

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

School of Education

Thesis:

**Examining the Perceptions of Superintendents,
Principals and Teachers
Regarding Professional Learning Community**

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Abstract

In our competitive era, the life pace is dynamic and it demands schools to adjust to the changing reality so rapidly. The schools have to be aware of the environment that surrounds them as well as to be updated with various innovations. One of the issues which brought to light in the latest years is the Professional Learning Community. It is a group of educators that work in cooperation in order to improve the achievements of all pupils in the school (Margulin, 2005).

This research investigated the Professional Learning Community from different aspects while examining the similarity and the dissimilarity in the perspectives of diverse ranks in the educational system. This was a qualitative research. The research's main tool was semi structured interviews. This research included 45 interviews of superintendents, principals and teachers. The purpose of this research was to examine the perceptions of the different ranks in the educational Ministry in regards to the importance of the Professional Learning Community as well as to explore its inhibiting and fostering factors.

The findings of this research presented a comprehensive distribution of various perspectives regarding Professional Learning Community. It appears that there is an agreement among the superintendents, principals and teachers concerning the definition of the term Professional Learning Community and its key components. Interestingly, the superintendents, principals and teachers

perceived Professional Learning Community as a means to promote learners' achievements, develop a positive school environment, personal professionalization and a system's progress

Furthermore, most participants emphasized that the principal's role was essential. The principal's performance could lead the school either to a great success or to a complete failure. According to the superintendants and the teachers, the principal was considered as a factor that promoted the Professional Learning Community. However, the principals considered the school's atmosphere as well as the sense of openness between the staff and the management as a factor that encourages the Professional Learning Community. Moreover, all participants emphasized the significance of working collaboratively as a condition that fostered the Professional Learning Community.

The principals and the teachers indicated that overload, a lack of resources and top to bottom commands were conditions that inhibited the Professional Learning Community. Nevertheless, the superintendants related to the principal's leadership style as a factor that restrained the Professional Learning Community. It is important to indicate that the superintendants' perspective suggested a general viewpoint as opposed to the centered perception which was offered by the teachers and the principals.

The research showed that the Professional Learning Community played an important part in facilitating a change as well as leading the school toward success. And yet, this could not occur without providing the staff with the necessary resources such as: professional guidance, time and place. It seems that schools which developed a community of learners succeeded to raise their learners' achievements, motivated the staff and increased their loyalty toward the school.

Consequently, Professional Learning Community is an updated response, which considers the professional and personal needs of both the principal and the teacher in order to promote the pupil. Thus, there is a need to aspire and to empower the teacher's expertise. The recommendation for those who design the education agenda is to upgrade the teacher's role through reflective learning and openness that will take place throughout the process. Moreover, providing resources such as time and systemic flexibility might bring a better future that will promote the rebuilding of the Professional Learning Community.