with cooperation, development of collaborative school system based on trust and respect.

In chapter 3, current conditions of TLC operation and problems are analyzed. TLCs were operated in and out of schools. TLCs within the schools were formed based on grade level, subject, lesson study, combined grade level and content, and interest. In addition, TLCs with parents and local community members were also in operation. TLCs out of schools were subject and content based and district based TLCs teacher job training TLCs were also operated.

In 2016, the Ministry of Education(MOE) and the Offices of Education is supporting for lesson research TLCs. The MOE commissioned the Center for lesson improvement of teachers' for 2015 revised curriculum to the Korean Educational Development Institute. The Center involves in building National level TLC cluster, developing teaching and learning materials for teachers, workshops and training for teachers, and identifying and disseminating best practices. At the Offices of Education level, with the financial support from MOE, approximately 1,510 TLCs are developed and in operation with the Offices' support. In some Office of Education, teacher training credits are given for TLC participation at the school level.

Analysis of TLC outcomes show that TLCs contribute to teachers' professionalism, cooperation among teachers, cultural development of discussion, improved teachers'

self efficacy, improved students' academic achievement, cultivation of students' character, and improved satisfaction level of school experience.

The problems of TLC operation could be identified in teachers' condition, school condition, and support system. First, for school condition, lack of cooperation among school members, lack of active participation, negative attitude and lack of will, lack of time were identified as constraints. Second, school factors were too much workload, difficulties in recruiting teachers, time and space constraints, traditional school culture of isolation. Finally, for support system, lack of school principals support, lack of leaders, financial lack, and lack of research materials were identified as constraints for TLC.

Implication for TLC support are reducing teachers' workload, increase principals' capacity for TLC support, financial support, approval of TLC as in-service training(credits), development of specific model or manual, dissemination of best practices, network of not only teachers but also experts and administrators, systematic research of TLC monitoring and management of achievements.

Chapter 6 presents best practices of school level and regional level TLCs. The cases of best practices are threefold: First, within school TLC that include grade-subject integrated, teachers' professional development, and educational policy connected. The second, which is out-of-school TLC include subject centered and student guidance. Finally, case of office of education show support for TLC foundation.

Cultural and structural aspects (such as sharing organization's goal and autonomy) were common elements of successful TLC in both in-school and out-of-school TLCs. However, out-of-school TLCs had attributes of teacher(regular) centered, connection with branches and chapters, and on and off-line activities which can be characterized as autonomous and horizontal operation of TLC.

In addition, in-school TLCs, system factors such as teacher transfer were identified as barriers, and inconsistency between principals and office of education were challenges for effective TLC. The support from the office of education have different emphasis based on the developmental stages of TLCs. At the beginning stage of TLCs, the support focused on providing opportunities for participation and at the later stages the focus is shifted more towards reducing teachers' workload and building school and regional network.

The cases of TLC operation and its' support reveal, first, principals and offices of education need to deviate from result-oriented approach, such as emphasizing students' academic achievement, and take approach for valuing collaborative learning of teachers' in their support. Second, principals and offices of education also need to create and build network of learning communities so that various activities of TLCs could be shared.

In chapter 5, teachers' needs analysis results are presented. Survey was administered between 23rd of September and 4th of October in 2016 to 730, which is 5% of teachers who participate in lesson research TLC that is supported by the Offices of Education, and total of 565(77.3%) teachers completed the survey online. The 23 questionnaires included general information, experience of TLC participation, operation of TLCs, attributes of TLCs and problems, and tasks for TLC support.

The results show that 75.8% of teachers has less than 3 years of experience in TLCs, 47.1% of teachers participate in one TLC, 68% of teachers participate in TLCs that have 1~10 members, 43.9% of teachers had once a month meeting, 54% of teachers generally had 1~2 hours TLC. In addition, 75.1% responded that operation of TLC was done by lead teacher, 71.3% of teachers were fees of less than 50,000₩, and the cluster of teachers' TLC participation was 31% at elementary non-subject, 19.8% elementary subject, 17.7% secondary non-subject, and 14% secondary subject.

In addition, analysis of attributes and problems of TLCs show that 96.4% of teachers agreed that invigoration of TLC can contribute to enhance school capabilities. Also, 26% and 18.8% of teachers agreed that TLC can improve teaching and learning activities and communication among teachers. Finally, 35.2% and 31.9% of teachers viewed TLC as ways in which student centered teaching and learning and harmony and improved communication can be achieved.

Regarding barriers, lack of time, passive participation, understanding of each other and lack of will were identified by community members. In addition, heavy workload, after-school operation, school culture of individualism and isolation were barriers at the school level. Moreover, lack of systemic support at the National level, lack of finance, and lack of cooperation system among TLCs were identified as barriers.

Finally, the survey revealed that further development of TLC should focus on instruction(40.4%) and organization and operation of curriculum(23.4%). In addition, for disseminating out-of-school TLCs to within school, reducing teacher workload(27.8%), teachers' interest and active participation(23.9%), financial support per year less than 5,000,000₩(58.8%) were also important. Last but not least, teachers identified reducing teacher workload(4.65), securing time during weekly work time(4.4), principals' support(4.29), and securing finance(4.27) as important tasks for TLC development.

Chapter 6 reports on analysis of international cases of TLC. Implications of the cases of Sweden, Finland, U.S.A., and Singapore are first, MOE and office of education needs to coordinate their support TLC, second, the support system needs to focus on voluntary participation and autonomous operation of TLC, third, the support needs to be balanced between accountability and autonomy of TLC, and finally, creating collaborative culture among school members is compulsory.

Chapter 7 presents policy directions and four strategies for TLC support. In addition, short-term to mid and long term policy measure for the next 5 years are presented. They were deducted based on importance and urgency. The four strategies are ① development of teacher capacity, ② develop and support operation program, ③ improve teachers' work environment, ④ establish administrative and financial infrastructure.

For development of teachers' capacity, ① principals' support capacity improvement, ② training of lead teachers, ③ accepting TLC activity hours as training credits are suggested. For supporting development of operation programs, ① TLC program development based on local needs, ② TLC program for improving teaching and learning, and ③ cooperative network among experts are suggested. For supporting teachers' work environment, ① reducing teacher workload, ② securing weekly time for TLC participation, ③ providing space for TLC activities are suggested, and for establishing administrative and financial infrastructure, ① securing finance, ② establishing learning commons system, ③ disseminating best practices, ④ developing manuals for PLC operation, and ⑤ establishing web-page for TLC.

**Key words:** school education capacity, Teacher Learning Community(TLC)