The Development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in the Philippines: Roles and Views of Secondary School Principals

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ABSTRACT

It is widely recognised that principals play an indispensable role in the professional development of teachers in schools. In the Philippines, principals encourage teachers to participate in the traditional and most common approach to professional development such as conferences, seminars, workshops, and training. Despite documented benefits of these traditional approaches to teacher professional development, recent studies show that many teachers find them insufficient, inconsistent, and sometimes they do not necessarily address teachers' classroom needs. There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of teacher engagement through professional learning communities (PLCs) as a new approach to teacher professional development. Unlike traditional approaches to teacher professional development, PLCs redefine professional development from programmes that regard teachers as passive learners to programmes that regard teachers as active learners who are responsible for their own professional growth.

The study explored the roles and perspectives of secondary school principals in the development of PLCs in the Philippines. It is an underlying assumption that principals' understanding of their roles in the implementation of teacher professional development policies in schools is central to the formation of PLCs. This raised two important questions that principals needed to contemplate: How did they view and implement national policies on teacher professional development in the school level? And, how did they perceive and establish PLCs in their schools?

The study utilised a qualitative research methodology based on an interpretive paradigm. Through the use of semi-structured interviews alongside policy analysis, three main themes emerged: lack of continuing teacher professional development programmes in the Philippines; varying views of principals in the development of PLCs in schools; and, effective leadership styles as key to support continuing professional development of teachers. The lack of continuing teacher professional development programmes suggests that principals in the study failed to establish PLCs in their schools. This offers some important insights on the leadership experiences of principals in the implementation of national policies on professional development and how it affects their roles in supporting teachers'

continuing professional development. The study also reinforces theories around strong influence of school leadership in the formation of PLCs, particularly in developing countries such as the Philippines. This is an important issue for future work, as top-down leadership continuously predominates in school organisations in the Philippines. Further work is recommended to investigate the implications of this for the confidence level of principals in their leadership in the context of secondary schools in the Philippines.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1   The backdrop of the education system in the Philippines

The Philippines is going through massive transformation in its education system, from drastically changing the basic education curriculum, mass hiring of teachers and principals in the public schools, building of thousands of classrooms and to establishing more schools. These changes are part of the government's commitment to expand the access of the public to quality education. Despite this intent to increase the quality of education, it has been observed that less attention is drawn to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Many different educational reforms have been introduced, but most of them were focused on organisational changes, rather than looking closely at the problem behind the poor performance of many schools.

More than ten years ago, the Philippines had one of the best performing education systems in the South East Asia. In 1998, a study conducted by the Graduate School of International Development of Nagoya University, Japan, showed that the literacy rate in the Philippines was quite high compared to other Asian countries (Toyooka, Kim, Tsuchiya, Ogura, & Kondo, 2000). In fact, the enrolment rate at the primary and secondary level of education was at 99.9% and 77.8 % respectively, ratings which were higher than Singapore's and the rest of the ASEAN countries (Toyooka et al., 2000). Almost ten years after the Nagoya University study was conducted, the quality of education in the Philippines deteriorated. The Australian Educational Researcher Journal reported in 2007 that the Philippines was lagging behind other countries when it came to basic education (Orleans, 2007). "The Philippines ranked almost at the bottom of the list of seventeen (17) nations that took part in [this] large-scale evaluation of educational achievement" (Orleans, 2007, p. 33). The reason behind this poor student achievement, as Orleans (2007) argues, is accounted for by factors outside and inside the classroom. When it comes to factors inside the classroom, he points out that teacher quality most affects student performance.

Improving teaching quality has always been one of the major challenges of the Philippine education system. Although efforts such as providing sufficient

school infrastructure such as buildings and classrooms has been made in order to achieve quality education (Department of Education, 2014), the availability of resources to help teachers improve their performance is still considered poor. As a result, the Enhance Basic Education Act of 2013, commonly known as the K to 12 Law, has been implemented in the hope of creating massive school reform. This reform included a drastic shift in the basic education curriculum, vast organisational change, and massive hiring of teachers, among others. And in order to aid teachers through the transition in the curriculum, they were provided with various workshops and training. The downside of this training, however, was that teachers were only given one week to digest their learning. A week after that, they were sent back to their schools to don a new role. Hence, teachers were experiencing enormous pressure in meeting the new expectations of their roles.

1.2   The Philippine education system today

The K to 12 Law has brought about substantial reforms in the Philippine education system today. For decades, the Philippines has been the "last country in Asia and one of only three countries worldwide with a 10-year pre-university cycle (Angola and Djibouti are the other two)" ("K to 12 General Information | Department of Education," n.d., n.p.). This was changed in 2013, when the government approved into law the Republic Act No. 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. This law required the country's education system to comprise the following:

> At least one (1) year of kindergarten education, six (6) years of elementary education, and six (6) years of secondary education, in that sequence. Secondary education includes four (4) years of junior high school and two (2) years of senior high school education. (Aquino, 2013, p. 1)

Besides increasing the number of years in the basic education sector, the Department of Education also formulated a new curriculum design which aimed to enhance the global competitiveness of the Filipino graduates. Beginning from the kindergarten and the first three years of the primary education, the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) will be used. This means that instructional materials and the mode of teaching will be localised. Teachers will be using the mother-tongue or the language first learned by the child as the medium of instruction. Many researchers, especially language experts, argue that the MTB-

MLE is an effective way to help children transition their learning from Filipino to English, as their cognitive and reasoning skills are developed when they learn how to operate equally in different languages (Renomeron, 2014). In addition, they also find this effective in restoring and preserving the country's native language. Difficulties arise, however, when some of the early childhood education teachers are not familiar with the children's native language, and the books used for instruction are not in the children's mother tongue. Currently, the MTB-MLE instructional materials are printed in only twelve languages, as they are the only languages recognised by the Department of Education. This is another drawback of this programme, given the Philippines is home to a total of 182 native spoken languages (Collin, 2010).

Furthermore, the secondary education sector faces an equally challenging transition into the implementation of the new curriculum. Increasing to two more years in high school translates to an increased number of enrolments which requires more schools, more classrooms, more teachers, and more school leaders. In order to respond to this challenge, the Department of Education constructed more classrooms, hired more teachers, and invested a billion pesos more of the budget in the basic education sector (Department of Education, 2015). In addition, every school's human resource was also improved by providing relevant content and pedagogy training to teachers and leadership skills enhancement for principals.

1.3 Statement of the issue

The Philippines is currently undergoing a massive transition in its education system as it commits to transforming Filipino children into globally-competitive lifelong learners. The provision in the law to provide teachers and school leaders with the relevant and necessary training to help them deliver the expectations of the curriculum shows that the government understands their critical role in its success. While principals have indirect influence on students' achievement, they have a crucial responsibility in helping teachers effectively perform in their roles. As Morrison and Cooper (2008) suggest, principals "exercise significant positional power and influence" (p. 106) in helping teachers make lifelong commitment in improving their practice.

The state mandates all educators to participate in the in-service training and workshops for their professional development. However, these are traditional

approaches, which have received many criticisms from educational researchers, as they tend to become costly, fragmented, brief, inconsistent, and disconnected from actual classroom practices (Chalmers & Keown, 2006; Schlager & Fusco, 2003; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). In my experience as a secondary school teacher in a public school, for example, most of our professional development activities required attendance outside the school. This entailed budget for my transportation and accommodation, which are rarely subsidised by the school. Additionally, these professional activities are, most of the time, in the forms of direct instruction of theoretical insights through seminars and workshops. As teachers, we are left with the responsibility of translating these theories into practice. As a result, teachers who have difficulty in translating new learning into their practice tend to go back to their old ways.

There has been an increasing interest in professional learning community (PLC) as an effective approach for teachers' professional development. Unlike training, workshops, conferences and other means for teachers' professional growth, many researchers claim that PLC creates conditions in schools that help teachers learn and grow professionally (DuFour, 2012; Roberts & Pruitt, 2009; Sergiovanni, 2009). These conditions are creating a culture of collaboration, shared leadership, shared vision, and collective learning, among others.

In light of this, this research aimed to gather and explore the possibilities of the development of PLCs in the Philippines by looking through the views and perspectives of secondary school principals. In order to unravel these views and perspectives, this research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are secondary school principals' perspectives about existing policies for teacher professional development in Philippine public schools?

2. How do secondary principals implement these policies in their schools to support the professional development of teachers?

3. How do principals view professional learning community (PLC) as an approach to support teachers' professional development?

4. Have the secondary school principals established PLCs in their schools to facilitate teachers' professional development?

5. If yes, what are specific steps secondary school principals have undertaken in facilitating PLCs? If no, what are the constraints and affordances they perceive in developing PLCs in their schools?

1.4   The researcher's interest in the issue

It is my experience of working as a public secondary school teacher that has driven this research. I started working as a public-school teacher in 2013. This was the year when the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 was passed into law and was approved for immediate implementation. I was one of the newly hired teachers who was 'sent into the battlefield' without wearing appropriate battle gear. In my pre-service teacher education, I was trained to teach like I was the expert inside the classroom. When I had my first day of service in school, I had to take an entirely different role—a coach, a student-learning facilitator. And I admit, I struggled. However unprepared, I did my best to perform my new role.

The first year of the implementation of the new curriculum in 2013 created clamour and chaos among teachers. We felt helpless. Although we were provided with a week-long training session to learn the basics of the new curriculum, it was just not enough. We were required to teach the new curriculum without initially being provided with the resources we needed such as books, teacher's manuals, and other instructional materials. We had to follow lessons that were only given to us through our flash drives. Those who were generous enough to lend their personal computers and printers were able to print out those manuals and share them with their fellow teachers. Worse, it was even more devastating for our students. They did not have books to use. They had to rely upon their teacher's resourcefulness and creativity in making sure that despite the lack of books, they were still able to learn. It was just frustrating.

It is now my fourth year in the teaching service and it is also the fourth year since the implementation of the new curriculum. The Department of Education is able to fulfil its promise in building the learning infrastructures needed, especially the additional schools required in the senior high school. It is also catching up on its backlogs of instructional materials such as books and teacher's manuals. While teachers have also finally found ways to get around in doing their job, I understand that those moments of discomfort I experienced upon my entry to the teaching profession are normal in an organisation going through a transition. However, I believe it could have been mitigated had there been an existing learning community within the school that served as a support system for teachers during those difficult

times, hence the beginning of my passion to explore the possibilities of developing PLCs in the Philippine public secondary schools.

1.5   Significance of the study

The study aims to contribute in the growing area of research exploring the concept of professional learning communities as an approach to teachers' professional development in schools. Specifically, this may help secondary school principals view professional development from a different angle. It is the intention of the study to open their eyes to seeing new and exciting opportunities to help their teachers grow and develop professionally.

In addition, the findings of the study could make an important contribution to the policy makers for training and professional development of teachers in the Philippines. It is for the reason that to date, there has been a paucity of current research literature that explores the views of principals in the development of PLCs in the country. The study is the first of its kind, as previously published studies on teacher professional development have not tackled PLCs using the context of the Philippines. Furthermore, this research will be beneficial for teachers, as the development of PLCs in schools would entail having a staunch support system for them. The very presence of PLCs in schools will make teachers feel valued, appreciated, and supported as they strive to effectively improve the quality of learning in their classrooms.

Finally, and most importantly, the study may indirectly benefit students, as it aims to help improve the conditions of teaching through the formation of PLCs at school level. It is understood that when teachers feel valued and supported in their work place, they are more likely to be motivated to better perform their roles.

1.6   The context of the study

The Philippines is an island country located in the South East Asian region. It is an archipelago that consists of 7,107 islands. This archipelago is divided into three major island groups, which are Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The country's capital city is Manila, which is located in the central part of Luzon (see Figure 1 on following page). Besides the three major island groups, there are also many smaller islands that have their unique characteristics, languages, religion, and culture. The Philippines is a tropical country, which means it only has two seasons—wet or dry.

The dry season is from January to May, while wet season is from June to December. During the wet season, the winter monsoon triggers monsoon rains that normally carry strong winds and higher sea levels. The Philippines sits inside the typhoon belt; hence it suffers annual onslaught of heavy and dangerous storms from the months of July through December. It is not uncommon for public schools to suspend classes for a couple of days or weeks depending on the expanse of the typhoons' devastation. These natural calamities and disasters are threats to the people's well-being, as it derails socioeconomic progress and requires complex recovery interventions (Frankenberg, Sikoki, Sumantri, Suriastini, & Thomas, 2013). For example, in November 2013, the Eastern Visayas region was badly hit by typhoon Haiyan. Haiyan was one of the strongest typhoons ever recorded to hit land (Lum & Margesson, 2014). It damaged 2500 public schools and destroyed 12, 400 classrooms ("Two years after Typhoon Haiyan, the school rebuilding goes on," 2015).

In particular, this research takes place in Masbate, the southernmost island province in Luzon. Masbate is administratively part of the Bicol region. However, because of its proximity to Visayas (the second major group of islands in the Philippines), Masbate shares common biogeographic and sociolinguistic features with the people of Visayas. Similar to other islands in the rest of the country, Masbate's topography ranges from hilly to mountainous in the upland areas, with narrow coastal plains in the lowland areas. These topographical features strongly impact on the delivery of essential educational services to the people (Aruhu, 2010; Bosamata, 2011).

Masbate comprises 20 municipalities and one city. These twenty municipalities have 565 public elementary schools and 115 public secondary schools as of 2016 (DepEd Masbate Province, 2016). All of these schools in these municipalities are under the authority of the Masbate province division. On the other hand, the city division of Masbate has 34 public elementary schools and 8 public secondary schools (DepEd Masbate City, 2016). In the figure on the next page, the map of the Philippines shows the location of Masbate and the country's three major groups of islands.

Figure 1: The map of the Philippines

1.7   The thesis structure

The overall structure of this thesis takes the form of six chapters, including the introduction, review of literature, methodologies, presentation of findings, discussion of findings, and the conclusion of the research. The introduction gives a brief background of the issue, the reasons that triggered its inception, and the context of the study. The second chapter is a literature review that outlines the key ideas and theories relevant to the issue. This chapter also provides a critical stance on what is already known about the study. The third chapter is concerned with the design and methodology applied in the investigation. It also reviews the ethical considerations relevant to the research process. The fourth chapter presents findings of the research, focusing on the key themes that emerged in the analysis. This section also highlights and comments on these themes. A discussion of these themes

is then provided in Chapter 5. It is in this chapter where both sides of the issue are considered and its implications are examined. The sixth and final chapter provides a summary of the research findings, including the limitations and recommendations to support further studies.

Chapter Two
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

Theories around principal leadership and its effect on student performance and teacher professional development abound in the educational leadership literature. While there are a wide variety of discussions going on in this area, this chapter focuses on three major themes: principal leadership, professional development, and professional learning communities. This review of literature aims to provide a comprehensive background for understanding current knowledge about these themes, and how they interact to play an important role in successful student learning. This chapter begins with an explanation of how the principal's role is depicted through the history of schools—from being a school manager to being a school leader. In this chapter, it is also emphasised that as a leader, the principal's role in improving the quality of instruction in schools is strongly related to building the capacity of teachers.

Another focus of this literature review is teachers' professional development. The many different views of education scholars on what effective professional development truly means will be explored. By exploring these concepts, this literature review presents a critical stance on the role of principals in facilitating effective teacher professional development. Additionally, in another part of this section, a number of unique approaches to professional development of teachers in countries such as South Africa and the Philippines are cited. The final part of this section covers the relevance of professional development to educational reform. In this review, the position is taken that professional development is one useful means for introducing educational reform in schools; hence, the literature reviewed is reflective of that. The third and final part of this chapter moves on to a discussion of professional learning communities. This section aims to unpack theoretical arguments surrounding professional learning communities by explaining the purpose and the key characteristics of this concept. Lastly, this section also provides current knowledge on the existence of professional learning communities in the Philippines.

2.2   The portrait of the principal

The role of the principal has changed significantly through time. In the past, principals were described as school managers, whose roles were limited to maintaining the status quo and keeping the school organised (Ediger, 2014; Elisha, 2012; Fullan, 2005). In a report published by the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (2006), the principal is described as one who runs an institution that resembles a well-oiled machine. The principal is not expected to transform the school and facilitate deep cultural shifts; rather, he or she is considered successful "if he could maintain the status quo and perpetuate the norms and traditions that have been in existence for generations" (Humada-Ludeke, 2013, p. 16).

As societies change, the expectations of schools also change. Hargreaves and Fink (2004) point out that schools in the past fundamentally served a different purpose than the schools that we have in the 21st century. From being gatekeepers of the long-standing norms of the schools, principals are now expected to challenge these norms if deemed ineffective. In the first part of the 21st century, growing research evidence shows that the role of the principal meaningfully influences the performance of schools, hence no longer simply managing schools; they have to lead to become successful (Elisha, 2012; Gupton, 2010). This reveals a shift in the portrait of the principal from taking a managerial position to a leadership position.

The leadership orientation of the principal's role has nevertheless been interpreted in different ways. In the leadership literature, the principal takes on different roles according to the principal's influence, values, and vision (Bush, 2011). Early leadership literature represents effective principals as transformational leaders whose influence motivates their followers to do more than what they are expected and, sometimes, even more than what they think they are capable of (Bass, 1998). While it inspires high levels of commitment from the members (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999) it is alleged to create 'despotic' leaders because of the strong, heroic, and charismatic characteristics transformational leaders possess (Allix, 2000). In contrast to this model, transactional leadership portrays principals as leaders who drive commitment from their teachers in exchange of resources in the form of key rewards and references (Bush, 2011). Consequently, Bass (1998) points out that there are principals who use both of these models as "consistent honouring of transactional agreements build trust, dependability, and perceptions

of consistency with leaders by followers, which are each a basis for transformational leadership" (p. 11).

In addition, core values drive the work of principals into the ranks of real leadership (Gupton, 2010). This real leadership means focusing "on the moral purpose of education and on the behaviours to be expected of the leaders operating within the moral domain" (Bush, 2011, p. 186). This values and moral-laden leadership is the foundation of several other leadership models such as ethical leadership (Branson, 2007; Staratt, 2005; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007), authentic leadership (Begley, 2007), and moral leadership (Bush, 2011). On the other hand, leadership scholars argue that leadership in schools should no longer reside within the four walls of the principal's office (Bush, 2011; Spillane, 2006). Gupton (2010) defines this as the distributed leadership model. In this model, the emphasis is on leadership that is shared rather than top-down and hierarchical (Gupton, 2010). Sharing of leadership, as Spillane (2006) argues, involves principals sharing their leadership responsibilities with fellow teachers such as mentoring their peers and helping each other grow in the teaching practice.

The abovementioned leadership models portray principals as leaders who are not only capable of influencing teachers but are essentially leaders who understand their purpose and who acknowledge that leadership in schools is not theirs alone to hold. As Elisha (2012) points out, having this understanding of their purpose is crucial for principals if they are to function effectively in their roles.

2.3   The function and purpose of the principal

In the previous section, it has been mentioned that schools in the past have principals whose main function is managing the school organisation. As the lead figure of the school, the principal is expected to create a conducive workplace for teachers (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007) and provide the best learning experiences for the students (Ediger, 2014). This places more emphasis on what principals are supposed to accomplish as the means of defining their roles (Sergiovanni, 2009). This critical shift to an outcomes-based approach on defining the role of principals tends to overlook the specific processes and functions that principals need to do to perform their job. While leadership provides a salient picture of what schools should look like, Gupton (2010) argues that it is vital to remember that, "sound management [of schools] continues to be a major

part of effective leadership" (p. 15). This means that for principals to lead effectively, they must also possess management skills.

2.4   The principal as a manager

For schools to work well, Sergiovanni (2009) argues that principals should focus on planning, organising, leading and controlling the school. To further this, he explains that the principal as a manager should set goals and objectives for the school and create strategies in implementing them. He adds that as a manager, the principal must possess organising skills in order to bring together the resources of the school in the accomplishment of set goals. It is also part of the managerial responsibility of the principal to be able to lead his or her colleagues by motivating, guiding, and supervising them as they achieve collective goals. Lastly, Sergiovanni (2009) also emphasised that as a manager, the principal should also know how to control the organisation by ensuring that everyone adheres to the standards of the school.

This framework of the principal's managerial function is supported by Law and Glover (2000). They propose that in planning, the principal formulates school policies, which are implemented through organising and coordinating; while controlling means sustaining these school policies. These processes and functions that take place within the school context, however, are focused on the organisation rather than the individual. If the school organisation is to be fully successful, it is highly necessary that the individuals are valued, because they become more effective members if they appreciate their own skills, talents, and their unique contribution to the organisation (Pedler, Burgoyne, & Boydell, 1996). It is necessary that the principal as a leader knows the team, their skills, talents, and their development needs. "A leader is to the team as a shepherd is to the sheep. Like a shepherd, a leader knows the team, protects it, guides it, and steers it toward the vision" (Webster-Smith, Albritton, & Kohler-Evans, 2012, p. 3). To steer the team towards the vision is a function that only a true leader would understand. It is therefore necessary that a principal understands what it is to be a leader.

2.5   The principal as a leader

Theories of principal leadership abound in the education literature. Some of these theories that have been influential in guiding principals in their jobs were

mentioned earlier. The job of the principal, as argued by Sergiovanni (2006), "is to transform the school from being an ordinary organisation concerned with technical functions in pursuit of objective outcomes into an institution" (p. 3). He explains that while organisations define their effectiveness and efficiency by 'doing things right', institutions celebrate effectiveness and efficiency by 'doing the right things'. This means that principals lead schools in moving beyond achieving tasks at hand into a structure that embodies purposes in everything that it does. The principal, therefore, needs to take on a new leadership role that is focused on serving the purpose of schools.

A striking argument about the purpose of schools is raised by Schwahn and Spady (1998). They argued that leadership in schools does not exist if the organisation does not have a purpose, or if there is any and that purpose is not compelling, then why would anyone follow it? This raises two important questions worth contemplating, being what is the purpose of school and whom is the school for? Interestingly, Barth (2001) provides an answer to this. He argued, "schools exist to promote learning in all their inhabitants" (p. 12). In other words, the purpose of school is to promote learning not only of the students but of all its inhabitants including the teachers and the entire school staff. The school therefore exists so that everyone who is involved in the learning of students is also able to promote learning among themselves.

Many research findings suggest that improving student learning depends on the strong leadership that exists in schools. School leadership through interactions with teachers accounts for one quarter to one third of the total school effect on student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). While there have been ongoing educational debates on the direct link between leadership and student achievement (Militello, Rallis, & Goldring, 2009), it is not unknown that principals hold a critical position in creating the conditions and capacities for effective teaching and learning to take place (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011). Gupton (2010) illustrates that effective principals' behaviour patterns yield to student success. She enumerates that:

> Principals provide instructional leadership and nurture it in others. Principals shape the school culture and climate. They also manage and administer complex organisational processes. They build and maintain positive relations with parents and

community. Lastly, they lead and support school improvement
and change. (Gupton, 2010, p. 15)

Therefore, instructional leadership translates to the relationship built by the principals inside and outside of the school organisation. It is about encouraging and supporting harmonious relationships to build a positive school culture. The principal's role as a leader of learning is frequently mentioned in the educational leadership literature. The next section will be devoted to exploring the function of the principal as an instructional leader.

2.5.1 Instructional leadership

The hectic nature of principals' routine day makes it easy for them to get swept up in the constant momentum of a school's constant stream of interruptions (Fullan, 2005); it is, therefore, an absolute necessity that they set priorities in serving the ultimate purpose of schools. Sergiovanni (2009) argues that whatever principals do, they "must be instructional leaders who are directly involved in the teaching and learning life of the school" (p. 269). The same line of thought is shared by Daresh and Playko (1995), as they point out that principals taking the roles of instructional leaders have direct or indirect behaviours significantly affecting teacher instruction that results in students learning. If principals taking the role of an instructional leader affect (either directly or indirectly) teachers' performance, then what should they do to help teachers improve their teaching practice? The answer to this question is found in one of Sergiovanni's (2009) leadership books, as he argues that it depends on how the principals view good teaching. The principal's understanding of good teaching shapes his or her decisions on how learning environments should be developed, what the relevant curriculum would be, and, among others, how the school organisation should be organised (Sergiovanni, 2009).

The principals' understanding about good teaching is necessary for them to bridge the gap between how they want teachers to teach and how they are going to provide the resources for them to teach that way. Gaining such understanding requires knowledge and skills for them to develop learning environments that are relevant in addressing the professional needs of their teachers. In order to gain such knowledge and skills, Graham (2010) urges principals to be involved in continuous professional learning; just as they require teachers to be effective, they must also

be effective in their roles. Similarly, Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) point out that as instructional leaders, principals are expected to be a resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and have a visible presence. Being a resource provider, principals should ensure that learning materials and infrastructures are readily available for teachers, to allow them to adequately perform their duties. As an instructional resource, it is also a duty of the principal to support and supervise daily instructional activities and programmes in the school. Marzano et al. (2005) emphasise that this duty is effectively executed when the principal role models the behaviours he or she desires to see from the teachers, such as "participating in in-service training and consistently giving priority to instructional concerns" (p. 18). In addition, the principal must also be an effective communicator by setting clear goals and articulating these goals to faculty and staff. Lastly, Marzano et al. (2009) describe as important *visible presence,* as principals frequently engage in classroom observation and should be highly accessible to faculty and staff by being transparent and approachable most of the time.

In a nutshell, instructional leadership is crucial, as it provides structure and support within the school to create a conducive learning environment not only for students but for teachers as well. In so doing, the principal is not only promoting a professional learning environment but, more importantly, he or she is at the same time building the capacity of teachers.

2.6   The principal in building the capacity of teachers

It is argued that building the capacity of the school is a central responsibility of principals in order to foster conditions in schools that support effective teaching and learning. School capacity means all teaching staff have the knowledge, skills and disposition of a professional teacher who is at the same time competent in the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, classroom management, and possesses high expectations for student achievement (Youngs & King, 2002). In order to achieve this collective power of the entire teaching faculty, principal leadership, technical resources, programme coherence, and professional community should hold a strong presence in the school, hence, leading to instructional quality and student achievement. In the figure on the next page, Youngs and King (2002) outline this relationship of school capacity and student achievement.
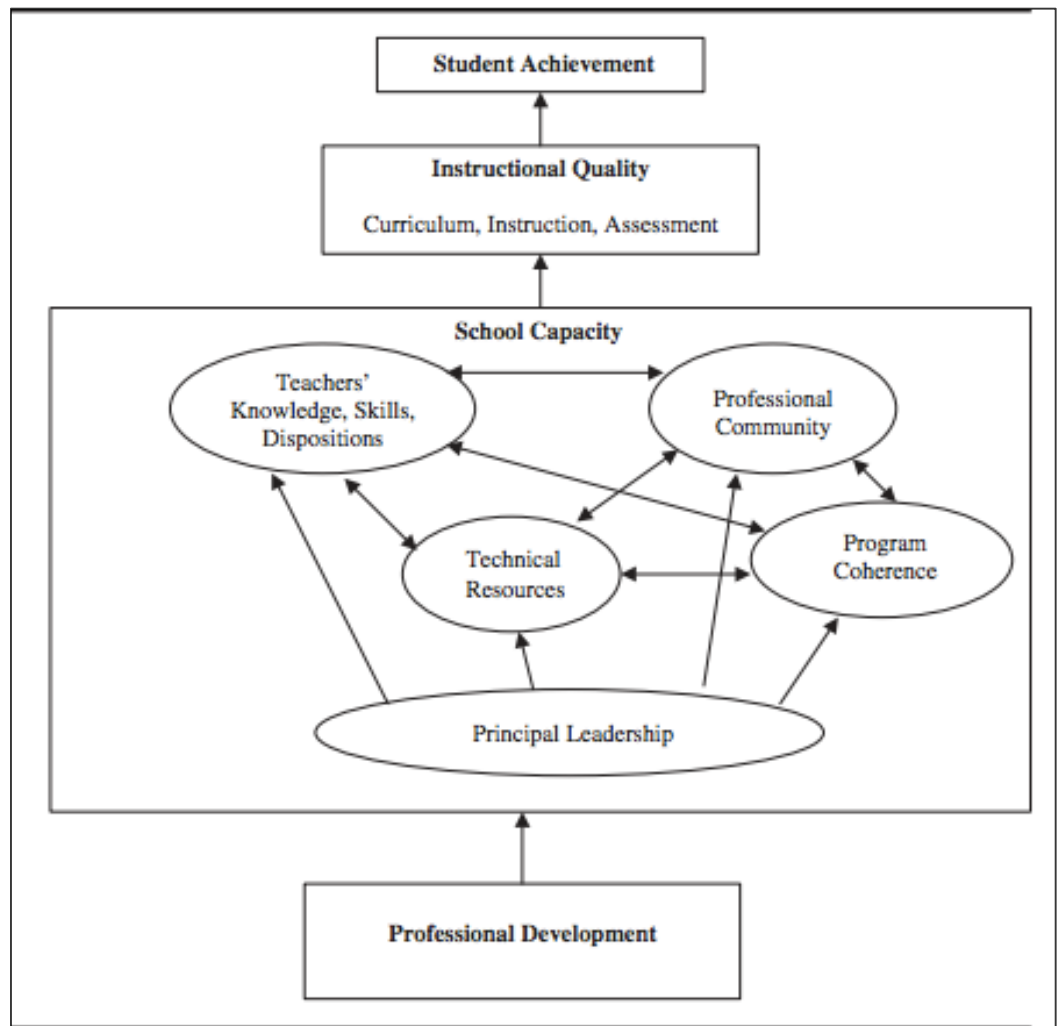
Figure 2: School capacity, instructional quality, and student achievement

The figure above shows that professional development is the founding element in building school capacity. It begins with providing professional development to principals to become effective leaders. An effective principal prioritises providing technical resources, ensuring program coherence, enables professional communities and ensures teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions are well calibrated. All of these lead to instructional quality in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, therefore raising the bar for student achievement. Likewise, Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (2011) emphasise that the development of teacher capacity is the most important school improvement effort. Along with this line of thought, professional development for teachers is seen as a strategy to increase individual competence of teachers, eventually, improving school capacity (Munck & McConnell, 2009). Therefore, having a theoretical understanding of the definition of teachers' professional development is essential.

Having explained the significant role of professional development in building school capacity, the following section will explore various definitions of professional development, what effective professional development really is, and the role of the principal in facilitating effective teacher professional development, among others.

2.7   Professional development

While professional development (PD) is a broad term that encompasses many definitions, the usage of this term in this section is referred to as the professional development of teachers. Not only is teacher professional development defined in this section but it also explores the characteristics of an effective PD. This section also moves on with the explanation of various PDs available for teachers in developing countries. Lastly, it tackles professional development and how it is relevant to educational reform.

2.7.1   Definition of teacher professional development

A succinct definition of professional development is provided by Wei, Darling-Hammond and Adamson (2010). They explain: "professional development is a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement" (p. 16). When teachers experience comprehensive, sustained, and intensive professional development, positive changes occur in their behaviour and in their attitude towards their teaching practice (Kedzior, 2004). Darling-Hammond (1996) agrees to this by citing, "teachers who have access to teacher networks, enriched professional roles, and collegial work feel more positive about staying in the profession" (p. 9).

In addition, professional development is the "sum total of formal and informal learning experiences throughout one's career" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 326). In other words, in a teacher's lifetime journey in the teaching profession, professional development takes on a variety of shapes, such that it can be "collective or individual development, continuing education, pre-service and in-service education, group work, team curriculum development, peer collaboration, and peer support" (Vrasidas & Glass, 2004, p. 2). In addition, these learning experiences for teacher professional development may as short as a single course

or as long as a semester-long academic course, depending on what professional development providers offer to teachers (Buysse, Winton, & Rous, 2009).

On one hand, Avalos (2011) offers a specific definition of professional development by concluding that it is mainly about teachers' professional learning, how they learn to learn, and how they transform their learning into practice for the benefit of their students. Grimmett (2014), on the other hand, challenges this line of thought, as she differentiates professional learning from professional development. According to her, professional learning does not necessarily mean professional development unless the latter leads to sustained changes in teaching practices and in the way teachers participate and contribute to the development of their colleagues. Despite this argument, it is evident that Avalos (2011) and Grimmet (2014) share a common stance that professional learning is considered useful for teachers' professional development when learning consistently manifests in teachers' professional practice, as shown in their relationship with their students and with their colleagues.

While there is a large body of literature that tackles the concept of professional development for teachers in schools, Buysse, Winton and Rous (2009) argue that "there is no agreed-upon definition or shared understanding of the term professional development in education or related fields" (p. 235). In the context of early childhood education, for example, they explain that the absence of a concrete definition of professional development is attributed to the "lack of a common vision for the most effective ways of organising and implementing professional development to improve the quality of early childhood workforce" (p. 235). The lack of common understanding of effective professional development is not the only challenge of our schools today. Rhoton and Stiles (2002) point out that teacher professional development in present schools is not designed to develop the expertise of teachers that is required and relevant for improving student learning. It is, therefore, useful for schools to look into the characteristics that truly define effective professional development.

2.7.2 Effective teacher professional development

There is no "one size fits all" approach to effective professional development for teachers (Kedzior, 2004). As teachers are diverse, so are their learning needs (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). Timperly et al. (2007)

cite the example of a newly inducted teacher who is fresh from pre-service training who will definitely have different learning needs than those of a teacher who has been in the teaching profession for many years. Researchers recommend that for professional development to be effective, it must be designed, delivered, and evaluated in ways that it meets the needs of specific teachers in their specific contexts (Bredeson, 2000; Guskey, 2002).

Furthermore, Vrasidas and Glass (2004) argue that teachers tend to teach as they were taught. This means that their experiences as learners are "indelibly etched in their minds and shape their daily teaching" (Vrasidas & Glass, 2004, p. 3). Effective professional development provides teachers the opportunity to think and learn critically as they make instructional decisions, as they structure students' learning activities, and as they employ pedagogical strategies inside their classrooms. Harwell (2003) also emphasises the relevance of learning opportunities in the contexts within which they will be used, because only when teachers make meaning of their learning experiences will professional development become effective. Consequently, Kedzior (2004) argues that effective teacher professional development should be content-focused, extended and ongoing, collaborative, coherent and integrated, inquiry-based, teacher-driven, informed by student performance, and include self-evaluation. She explains that content-focused teacher professional development must have a subject matter that caters to the learning needs of the students. She also points out that teacher professional development must be extended and ongoing, rather than one time sessions, so that teachers will be able to make meaning of their experience and develop connections between theory and practice. Additionally, Kedzior (2004) emphasises that teacher learning also happens when teachers engage in active learning. Thus, effective professional development must also be collaborative. Furthermore, as Kedzior (2004) continuously argues, effective professional development must promote inquiry and reflection, where teachers are able to self-evaluate and self-identify the aspects in their practice that need improvement. And most importantly, all of these efforts for teacher professional development must be informed by student performance through analyses of the student data. That is to say, any effective teacher professional development must be data-driven. Using the words of DuFour and DuFour (2012), it must always "be hungry for evidence" (p. 4).

These guiding principles of effective teacher professional development, as proposed by Kedzior (2004), may sound ideal. Nevertheless, Bredeson (2000) argues that its successful implementation is only as good as the existing leadership in schools. He points out that the principal is in a unique position to influence the implementation of these guiding principles of effective professional development. The principal should be able to create the conditions of healthy teaching and learning environments, both for the students and the school's staff. The next section will further elaborate this role of the principal, specifically in the professional development of teachers.

2.7.3 Effective teacher PD and the role of the principal

A vast volume of literature focuses on the role of principals in facilitating effective teacher professional development (Bredeson, 2000; Kedzior, 2004). The reason for this is the major understanding that professional development has the potential to contribute to the quality of schooling and that teachers hold the key to students' success. Thus, principals must place high priority on the ongoing professional development of their teachers. Payne and Wolfson (2000) identified five components of the principal's role in teacher professional development. They argue that principals must take on the roles of a role model of continual learning, a leader of learning, a motivator and supporter, a resource provider, and a facilitator of learning. The principal should serve as an example of a lifelong learner who is committed to establishing a culture of ongoing professional development within the organisation. Ongoing learning would mean principals encouraging teachers to participate in professional development activities together (Payne & Wolfson, 2000). An example might be principals continuously updating their teachers in current research and literature to keep them informed of recent trends and issues in education. The principal may then use this base knowledge for discussion and problem solving within the school.

As the leader of a learning organisation, "the principal must establish the expectation that all members should focus on their own professional growth and work cooperatively with others to increase student learning" (Payne & Wolfson, 2000, pp. 16-17). The principal must lead the organisation in identifying the forms of professional development activities that they need to help them achieve the organisation's mission and vision. Together, they use the data of individual and

group assessment of their professional learning needs to inform school improvement plans. In this way, they ensure that every school improvement effort is focused on improving teaching strategies to increase student performance. Moreover, teachers view their principals as motivators, supporters, encouragers, and a source of information for professional development opportunities. For example, the principal shares information about conferences and training that are of interest to their teachers. In this training sessions, the principal encourages their teachers to present their best practices with other professionals. The principal also motivates teachers to share their learning experiences with their colleagues from these training sessions and conferences.

Another role of principals in building school capacity through professional development of teachers is to serve as the resource provider. Being in the position to control and manage the resources of the school, the principal is expected to provide time and financial support in enabling professional development opportunities for teachers. In so doing, the principal serves as the instructional leader who indirectly influences student outcomes by exerting effort in improving the aforementioned school-level variables (Youngs & King, 2002). Additionally, Jones and Harris (2014) contend that the most effective principals are those who realise the significant role they hold in influencing the professional growth of their teachers and thus actively support and promote professional enquiry, learning, and reflection amongst their teachers.

2.7.4 Professional development of teachers in developing countries

Many researchers agree that the dominant approach to professional development of teachers in developing countries is still in traditional forms such as workshops, conferences, seminars, or short courses (Collinson & Ono, 2001; Gallos & Herrington, 1997; Ono & Ferreira, 2010; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Ono and Ferreira (2010) explain that most of the time, this traditional paradigm of professional development is conducted according to its purpose. For instance, teachers are enjoined to participate in professional development activities such as seminars and workshops to get certified, to become upgraded, to prepare them for new roles, to get refreshed in teaching pedagogies, and/or to get new information regarding curriculum-related updates (Ono & Ferreira, 2010).

Despite the popularity of traditional forms of professional development, many are discouraged from participating in these activities due to budget constraints (Leu, 2004). The data in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) conducted in 2013 shows that teachers are more likely to participate in professional development in countries where they receive better financial support for these activities (TALIS, 2013). Moreover, in their study on school-based professional development activities in the Philippines, Gallos and Herrington (1997) discovered that one of the reasons why there is a low participation rate among teachers in the country's professional development programmes is because attending these conferences and workshops is very costly. Teachers are required to go to designated training centres that "require them to travel, which entailed time away from school, and expenses such as transportation costs" (Gallos & Herrington, 1997, p. 184) and sometimes, accommodation expenses.

Besides being costly, the traditional approach of professional development is also criticised for being brief, inconsistent, fragmented, decontextualised and isolated from real classroom practices (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). For years, the professional development of teachers in many developing countries has been viewed as staff development and in-service training, which do not necessarily meet the professional development needs of teachers today. "Much of professional development is deficit-focused, assumes teachers need information from outside experts, and ignores key principles of adult learning by seeing teachers as passive receptors and not as sources of knowledge in their own right" (Lee, 2000; Sandholtz, 2002, as cited in Ferrier-Kerr, Keown, & Hume, 2008, p. 124).

Criticisms of the traditional professional development approach have led many researchers to propose a constructive approach focused on teacher learning (Ono & Ferreira, 2010). "Teacher learning is one approach of professional development" (Zhou, 2012, p. 6) that is unlike the traditional approach; it integrates reflection, inquiry, cooperation, and school-based activities (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). The available literature in teacher professional development in developing countries shows that in South Africa and in Asia, particularly in the Philippines, a unique approach to teacher learning has been developed.

2.7.4.1 Lesson study in South Africa

The lesson study in South Africa started when the country's late president, Nelson Mandela, requested Japan's assistance in helping them rebuild their education system (Ono & Ferreira, 2010). As a response, "the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) conducted studies for project formulation, which led to the official inception of the Mpumalanga Secondary School Initiative (MSSI) in 1999" (Ono & Ferreira, 2010, p. 65). This project went through different phases, with careful observation of the Japanese lesson-study model. The Japanese lesson-study model is an approach to teacher professional development where teachers engage in classroom research in order to improve their teaching practice (Collinson & Ono, 2001). This involves "peer observation, critique, and discussion around specific student learning objectives" (Sargent & Hannum, 2009, p. 259).

The initial implementation of lesson study in the provinces of South Africa appeared promising. However, two years after its implementation, "the National Department of Education barred all workshops during the school term because of poor matriculation results" (Ono & Ferreira, 2010, p. 67). Teachers were only allowed to participate in professional development activities during school holidays. It was only in 2007 that lesson study was allowed to be practised in schools once again. Despite efforts to institutionalise lesson study in South Africa, Ono and Ferreira (2010) cite a number of reasons why the MSSI project, in the formation of lesson study, failed. Firstly, there was no existing national policy that reinforced the implementation of lesson study in South Africa. The absence of a national policy made it harder for principals to establish lesson study at the school level (Ono & Ferreira, 2010). Secondly, Ono and Ferreira continue to argue that even though teachers tried to initiate lesson study among their peers, some of the principals did not support it. Gaining full support from the principal provides strong motivation for teachers in pursuing a learning community among their peers, the absence of which made it impossible to sustain a learning community among themselves. Lastly, in the later years of the lesson study implementation in South Africa, teachers were found to be merely completing the curriculum rather than paying attention to learners' understanding of the content. Ono and Ferreira (2010) argue that when teachers no longer see the value of what they are doing, every

school initiative aimed to improve student learning is doomed to fail. They continue to contend that this is the reason for the downfall of lesson study in South Africa.

2.7.4.2 *School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) in the Philippines*

In support of continuing professional development of teachers in the Philippines, the Department of Education released an order in 2014 for the conducting of in-service training activities of teachers during schools' mid-term break (Department of Education, 2014). The in-service training allows teachers to gather together and perform the functions of a School Learning Action Cell (SLAC). The SLAC functions as an avenue for Filipino teachers to revisit and review areas of concern in performing their duties and responsibilities to become more efficient and effective in the teaching profession ("The Importance of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC)," 2015). Through focused activities in the SLAC, members are made more responsible for their own learning, as the activities are structured to promote self-learning (Merrero, 2003). Moreover, in her study on SLAC programmes in one of the districts in the province of Benguet, Philippines, Merrero (2003) elaborates the specific processes involved in the formation of SLAC. She points out that it has four components: *activity, analysis, abstraction,* and *application*. Merrero (2003) expounds that SLAC must begin with an activity that will serve as the focus for teacher inquiry. *Activity* may include but not be limited to demonstration teaching, peer observation, lesson planning, and other teaching-related activities. Upon completing the *activity*, Merrero (2003) describes that teachers proceed to *analysis,* which is creating a space for them to give and receive feedback regarding the activity that took place. In this space, teachers move to the *abstraction* of their learning derived from the *analysis*. Finally, teachers come up with action plans on how to integrate their learning inside the classroom to increase student achievement (*application*).

One of the most distinct characteristics of SLAC is the open flow of communication between participants. Rey (2000) argues that the success of SLAC sessions is strongly attributed to keeping the communication channels open by giving every member the opportunity to share ideas and accept feedbacks. Through open communication, SLAC participants are given a space to share understandings on the content and pedagogy of teaching. With this space, they are able to help one another in facing challenges brought about by many different school reforms. In

other words, the space that teachers create through SLAC is an effective venue for teacher communication to take place in times of school reform. In her commentary, Lewis (2002) argues that the creation of this space for teachers to communicate is a learning environment in itself that promotes teacher professional development. She further explains that this approach to teacher professional development is an effective vehicle for teachers to address the context, the process, and the content for any organisational reform to succeed.

2.7.5 Professional development and educational reform

As reviewed in the previous sections, professional development is a key vehicle for successful student performance by transforming teaching practice. In line with this thought, Carr, McGee, Jones, McKinley, Bell and Barr (2000) emphasise that professional development does not only bring about teacher transformation, it is also a means to introduce curriculum and pedagogical reforms in schools. For years, numerous professional development programmes have been associated with the implementation of new curriculum, national and school level policies, and new teaching pedagogies, among others. In New Zealand, for example, primary school teachers have been inundated with policies in public health and health promotion and guidelines such as to promote healthy eating and student engagement through physical activities (Burrows, Wright, & McCormack, 2009). These initiatives have been viewed as opportunities for professional development activities that would assist teachers in developing their classroom programmes and pedagogies that will lead to student achievement (Earl & Timperley, 2009).

On the contrary, Petrie and McGee (2012) see the paradox in this, as professional development programmes aim to support teachers in providing "contextually relevant, ongoing needs-based learning opportunities" (p. 60), while these professional development opportunities fail to acknowledge that teachers are also learners themselves who primarily need those learning opportunities. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011) point out that when teachers are involved both as learners and as teachers and they are allowed to struggle with uncertainties accompanying their role, only then can professional development be truly effective. For this reason, educational reform initiatives that involve teachers' professional development are proliferating as policymakers are starting to pay attention to the

quality of teaching as a crucial factor that significantly affects student achievement (Gumus, 2013).

2.7.6 The educational reform policies in developed versus developing countries

Teachers play a key role in the successful implementation of school reform policies, hence they "need to be professionally equipped to meet the challenges associated with those policies" (Steyn, 2013, p. 278). For example, Pedder, Opfer, McCormick and Storey (2010) note that the State of the Nation's policy in 2008 on continuing professional development in England changed its focus, from "a focus on the professional development of individual teachers to a system where schools are supported in their improvement priorities which are targeted at policy implementation and its effective management (p. 367).

Likewise, collaborative learning is identified as the main strategy for professional growth in school systems in the USA (Wei et al., 2010). In fact, a state policy is in place that supports teacher collaboration. In Delaware, a state mandate exists that all schools provide 90 minutes of weekly collaborative time where teachers and principals spend time together to examine their student data and work out strategies to address students' needs (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016). In addition, in the rural Appalachian schools in the Kentucky region, Barrett, Cowen, Toma, and Troske (2015) found out that in order to make teaching an attractive profession in rural communities, policymakers have devised programmes that improve the teaching workforce.

On the contrary, in a developing country such as South Africa, Steyn (2009) reports that the dissatisfaction of teachers with the professional development programmes available for them is a sign of the inappropriateness of these programmes for teachers' needs. Opfer and Pedder (2011) also observe that educational policies in developing countries have often neglected to include continuing professional development of teachers as an integral part of the successful implementation of those educational reform policies. While little research has been done on aspects of school reform policies and professional development, school systems in some Asian regions are changing as they begin to recognise teacher collaboration as an effective means for educational reform. Chan and Pang (2006) identify a number of examples such as:

Educational reform in Hong Kong which has a theme called "Learning to learn"; the Ministry of Education in Japan which has introduced a new curriculum focusing on Integrated Study; and the educational reform in China that is moving from didactic to more constructivist views of learning. (p. 3)

In the Philippines, the capability-building component of the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) adopts numerous frameworks to establish continuum in the professional growth of teachers as they face constant changes in school curriculum. Two of the most dominant teacher professional development frameworks in the country are the National Competency-based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) that was crafted in 2003 and institutionalised through the Commission on Higher Education in 2007 and the Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) that was issued for implementation in 2015. These frameworks serve as a basis for defining effective teaching in the Philippines.

2.7.7 School reform policies in the Philippines

This section reviews the two major professional development policies of teachers in the Philippines, which are the National Competency-based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) and the Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS). These policies were put in effect to promote school reform in the Philippine public schools by improving the teaching practice (Department of Education, 2011). It is important to bear in mind that while literature around school reform policies abound in the Western context, there is an observed paucity of studies available concerning school reform policies in the Philippines. This is especially so for studies concerning the NCBTS and the RPMS. With this lack of available literature, caution must be applied, as the review of these policy documents might only embody general information regarding these policies.

2.7.7.1 *National Competency-based Teacher Standards (NCBTS)*

The National Competency-based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) is a policy document that is designed to provide a set of teaching standards for pre-service and in-service teachers in the Philippines. It argues that teachers may have different interpretations of what effective teaching is. Their understanding of good teaching may differ from what they were taught in their pre-service education to what their principals expect of them in the field. Hence, the NCBTS is in place to serve as a

single framework that will encompass all definitions of effective teaching "in all aspects of a teacher's professional life and in all phases of teacher development" (Department of Education, 2011, p. 3). The NCBTS focuses on what the teacher is competent of doing. These competencies serve as the basis for all professional development activities that teachers will be involved in.

More than being a basis for teachers' professional development, the NCBTS also outlines seven domains that constitute effective teaching. Biong (2013) argues that the seven domains integrated in the NCBTS describe what an ideal professional teacher should be. The Department of Education (2006) enumerates the seven domains as: social regard for learning; learning environment; diversity of learners; curriculum; planning, assessing, and reporting; community linkages; and personal growth and development. Each of these domains represents standards that refer to teachers as the facilitator of learning. In the seventh domain that is teachers' professional growth and development, the NCBTS puts emphasis on personal growth and continuous improvement of teachers. It argues that personal growth and continuous improvement begin when teachers give high regard to the nobility of the teaching profession. Being in a noble profession, it is crucial that every teacher is aware of the need to continuously uphold the "dignity of teaching such as caring attitude, respect and integrity" (Department of Education, 2011, p. 22). The result of having this awareness is the creation of accountability for teachers to continuously improve themselves. The same NCBTS document contends that when teachers become seriously engaged in their own professional growth, they begin creating professional learning communities where they participate in discussions to improve teaching practice.

Since its implementation in 2007, the NCBTS serves as a guide for teachers in adapting to the changes in the Philippine curriculum. For example, the Kindergarten Act signed in 2011 requires kindergarten to be compulsory for all. There was a smooth transition in the basic education sector, as many teachers, including those teaching kindergarten, were already knowledgeable of the needed competencies to effectively handle learners from diverse backgrounds (Department of Education, 2011). As mentioned earlier in the first chapter of this thesis, the Enhanced Basic Education Act was passed into law. This law introduced several reforms in the basic education sector. These reforms included an increase in the number of required years in basic education, from 10 years to 12 years, as well as

the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in teaching different content areas in Grades 1 to 3 (Aquino, 2013). As the NCBTS is currently being reviewed to make it more congruent with the teacher quality requirements of the K to 12 reform, the Department of Education simultaneously introduced the Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) for teachers in 2013. As Nunez (2014) argues, the RPMS helps the strategic, responsive, and effective delivery of services of all levels of the Department of Education so that it can effectively implement the K to 12 strategies in improving the quality of education in the Philippines.

2.7.7.2 *Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS)*

Along with the restructuring of the basic education sector as brought about by the K to 12 reform is the introduction of the new performance management system for teachers, administrators, and the rest of the Department of Education employees. Nunez (2014) argues that the RPMS is a systematic approach in managing the performance of the Department of Education employees to help them continuously grow and consistently improve their performance at work. The objectives of the RPMS include the alignment of individual roles and targets with the department's mission and vision, tracking each individual's performance systematically, providing mentoring opportunities to every employee through feedback, and developing people as a whole ("Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) for DepEd," n.d.). As a tool for people development, the RPMS provides uniformed metrics for every Department of Education employee category. For example, teachers will be evaluated according to their set goals and targets for the academic year as outlined in the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF).

One of the components of the teachers' performance commitments in the IPCRF is staff development. In this component, staff development performance is measured according to the frequency of the training, seminars, and professional development workshops they have attended for the entire academic year (Blanquera, 2014). Staff performance is also measured against the number of attendance at the required division training demonstrations, participation in school teaching demonstrations, the number of units earned in the graduate school, and their membership in professional organisations. An example of this component or key result area and the teachers' objectives is shown in Figure 3 on the next page.

Furthermore, the RPMS is not only a performance appraisal tool in the Department of Education but it is also one of the bases for financial compensation of teachers and other employees of the department ("Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) for DepEd," n.d.). Higher rating in the RPMS also translated into higher performance reward for teachers.

TO BE FILLED DURING PLANNING								
Major Final Outcomes (MFO)	Key Result Area (KRA)	Objectives	Timeline	Weight per KRA	Performance Indicators (Quantity, Quality, Timeliness)	Actual Results	Rating	Score
Compassionate and competent teachers	II. STAFF DEVELOPMENT	Attend trainings, summer institute, seminar and professional meetings.	June – March		Attend the following: - 10 staff Meetings - 10 Faculty meetings - 1 Memorandized Seminar - 2-day SB-InSeT - 3-day Summer Institute			
		Attend required division teaching demonstration Conduct school teaching demonstration (intravisitation)	June – March		Attend 100 % of the required division teaching demonstration Conduct 1 school-level teaching demonstration			
		Earn units in the graduate school	June – May		Earn 6 units in graduate school within the year			
		Participate actively in professional organizations	Year round		Active membership in three (3) professional organizations; proof of activities participated in			

INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE COMMITMENT AND REVIEW FORM FOR **REGULAR TEACHERS**

Figure 3: IPCRF form for regular teachers

As a teacher appraisal tool, the RPMS promotes employee development by engaging teachers in a continuous learning process that enables them to achieve their personal objectives within the context of the business goals ("Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) for DepEd," n.d.). The RPMS document argues that quality performance is achieved in an environment that requires application of what is learned and reinforces measurable outcomes. As part of the school policy reform concerning teachers' performance, the implementation of RPMS is one of the Department of Education's initiatives in its continuous commitment to improving and providing quality education to every Filipino learner (Malipot, 2014). Improved quality of education and increased student performance, as Yap (2015) argues, becomes easily attainable if schools are to become professional learning communities (PLCs). In the next section, PLCs will be given much attention, as it has become a "catchphrase for reforming schools and classroom instructions" (Yap, 2015, p. 535). With the advent of so many school reforms in the Philippines, understanding PLCs may actually be very helpful for teachers.

2.8   Professional Learning Community (PLC)

The concept of the professional learning community (PLC) is drawing great attention from educators around the globe, as recent studies have found it to potentially impact student achievement in a "powerful and positive way" (DuFour & DuFour, 2012, p. 3). In fact, educators use it so ubiquitously that DuFour (2004) fears the term PLC is starting to lose its true meaning. For example, people assume themselves to be working as PLCs when they gather together as a team to complete a task, to meet as a team to share learning based on certain readings (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010), or when they use it as a program to support teaching strategies (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). While working together as a team is inherent to PLCs, these perceptions are insufficient and misleading. More than just being occasional team meetings, book clubs (where members share their learning), or a school program that is simply an addition to the school's existing practices, a PLC is a process that profoundly impacts the structure and the culture of a school (DuFour, 2012).

Many researchers have different ways of defining the meaning of a professional learning community. Humada-Ludeke (2013) defines PLC from an organisational perspective, where it is viewed as a whole-school reform requiring commitment and active participation of each member to improve student learning. While student learning should be the primary focus for PLCs, it should include shared values, shared leadership, shared accountability in the development of curriculum and instruction, and reflective dialogue for it to be effective (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Previous literature, on the one hand, argues that PLC is a context or a working environment. It is a place or a cultural setting where students and adults engage in collaborative learning, where everyone sees themselves as an integral part of an overall welfare, thus encouraging each other (Barth, 2001; Myers & Simpson, 1997). On the other hand, Mullen (2009) explains PLC by unpacking its taxonomy. She argues that "PLC is an integration of two traditionally distinct concepts—professional learning and community. In this model, the professional's expert knowledge and focus on student learning and needs are combined with the community's shared interest, core values, and mutual responsibility" (p. 2). Sergiovanni (2009) agrees with this by contending that in a

learning community, knowledge exists as something that is both individually and community owned. "The two feed on each other" (Sergiovanni, 2009, p. 255).

In a like manner, two broad categories of activities are the bases of Sargent and Hannum (2009) in defining PLCs. They point out that PLCs must essentially begin with teachers regularly interacting about teaching and learning, such as working collaboratively in lesson planning, and joint discussion sessions on teaching, among others. Secondly, as a product of these conversations, teachers must be able to come out with tangible knowledge about teaching such as teacher research and publications (Sargent & Hannum, 2009).

Indeed, PLCs have taken on various definitions from different perspectives. For purposes of this research, PLC is defined based on DuFour and his colleagues' argument that PLC is an "ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recruiting cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve" (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 11). As an ongoing process, educators should commit themselves to the learning of their students by continuously finding ways to enhance their professional practice.

2.8.1 The purpose of PLCs

As argued earlier, the focus on and the commitment to student learning is the very essence of why PLCs exist. According to DuFour and DuFour (2012), the biggest idea that drives PLCs is the schools' fundamental purpose, and that is "to ensure that all students learn at high levels" (p. 4). This fundamental reason why schools exist must also be the fundamental responsibility of the members within it. Each member must have clear understanding of their purpose, as "clarity precedes competence" (Schmoker, 2004, p. 85). Clarifying the organisation's purpose will help the members articulate the steps they need to take to fulfil this purpose and move their organisation in the direction they want to go. This means that members of the school organisation must be guided by a "clear and compelling vision of what the organisation must become in order to help all students learn" (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 11). This vision to help all students learn becomes a compelling reason for teachers in PLCs to engage in conversations around what students need to learn and the pedagogical practices they need to adopt to enhance students' learning (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

In addition, DuFour (2012) points out that besides improving students' learning, another primary purpose of PLCs is to impact teaching. "The PLC process is specifically intended to create the conditions that help educators become more skilful in teaching because great teaching and high levels of learning go hand in hand" (DuFour, 2012, p. 5). It is a universal assumption that when adults strive to be effective in helping students learn, they also help themselves become effective by engaging in a community of continuous learning. When school leaders and teachers work collaboratively to improve their practice, they are also indirectly supporting student learning (Ferrier-Kerr et al., 2009). Hence, they start to manifest the essential characteristics of effective PLCs.

2.8.2 The key characteristics of PLCs

The concept of PLCs on the core mission of schools has confronted traditional assumptions about the role of schools. From being teaching institutions, PLCs exemplifies schools as learning institutions. In order to become learning institutions, DuFour and Eaker (1998) argue that educators must be prepared to embrace new ideas and assumptions about the functions of schools and let go of the traditional model of education that is no longer relevant to the present needs of learners. Schools in the past "continue to focus on procedures rather than results—teaching prescribed curriculum, maintaining class size, using appropriate textbooks… less attention is paid to determine whether or not the learning has actually occurred" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 22). This shift on the school's focus from teaching to learning institutions, however, is not enough. Schools need to change their culture and create a structure "to support learning for everyone" (Erkens & Twadell, 2012, p. 7). Humada-Ludeke (2013) argues that in order to create this structure, schools need to transform into PLCs, as "PLCs are the best hope for reculturing a school" (p. 27).

Many researchers argue that school culture changes when the schools inhibit the key characteristics of what it takes to become PLCs. Hord and Sommers (2008) posit that the most basic attribute of PLCs is the shared beliefs and goals of the members within it. DuFour and Eaker (1998) take the same view that shared understanding of the school's mission and vision create a collective commitment for members to translate what they believe to what they want to create in the organisation. In the PLC, members do not tolerate inaction. Rather, they turn their

aspirations into reality (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Likewise, this collective commitment drives the members of PLCs to work collaboratively in order to achieve their vision. Hargreaves, Hopkins and Leask (2005) suggest that it is by working collaboratively that schools are able to identify successful strategies in order to address these needs.

Creating a culture of collaboration, on the contrary, is much easier said than done. DuFour (2012) argues that despite compelling evidence that "working collaboratively represents best practices" (p. 3), teachers in many schools are still found working in isolation. In order to reduce this isolation, inclusion of teachers in shared leadership roles is necessary to increase their commitment towards common good (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Hord and Sommers (2008) point out that shared leadership is one defining characteristic of PLCs, where "power, authority, and decision making are shared and encouraged" (p. 10). This means that for PLCs to effectively work, members of PLCs should nurture an environment where one can freely contribute and participate in the decision-making of the school. Sharing of power and authority, in contrast, can be problematic (Hord & Sommers, 2008). They argue that "historically, teachers have been acculturated to see the principal as all-powerful, all-wise, and all-competent. It is difficult for teachers to propose new ways of thinking and doing when the principal is viewed in such a way" (p. 11).

The top-down culture of leadership must be continuously challenged if schools are to become PLCs. Challenging the status quo fuels continuous improvement. They do this by participating in respectful dialogues (Mullen, 2009), where teachers share their point of view without fear of rejection or criticism. Teachers must be able to feel that they belong in a space where they are equally valued and respected. Hence, principals must be ready to abide by the decisions initiated by teachers or by committees (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008), even if that decision is opposed to what the principal would have preferred. Importantly, principals need to have "healthy egos" (Hord, 2004, p. 26). Hord (2004) explains that sharing responsibility and credit for decision-making encourages staff to invest further in their school, thus increasing capacity and commitment of the staff.

To ensure strong cohesion within the school through collaboration, Schlechty (2009) argues that a line must be drawn between sharing authority and giving up authority. The organisation must have clear beliefs of the "boundaries

that reserve some decisions for the singular attention of the principal" (Hord & Sommers, 2008, p. 11). The organisation, therefore, must be cautious in determining the parameters within which the staff can make decisions while making sure it is permeable to allow open flow of conversation and interaction among members (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Schlechty, 2009).

Collaborative culture can only truly operate when leadership responsibility is shared (Erkens & Twadell, 2012). However complicated it may be, principals must be able to "move beyond traditional roles to a role that includes actively sharing leadership and encouraging collective learning among teachers (Hord, 2004, p. 31). Shared leadership fuels members of PLCs to not only collaborate but to also learn together. Collective learning is the engine for growth and renewal of PLCs (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The teams in PLCs continuously inquire and reflect on their current reality, "including their present practices and the levels of achievement of their student" (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 12). In their pursuit to seek answers for their questions, members of PLCs develop new skills and build their capacities as they transfer their learning into actions. They open themselves to possibilities that are simply improbable if they are learning independently.

Finally, all these efforts to transform into PLCs must be assessed on the basis of results rather than intentions (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). "The rationale for any strategy for building a learning organisation revolves around the premise that such organisations will produce dramatically improved results" (Senge, 1994, p. 44). Hence, teams in PLCs, as DuFour and DuFour (2012) put it, "must be hungry for evidence of student learning" (p. 4). They must be data-driven and use this data as evidence to drive continuous improvement.

All these key characteristics of PLCs mentioned so far, however, are theories of educational researchers coming from more developed countries. Very little attention has been paid to the impacts of professional learning communities in developing countries.

2.8.3 Professional learning communities (PLCs) in developing countries

The success and sustainability of PLCs, especially in developing countries, can be attributed to different factors such as "institutional features of the educational system, principal leadership characteristics, school socioeconomic factors, and individual teacher characteristics" (Sargent & Hannum, 2009, p. 260).

Institutional characteristics include time and space allotted by the school system for teachers to engage in professional community-building activities (Wang & Paine, 2003). In China, student examination results are a strong driving force in teachers' performance. Sargent and Hannum (2009) argue that:

> The importance of examination results in China raises the question whether examination pressure makes teachers more receptive to drawing on each other's support to foster student learning or whether it generates time pressures that discourage teachers from taking the time to collaborate and interact with each other in professional learning communities. (p. 260)

In addition, Printy (2008) identifies principal leadership as to either facilitate or hinder professional learning communities. She argues that principals can nurture and develop teachers' professional growth by promoting an environment where teachers can engage in conversations around teaching and learning, where they can observe each other's best practices, and share learning experiences. Furthermore, in their study carried out in a number of schools in Syria and Pakistan, Dayoub and Bashiruddin (2012) found out that teachers perform well in schools where they are given opportunities to share learning from their various in-service training and where they get support from school leaders within an enabling work environment.

The ability to establish professional learning communities in the developing countries may also depend on socioeconomic reasons such as financial resources of schools. Sargent and Hannum (2009) argue that "under-resourced schools may not be able to support teachers to attend professional learning activities outside the school, and teacher research may also be hindered if teachers lack easy access to computers and reference materials" (p. 261). In South African schools, low rates of collaborative teaching practice are dependent on the African culture. For example, the legacy of apartheid has severely impacted teaching practices, as proven by poor performance of schools (Steyn, 2013). Steyn (2013) argues that apartheid has led to many African teachers' social inequality and poor content knowledge. Despite research evidence showing teachers' interdependence through collaborative learning, she points out that teachers are still found working in isolation.

Finally, the individual characteristics of teachers are also considered as a factor in the success and sustainability of PLCs in the developing countries. "Individual teachers may have particular characteristics that predispose them to

become more active in participating and initiating activities of professional communities" (Sargent & Hannum, 2009, p. 261). Nelson, Deuel, Slavit and Kennedy (2010) further explain that the willingness of teachers to actively participate in conversations surrounding student learning goals and teaching practices is crucial in the development of PLCs. Teachers working in isolation is also perceived to be the major problem in most schools in Asian countries such as Malaysia and Korea (TALIS, 2013). In the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) conducted in 2013, it is noted that even though there is high participation rate in professional development activities such as workshops and seminars, participation in a network where teachers work collaboratively to mentor and coach each other is significantly low.

2.8.4   Professional learning communities in the Philippines

Workshops and seminars, as a form of professional development, have high participation rates in the Philippines. This is evident in the school professional development programmes where teachers are consistently encouraged, if not required, to participate in the district-initiated workshops, training, and conferences. As mentioned earlier, attendance at these professional development activities is a prerequisite for teachers to comply with the requirements of the RPMS. To date, there is no available literature investigating the influence of such requirement on the performance of teachers in public schools.

Nevertheless, two separate districts are beginning to develop professional learning communities in the urban schools in Metro Manila. The division of city schools in San Juan City and in Mandaluyong City are paving the way and creating infrastructure that would create an environment for PLCs to flourish. For example, in the schools' city division of Mandaluyong, the division superintendent released a memorandum in 2015 for the regional launching of PLCs in their division. Schools within the Mandaluyong City division are now required to organise a PLC technical team that is composed of the superintendent as the overall chairman, the assistant superintendent as the co-chairman, the division supervisors as focal persons, and the rest of the members are composed of the principals, master teachers, and school teachers (Almeda, 2015). In addition, during the regional launching of PLCs, participating schools were required to submit a 3-paragraph press release of PLC best practices, with pictures and a video presentation relating

to PLCs, in order to raise awareness of the advantages of schools transforming into PLCs (Almeda, 2015).

On the other hand, the city division of San Juan City chooses to use the internet as a platform for their PLC initiatives. For instance, a PLC website was created that offers different portals for teachers to engage in online discussions such as wiki-space, webinars, and GoToMeetings (Bautista, 2015). These learning platforms allow teachers to create a space where they can engage in useful conversations to help them perform well in their functions inside and outside of their classrooms. Yap (2015) argues that PLCs are effective social infrastructure to support collective and individual learning of teachers that lead to instructional reforms, instructional reforms that create growing public clamour as people demand better and efficient education (Norwood, 2007). Also, for a developing country that capitalises on the useful knowledge available in the society, the Philippines is indeed on the right track as it begins to develop PLCs in schools.

Collectively, the studies presented in this chapter provide evidence that the principal holds a crucial role in the professional development and learning of teachers. The principal's awareness of this role is critical in the development of professional learning communities in schools, resulting in students' achievement. In order to understand this thoroughly, this review provided various discussions on three themes of serious importance: the principal's leadership, professional development, and professional learning communities. So far, this chapter has focused on highly theoretical assumptions in these areas. It is now necessary to describe the methodology used for this investigation.

Chapter Three
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

This chapter explains the research design and the methodologies involved in employing qualitative modes of inquiry and has been organised in the following way. In the first section, a brief overview of the theoretical framework and the research paradigm will be provided. The next section deals with the illustration of the methods the researcher used to collect the research evidence. It also includes the elaboration of the data generation process such as gaining access to the research site, procedure for selecting participants, and validity and trustworthiness of the data. The remaining section is concerned with the ethical procedures such as gaining access to participants and informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and the social and cultural considerations.

The study will explore the roles and views of secondary school principals in Masbate, an island province of the Philippines. Being a qualitative study, this research is anchored in an interpretive paradigm as the researcher presents and analyses the views of the secondary school principals. The following research questions will be used to ascertain the roles and views of these principals in the development of professional learning communities (PLCs):

1. What are secondary school principals' perspectives about existing policies for teachers' professional development in Philippine public schools?

2. How do secondary school principals implement these policies in their schools to support the professional development of teachers?

3. How do principals view PLCs as an approach to support teachers' professional development?

4. Have the secondary school principals established PLCs in their schools to facilitate teachers' professional development?

5. If yes, what are specific steps secondary school principals have undertaken in facilitating PLCs? If no, what are the constraints and affordances they perceive in developing PLCs in their schools?

It is crucial that the researcher deeply understands the questions above. This is because the first step to knowing how to solve the research problem is

understanding what the problem is and why the researcher has to strive to find solutions for it. By understanding the research problem, the researcher will be able to determine the appropriate research tool to use in the study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) describe this process as finding the appropriate research tool. They argue that finding the appropriate research tool depends on the purpose of the study. There needs to be 'fitness for purpose' in deciding what type of methodology the researcher must use. Conversely, many researchers point out that the methodology and methods used in a study are two different concepts. 'Methodology' is the theory of knowledge that guides the research while 'methods' are the specific procedures that guide the researcher to generate the research evidence (Abady, 2015; Burton, Brundrett, & Jones, 2008). In this chapter, the distinction between these two terminologies will be observed.

3.2 Research paradigm

Researchers have different views of the world. In dealing with research, it is helpful to understand these views. The research paradigm tells us the researcher's way of thinking and how he or she makes meaning of the world. It is how the researcher views the reality. It is asking the question—is there one reality or multiple realities? The research paradigm serves as the roadmap for the research. It tells us how the research should be conducted and what types of conclusions could be drawn (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). While there are many different research paradigms that have been defined in the research literature, the study focuses on the difference between positivist (quantitative) and the interpretive (qualitative) paradigms. The positivist paradigm assumes that human behaviour is essentially rule-governed and should be investigated by the methods of natural science, while the interpretive paradigm is more concerned with understanding the individual and the subjective world they live in (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

This research draws on an interpretive paradigm. It is founded in the researcher's belief that "society does not exist in an objective, observable form; rather, it is experienced subjectively because individuals give it meaning by the way they behave" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 6). People make deliberate choices and these choices are strongly influenced by how they perceive their current realities. The reality is socially constructed (Rowlands, 2005), and while facts about behaviour may be established, those are always context-bound and do not

necessarily apply to everyone and every time (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Therefore, understanding these realities necessitates holistic views and the use of an interpretive paradigm that acknowledges the "intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being explored, and the situational constraints shaping the process" (Rowlands, 2005, p. 81).

3.2.1 The interpretive paradigm

The researcher's theoretical lens depends on what the researcher wants to know in conducting the research. That is, what one wants to know determines how one should go about it (Trauth, 2002). Essentially, the aim of this research is to understand the lived experiences of the principal participants with the current policies on professional development of teachers. Gaining understanding of the principals' lived experiences will help the researcher build theories around the possibilities of the development of PLCs in the schools where these principals work. The association with the principals' lived experiences and understanding in order to shape theories that will guide the research is called the interpretive paradigm. This is how the interpretive paradigm operates: "the researcher works directly with experience and understanding to build theory on them" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 22).

In addition, employing an interpretive paradigm in a research work requires discipline. The researcher must also be patient, honest, courageous, persistent, imaginative, sympathetic, reflective, and have the view of conducting research with people to learn with them and not to conduct research on them (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). This is parallel to what Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012) point out what interpretive researchers must not do, and that is bring their own hypothesis, concepts, or ideas in the field to test them. Rather, they enter the field to understand how these ideas and concepts are used and let the hypothesis itself "emerge from the field" (p. 18). Hence, this necessitates the interpretive researcher to employ a data generation method that allows her or him to become part of the research setting (Burton et al., 2008).

3.2.1.1 *Data generation methods used in an interpretive paradigm*

Many scholars argue that data generation methods such as interviews and observations allow researchers to be in a situation that is as normal as possible.

These research methods enable researchers to become part of the research setting and allow them to create meaningful interactions with participants, hence creating a more natural environment (Abady, 2015; Burton & Bartlett, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The interpretive paradigm is, therefore, appropriate to this research as the researcher employs semi-structured interview as the main data gathering method. In this method, the researcher engages in deep conversations with the participants in order to generate understandings of their views and how these views influence their context. This process also allows the researcher to have a close interaction with the participants and collaborate with them in creating meaningful realities (Abady, 2015).

Accordingly, Burton and Bartlett (2005) argue that the researcher in an interpretive paradigm seeks to unveil the perceptions and understandings of the participants on a certain phenomenon just as they see or experience it. This is suited to the study because as the researcher, unpacking the experiences of the principals with the professional development opportunities they make available for their teachers is a critical element. The researcher in the study is very much interested in how principals view these opportunities, because their perceptions have a direct effect on their interest towards the development of PLCs in their schools. In principle, the interpretive paradigm will guide the researcher as she attempts to access the thoughts and perceptions of the principals towards the issue. In an interpretive paradigm, the researcher is reminded that knowledge is shared and is the product of the interaction between the researcher and the participant (Burton et al., 2008). This means that as the researcher engages in thoughtful conversations with participants, together, they are already creating shared knowledge and shared reality.

In essence, shared experiences may add richness to the data gathered. However, as Abady (2015) argues, there is danger in this as this model "allows researchers to create their own meaning from the collected data" (p. 48). This is especially so if the researcher is not fully acquainted with the context that influences the way the participants perceive things. Hence, the given information can be distorted (Abady, 2015). Nonetheless, Lincoln (1995) argues this can be avoided when the researcher is highly committed to fairness (balance of stakeholder views) and to open and democratic sharing of knowledge. This reflects Burton and Barlett's (2005) recommendation that researchers should be able to provide full

explanations as to how data were gathered and to defend their interpretations by showing on what evidence they base their findings.

3.3 Qualitative research methodology

When one is asked to define research, the usual definition is more often referred to quantitative research (Holliday, 2007). It is therefore understood that many researchers engage in distinguishing quantitative research from qualitative research when they attempt to define the latter. Punch and Oancea (2014) provide a simplified definition of these two terms, as they argue that quantitative research deals with data in the form of numbers while qualitative research deals with data not in the form of numbers but by way of words, images, artefacts, or other things. In recent years, however, many researchers have also ventured to employ mixed methods, which is integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches into a single study (Plowright, 2013). While the mixed method is arguably complex, many researchers also claim that the qualitative method is more complex in its own right.

Essentially, qualitative research deals with the social behaviour of people. This behaviour, however, is not predictable or measurable. People act deliberately and creatively in situations that are fluid and changing. "Events and behaviour evolve over time and are richly affected by context–they are situated events" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 20). Therefore, qualitative research calls for a holistic, empirical, and empathic approach (Conrad & Serlin, 2011), where context and events must be taken into account. This is the reason why researchers across departments in social and behavioural sciences engage in qualitative research. They have to employ multiple, usually interactive methods to capture the complex human behaviour that cannot be reduced into independent factors (Conrad & Serlin, 2011; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). These methods include ethnography or field research, oral history, observation, interviews, review of documents, ethnodrama, narrative inquiry, among others (Cohen et al., 2000; Conrad & Serlin, 2011; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

3.3.1 The stance of a qualitative researcher

Qualitative research requires an empirical approach because it operates in natural settings where the focus is on capturing the context (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Punch (2009) describes this context as 'banal' or commonplace, being that which

reflects the everyday life of individuals, organisations, or societies. Usually, the researcher attempts to become an insider in order to gather data. This makes the researcher the primary instrument to data gathering. The researcher is in direct contact with the people, situations, or phenomena being studied, therefore his or her "personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon" (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017, p. 94). Similarly, the researcher in a qualitative research methodology takes on an empathic stance. It necessitates "openness, sensitivity, awareness, respect, and responsiveness" (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017, p. 94), as the researcher immerses into the research setting. The researcher must be attentive and mindful while engaging with people or situations to avoid missing out vital information. This is especially important in doing interviews in the field, where researchers have to be reflexive. Reflexivity demands the researcher to constantly examine his or her voice or stance that may impact on the research (Atkins & Wallace, 2012).

3.3.2 Reflexivity

Many researchers argue that one of the key features of qualitative research is reflexivity. Reflexivity is the process where qualitative researchers acknowledge and account for their assumptions, social backgrounds, theoretical and political leanings, experiences, and biases that may impact on any aspect of the research (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017; Luttrell, 2010). This is important in qualitative research methodology, because the researcher is the research instrument whose thoughts, experiences, and personal biases may shape the process or the outcome of the research. Being the co-creators of knowledge in the research process, the researchers must engage in ongoing reflection of how much of their own voice is represented in the research and to have a good sense of their positionality in the study they are conducting (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

In the study, reflexivity is given importance because the researcher is using face-to-face interviews with the participants to generate data. Being in direct contact with them, there is a danger of unnecessary confessions or sharing of personal biases or experiences that may influence their own personal views. Hence, it is essential that she keeps a balanced and neutral position between her personal views and the views around her. This is what Lichtman (2011) calls positional reflexivity. Lichtman (2011) argues that positional reflexivity is useful because

continuous critical self-reflection helps the researcher develop effective interview questions.

Reflexivity, however, is not only important for data generation. Theoretically speaking, the researcher must be continuously reflexive throughout the research process: "beginning with what questions to ask; what design to craft, data collection methods to employ, and analyses to conduct; who and what to include/exclude, and at what levels; and how best to represent what one learns" (Luttrell, 2010, p. 4). This means that as a qualitative researcher in the study, the researcher must always take note of her own beliefs and perspectives and will do so by keeping a reflection journal throughout the research process. Watt (2007) suggests that keeping a research journal has many benefits for qualitative researchers. First, it serves as a stimulus for qualitative researchers to reflect on their understanding and positionality in the research process. Secondly, writing down notes when they occur is actually the beginning of the analysis, as it allows researchers to discover ideas in their heads that they never thought to exist (Watt, 2007). Finally, Berger (2015) argues that a reflection journal also serves as the quality control in a qualitative research. As the researcher engages in continuous "internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation" (Berger, 2015, p. 220), the researcher is generating good data which are highly reliable and valid. In the study, the researcher will be keeping a reflection journal not only to record her experiences and reflections throughout the research process but also to document her personal conversations with the principals after the field interview has already taken place.

3.4   The sample

This section presents the research process for the study. In it, the reasons behind the selection of the research context and the participants are explained.

3.4.1   The context

The study will be conducted in five public secondary schools in Masbate, an island province in the Philippines. The first three schools, labelled "School A," "School B" and "School C" are secondary schools within the city division of Masbate. The other two schools labelled "School D" and "School E" are secondary schools within the province division of Masbate. The first three schools belong to the urban school category, because they are located inside the perimeters of the

capital city of Masbate. The last two schools in the province belong to the rural school category, because they are located more than fifty kilometres outside the city. This distance is tantamount to two to three hours' drive from the head office of the Department of Education in Masbate. The interviews will be conducted inside the principal's office. However, the interview may take place outside the school depending on the availability of the principal participants.

3.4.2 Participants

The participants in the study are all principals in their respective schools. Individual semi-structured interviews are carried out in each school. Three among the five participants are female and two are male. In total, there are five principals who participated in the individual interview. Two of the principals had at least five years of experience as a school leader, while the other three had more than twenty years of experience in a school leadership position. Engaging with these principals with varied years of experience in school leadership service is an opportunity to gather a rich amount of data regarding their diverse professional development experience. Lastly, to ensure non-traceability and confidentiality, codes are used for the semi-structured interviews. Each participant is designated with the codes P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. To further protect participants' identity, the schools have been separated from the codes used with each principal. Hence, the code used for each principal did not represent any school in particular.

3.5 Data generation methods

The researcher in qualitative research could either employ interactive or non-interactive data generation methods. Interactive techniques require the researcher to interact with the subjects being studied, such as conducting an interview, while non-interactive techniques lack such interaction, as in review of documents (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). In the study, the researcher intends to engage in both techniques of generating data by doing interviews and document analysis.

3.5.1 Interviews as research methods

Interviews are one of the most popular methods in generating qualitative data. Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin and Lowden (2011) point out that this popularity is due to its flexibility. They argue that:

Interviews are one of a range of methods intended to gather information that is illuminative and goes beyond the descriptive in order to help us understand why people think or act in certain ways to help explain why something has or has not worked. (Menter et al., 2011, p. 126)

This is one of the primary reasons why the interview is the most suitable approach for the study. In this approach, the researcher has the opportunity to go beyond the surface level of the participant's response and use probing questions to explore deeper into their perceptions and views. Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Walker (2014) point out that this is especially true, because interviews are the main tools used by researchers to "gather data from people about opinions, beliefs, and feelings about situations in their own words" (p. 466). Through interviews, researchers can better understand the respondents' experiences and how they interpret those experiences.

In its simplest definition, an interview is a conversation between two individuals; one is asking the question, or is also known as the interviewer, and the other one responds to the question, or is also called the interviewee (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Interview, however, is not just an ordinary conversation, because it has to be purposive, question-based, and there is the expectation that the responses of the interviewee are as explicit and as detailed as possible (Cohen et al., 2007). When it comes to qualitative interviewing, Punch and Oancea (2014) argue that the conversation is more focused on grasping the meaning and building knowledge together.

Many researchers claim that using interviews as research methods has numerous advantages. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) emphasise one distinct strength of interviews is its ability to yield information that directly answers the research questions. It is aforementioned that one benefit of using interviews is that it provides flexibility to the researchers, where they can probe and follow up on the interviewee's answers in order to yield deeper information. In a like manner, interviewees can also ask for clarification from the interviewer if they do not understand the question. This way, the researcher is able to gather more accurate information from the interviewees (Menter et al., 2011). On the contrary, the flexibility of interviews could also be disadvantageous for the researcher. "Interviewers' flexibility in sequencing or wording questions can result in substantially different responses, thus reducing the comparability of responses"

(Cohen et al., 2007, p. 353). Another weakness of using interviews to generate data is that it is time-consuming and expensive (Menter et al., 2011; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Besides the researcher needing to adjust to the availability of the respondents, it also takes time and resources when the researcher begins the data analysis. Lastly, Yin (2013) cites that one of the dangers of employing interviews is the tendency for participants to only provide information that they think the researcher wants to hear, or to put themselves in a good light, instead of providing the accurate information. To avoid this, the researcher must have a "good background of information, to follow up with questions that reflect knowledge of a different interpretation, and, if all else fails, to triangulate response through other interviews or document reviews" (Newby, 2010, p. 342).

Moreover, interviews come in various types. Menter et al. (2011) cite three main types of interviews: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. In a structured interview, respondents are asked a consistent set of questions, like that of a questionnaire (Conrad & Serlin, 2011; Menter et al., 2011). The unstructured interview, on the other hand, has no predefined set of questions resulting in informal conversations with the respondents (Cohen et al., 2007). In the study, the semi-structured interview is employed to still be able to engage respondents in a conversation while ensuring that it is kept systematic.

3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

One feature that all qualitative interview formats share is that questions are normally open-ended (Ary et al., 2014). This means that questions are simply not answerable by just a yes or a no, but they allow respondents to reveal more comprehensive answers. This is the reason why the study uses semi-structured interview, because it gives the researcher flexibility to probe through these answers. The interviewer also has the opportunity to tailor the questions to adapt to what the interviewee is saying. The questions may have been formulated in advance to guide the interviewer in covering the whole topic, but the interviewer has the freedom to modify the questions during the interview process (Ary et al., 2014; Menter et al., 2011). The interviewer may also introduce additional topics and may ask additional questions or probes for follow up or clarifications to ensure that the information is clear and accurate. "This ability to ask additional questions produces data that will enable the investigator to appreciate the issue better" (Newby, 2010, p. 340).

At any rate, Newby (2010) argues that using the semi-structured interview allows a "trade-off between the quantity of data collected and its richness" (p. 340). He explains that the data generated from this type of interview may be rich and deep but if it is obtained from a large number of respondents, the researcher will find it difficult to incorporate everything in the analysis. Hence, the best defence to this is to apply coding during data analysis. Coding is a process of data reduction, where large quantities of descriptive information are organised, categorised and synthesised (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Coding will be explained in greater detail towards the end of this chapter.

3.6   Document analysis for data triangulation

To gain a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied, qualitative researchers may use written documents or salient artefacts that are helpful in the study, such as school improvement plans, minutes, journals, policy statements, and handouts, among others (Ary et al., 2014; Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). These written artefacts are a product of human activity that can provide important indications about the organisations being studied. As Conrad and Serlin (2011) point out, "the organisation's culture leaves its imprint on most of the printed materials that is produced" (p. 380). It is therefore important not to overlook their place in the research process. However, using these written artefacts requires caution. The qualitative researcher must make a theoretically informed decision in selecting which documents are appropriate in the study. Ary et al. (2014) argue that:

> Documents are not "objective" in the positivistic sense for while they are independent of the researcher, they are not independent of those who created them. Documents are written by people, for people, and some may be written explicitly to change behaviour. (p. 471)

Many researchers suggest that in defence, qualitative researchers must be critical in checking how, when, where, by whom and for whom these documents are produced (Ary et al., 2014; Bell, 2010; Conrad & Serlin, 2011; Punch, 2009). In addition, sensible use of these documents helps the researcher draw upon "multiple (at least two) sources of evidence; that is, to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods" (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). This usage of multiple resources or research evidence underpins the concept of triangulation. Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest that triangulation is a

validity procedure which qualitative researchers use to establish evidence by seeking convergence among multiple sources of information. The most common methods qualitative researchers use in corroborating data are observations, interviews, and document analysis (Bell, 2010; Lochmiller & Lester, 2017; Menter et al., 2011). For the purpose of data triangulation, the study utilises document analysis. Bowen (2009) explains that document analysis is an iterative process of evaluating documents to produce empirical knowledge that will add contextual richness to the research. He argues that besides adding richness to the data, document analysis is useful, particularly in pre- and post-interview situations. "Information contained in documents also suggested events or situations that needed to be observed" (Bowen, 2009, p. 36).

Unlike the usual document analysis that uses themes and categories, the researcher will utilise policy analysis within the document as prescribed by Atkins and Wallace (2012). Policy analysis, as they explain:

> …does not focus primarily on what lies behind the language or rhetoric in which policy is couched, but on policy itself, its congruence (or otherwise) with previous policy trends and whether it achieves, or has potential to achieve, its stated aims. (p. 172)

It is critical to take note that in the study, the researcher's use of policy analysis is mainly for the purpose of supplementing further information to the primary data generation method, which is the interview. The policy analysis will help the researcher to generate information for additional or probing questions during the interview process. In particular, these policies may include the NCBTS and the RPMS national policy documents on teacher professional development in the Philippines. Similarly, the purpose of utilising policy analysis prior to and during the data generation stage is to help the researcher engage in the resulting conversations with the informants about the policy documents existing in the Philippines for teacher professional development. This is done by examining through these documents and seeking to understand how they impact teachers' professional development in schools.

3.7   Research process

In this section, the research process will be explained in detail. The research process involves gaining access to the research field from the University, gaining

access to conduct research in the Philippines, the procedure for selection and for meeting prospective participants, and achieving validity in qualitative research.

3.7.1 Gaining access to the research field from the University

In order to access the research site, obtaining approval from the ethics research committee is a primary requirement. This is done to ensure that "no badly designed or harmful research is permitted" (Bell, 2010, p. 47) to enter the field. Ethics committees serve as gatekeepers in all research involving human subjects, to ensure that the dignity of the participants is protected and any anticipated ethical issues are addressed (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). Every university and research agency that engages in research with human participants has their own institutional review board (IRB) that reviews and approves research proposals (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). To this end, the researcher submitted her research proposal along with her ethics research application to the University of Waikato Research Ethics Committee (**Appendix A)** to conduct a study in the Philippines.

3.7.2 Gaining access to conduct research in the Philippines

One of the primary ethical requirements in conducting field research is to seek approval to access the research site from its "gatekeepers who may be the principal, the superintendents, or the committee that is charged with this responsibility" (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 436). In the study, the researcher wrote letters addressed to each Schools Division Superintendent–one from the city and one from the province–to seek permission to carry out the study in their respective divisions **(Appendix B)**. A copy of these letters was also sent to the participants who were most likely to participate in the study.

3.7.3 Procedure for selection and for meeting prospective participants

In order to carry out the research, prospective participants must be identified. In the letters the researcher sent to the division superintendents, she asked them to identify the schools whose principals are most likely to participate in the study. Wiersma and Jurs (2009) point out that this procedure of selecting participants is called purposive sampling. The principals were not chosen randomly but they were selected because of their typical characteristics that are relative to the study and of their availability.

Upon getting the consent from the superintendents and obtaining the contact information of the potential participants, the principals were sent emails and postal mails of the information sheet **(Appendix C)** to provide them with an overview of the study. In the same correspondence, they were invited to participate and their expectations regarding their participation were set by elaborating them in the consent form **(Appendix D)**. After three days, the researcher made a follow-up phone call to each prospective participant and sought their answer about their willingness to participate. All of the five participants who were sent the invitation agreed to participate. Therefore, the first meeting was immediately scheduled in the same phone call.

3.7.4 Validity in qualitative research

Researchers agree that validity is one of the key requirements of effective research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Menter et al., 2011; Rolfe, 2006). As Cohen et al. (2007) argue, if research is invalid, then it is worthless. In qualitative research, validity is often associated with authenticity, adequacy, trustworthiness, credibility, and reliability (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). It is therefore through validity that we are able to identify if the research is good or bad. While many researchers refer validity to many different complex terms, Savin-Baden and Major (2013) fundamentally defines it as the ability of the research to "lay claim to the strength of the findings, to demonstrate that they are true" (p. 472). On the contrary, establishing what is true in qualitative research is difficult and problematic. Qualitative researchers "increasingly view truths as multiple, value the subjectivities of both researchers and participants, and engage the values of the researcher in the research process" (Williams & Morrow, 2009, p. 577). Rolfe (2006) shares the same argument and points out that this lack of consensus of what is acceptably true and valid is due to the reason that "there is no unified body of theory, methodology or method that can collectively be described as qualitative research" (p. 305). Hence, establishing evidence of research validity lies in the burden of the qualitative researcher.

Many researchers suggest that despite controversies on how validity is achieved, qualitative researchers may use verification strategies to build validity and trustworthiness into the study. Williams and Morrow (2009) suggest that in order to establish research validity and trustworthiness, the qualitative researcher

must attend to three major categories. These are: "integrity of the data, balance between reflexivity and subjectivity, and clear communication of findings" (Williams & Morrow, 2009, p. 577). Integrity is addressed by ensuring that there is sufficient amount of high quality and quantity data gathered (Yeh & Inman, 2007). Determining the sufficient amount of data, however, is left to the researcher's judgment, gained through years of experience (Williams & Morrow, 2009). As for the researcher of this study, who is a novice in the research field, she ensured that her data is sufficient by striving to achieve rich data despite the small sample size in the study. This was done by taking into account the diverse perspectives of the participants, as they share these in a variety of ways, which are more likely to provide rich data (Williams & Morrow, 2009).

In the previous section, a discussion on the significance of reflexivity in the research process has been devoted. This is so because the researchers' position or views affect everything in the research such as what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods to use in the investigation, the findings they consider most appropriate, and the framing of conclusions (Malterud, 2001; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Besides using the reflection journal as suggested earlier, researchers may also utilise member checking, where participants' feedback on data interpretation are honoured (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Williams & Morrow, 2009). This will be observed in the study by making sure that participants are given the chance to review the interview transcripts so that they can confirm the credibility of the data generated. Lastly, clear communication of findings means that the significance of the study is clearly articulated (Williams & Morrow, 2009). It is important that qualitative research is socially valid by establishing its social relevance and value to the participants of the area being studied.

3.8   Ethical procedures

The ethical procedures required in order to carry out the research are explained in this section. Primarily, the ethical procedures require ethical considerations such as gaining access to the research site, informed consent, the participants' right to privacy, and power dynamics.

3.8.1   Ethical considerations

The nature of the methods used in qualitative research such as observation and interviews allows the researcher to have prolonged personal interaction and engagement with participants in their own community environment. This poses some unique ethical considerations in terms of informed consent, confidentiality, recruiting participants and gaining access to the field, and the researcher's social and cultural relationships (Ponterotto, 2013). Ethical considerations mean that the researcher has the responsibility to care for the welfare of the participants participating in the research process. In behaving ethically, chances of maintaining positive rapport between researcher and participants are increased for the duration of the study (Burton et al., 2008).

3.8.1.1   *Access to the research site*

Gaining access to participants is one of the central elements required for a research process to proceed. In the study, gaining access to participants is not difficult because as a teacher conducting research in her own field, I am practically an 'insider' who is already within the research setting (Burton et al., 2008). Burton et al. (2008) contradict this point, they argue that although access to a research site is easy, it can be problematic at the same time. They contend, "being an insider may raise issues of the balance of power, ownership and voice, anonymity and confidentiality, and informed consent" (Burton et al., 2008, p. 51). Therefore, Menter et al. (2011) suggest that because the teacher-researcher is taking on an additional role, it is highly important that the researcher has a strong ethical basis to claim legitimacy of the research. This entails seeking agreement from head-teachers, colleagues, or local authorities such as the superintendent to carry out the study (Menter et al., 2011). Once general agreement is obtained to proceed with the research, further permission is necessary such as gaining participants' informed consent.

3.8.1.2   *Informed consent*

Once into the research setting, the next requirement for the study to proceed is obtaining participants' voluntary informed consent. Punch and Oancea (2014) define voluntary informed consent as participants' agreeing freely to take part in the research, "that they understand what their participation entails and how it will

be reported, and that they feel free to withdraw their agreement at any time throughout the research process" (p. 65). Wiersma and Jurs (2009) suggest two ways of obtaining informed consent: passive consent and implied consent. For the study, the researcher used passive consent by sending letters and information sheets to participants, asking them whether they do not want to participate in the study. Their failure to respond was an indication of their refusal to take part in the study. The danger of this however, is the possibility of the letters not having been received by the participants or the email is accidentally sent to junk mail (Hughes & Gutkin, 1996). Therefore, to make sure that participants were able to receive the invitation letter, the researcher made a follow up phone call with them. Moreover, implied consent usually involves questionnaires wherein participants complete the survey forms; if they return the completed forms, it means that consent is given (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

While there are countries with strict protocols about informed consent, Cohen et al. (2007) argue that there are also cultures that are not as stringent. For example, when Nguyen (2015) conducted a study in Vietnam using semi-structured interviews, he found himself totally ignorant and confused about the requirement of obtaining informed consent from the participants. The researcher of the study shares the same experience, because, initially, she wondered why she needed to seek permission to work with people who already agreed to have an interview with her, to begin with. Obtaining informed consent is a Western academic culture that is not commonly practiced in some countries in South East Asia such as Vietnam and the Philippines. Nguyen (2015) also argues that this concept is unfamiliar to the participants, hence, it may intimidate them as it may appear something so serious resulting to participants feeling uncomfortable with the interviews. Sharing the same fear, the researcher of the study saw to it that prior to commencing the initial interview, she devoted time to discuss the informed consent form with the participants. She also made sure that their hesitations were completely eliminated by answering their questions before they signed the consent form.

3.8.1.3 *The right to privacy through confidentiality, anonymity, and non-traceability*

One of the principles of informed consent is gaining permission from participants to invade their privacy (David & Sutton, 2011b). As the researcher, it

is his or her responsibility to protect this privacy with utmost care. This can be done by means of confidentiality, anonymity, and non-traceability (Baumfield, Hall, & Wall, 2013; David & Sutton, 2011; Menter et al., 2011; Punch & Oancea, 2014). Confidentiality refers to the situation where the information about the participant "is known and recorded by the researcher, but is not disclosed in the reporting of the research" (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 47), or it may be disclosed but with the permission of the participant (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008). Bell (2010) explains that while confidentiality is the researcher's responsibility, to protect participants from being identified in the research, anonymity refers to ensuring that the researcher would not even be able to tell "which responses came from which respondents" (p. 49). This is appropriate for surveys and questionnaires where respondents' names, addresses, occupations and other identifying marks are disregarded to ensure complete anonymity. Researchers also use aliases, pseudonyms, and codes for identifying people in the presentation of findings (Cohen et al., 2007).

Nevertheless, in a qualitative study that uses face-to-face interviews, ensuring anonymity can be problematic (Ary et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2007; Gregory, 2003). In this study, ensuring anonymity is difficult for two reasons. First, the superintendents have first-hand information of the name of the participants, as they were the ones who were asked to identify them. Second, in using face-to-face interviews, the researcher has personal knowledge of the respondents' names and addresses, among other details. While it is difficult to guarantee participants' complete anonymity in this situation, researchers suggest that aiming for non-traceability is more realistic (Ary et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2000; Punch & Oancea, 2014). Non-traceability means not only safeguarding participants' identity by assigning them codes and pseudonyms at the interview transcription stage (Menter et al., 2011) but more importantly:

> To delete personal information (such as names, job title, place of work, name of school, dates and places of crucial events, detailed institutional descriptors, and other information that the researcher deems relevant), from the data ... or replacing it with more generic categories. (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 69)

In so doing, the participants' identity is protected and the data they share remain confidential despite being reported in the thesis and future projects. Besides

non-traceability, the researcher also utilised additional measures in protecting participants' privacy by "storing any personal information of the participants completely separate from the data" (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 69), and the data such as recordings and transcriptions were kept securely in password-protected files.

3.8.1.4 *Power dynamics*

In qualitative research, Creswell (2014) warns researchers about the possibility of power dynamics when using interviews as a research method. Power dynamics have been foreseen in this study because the researcher is a teacher who is conducting an interview with school principals as the participants. Campbell and Groundwater-Smith (2007) explain that this situation may create tension, because the researcher may find it difficult to encourage collaboration from the participants due to significant power difference. To address this, the researcher reassured the principals of the purposes and significance of the study to the teaching profession. Campbell and Groundwater-Smith (2007) further argue that careful justifications of purposes and methodology of the research are effective means to mitigate power imbalances. The researcher also made sure that she was honest and respectful in engaging the principals in conversations, because in doing so, she was able to also gain their trust. Building good rapport with participants, especially at the outset of the interview, is vital for the success of the data generation. Establishing good rapport with the school principals was useful, because they became more comfortable in trusting their personal stories, which resulted in richer data.

3.9 Data analysis

Data collected through qualitative methods such as interviews and observations will mean nothing until they are analysed and evaluated (Bell, 2010). Researchers point out that the complex nature of qualitative research entails a rich repertoire of techniques that can be applied in the analysis of data (Burton & Bartlett, 2005; King & Horrocks, 2010; Punch & Oancea, 2014). While there are many varieties of techniques a researcher can use, there is no single right technique in ordering and analysing data, because what matters is the researcher finds what works best for him or for her to come up with accurate and fair results (Blaxter,

2010; Burton & Bartlett, 2005). Nevertheless, Blaxter (2010) points out that data analysis involves two closely related processes:

> First, managing your data, by reducing its size and scope, so that you can report upon it adequately and usefully. Second, analysing your managed set of data, by abstracting from it and drawing attention to what you feel is of particular importance or significance. (p. 220)

In the study, the managing of data begins with transcription of field interviews and organising field notes. This is done to help the researcher familiarise and engage with the data (Ary et al., 2014). Lochmiller and Lester (2017) suggest that it is also better for researchers to spend time listening and re-listening to audio-recordings even before transcribing data, as it also provides them an opportunity to reflect on possible analytical questions that they can refer to as they progress through the analysis. While transcribing data, as the researcher, I will also simultaneously take down notes to capture key ideas and remarkable thoughts that occur in my head. This written reflection of her data is called a memo or an ongoing conversation between herself and her data (Clarke, 2005; Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Besides memoing of data, researchers also use codes, labels, annotations, charts, and summaries to manage and organise data (Ary et al., 2014; Blaxter, 2010). After familiarising and organising data, Ary et al. (2014) point out that the qualitative researcher's next step is coding.

3.9.1 Coding

Coding is the core of qualitative data analysis that includes identifying of categories and their refinement (Ary et al., 2014). It is "the process of applying codes to chunks of text so that those chunks can be interlinked to highlight similarities and differences within and between texts" (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 339). Like a puzzle, codes are the bits and pieces that researchers are trying to make sense of and connect to create meanings. Coding can be done using qualitative software such as NVivo, QDA Miner Full, and Qualrus or researchers can do it manually by marking up the text with coloured pens, highlighters (Creswell, 2016) and sticky notes. In assigning code labels on noteworthy text passages, as the researcher, I will use coloured highlighters and sticky notes. However, to ensure that the I do not miss out some significant descriptions and patterns of words, I will also utilise the NVivo software package. Both strategies have proven useful in

establishing intimate relationships between the data and the researcher that will eventually help the latter in drawing out themes (Creswell, 2016).

Specifically, King and Horrocks (2010) argue that coding includes two steps—firstly, descriptive coding and secondly, interpretive coding. They explain that:

> The first step is highlighting anything in the transcript that might help the researcher understand participant's views, experiences and perceptions. The researcher may also include brief comments in the margin of the highlighted texts. In the second step, the researcher groups together descriptive codes and creates interpretative code that captures it. It is in this phase where the researcher focuses on the interpretation of these codes. (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 152)

Generated codes from the preceding steps will serve as the evidence in writing theme passages (Creswell, 2016). Creswell (2016) points out that these theme passages can serve as headings, when writing the findings section of a qualitative report. However, before moving on to that, analysing these themes is the next crucial step for qualitative data analysis.

3.9.2 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative approach to data analysis, where themes or patterns within the data are identified, analysed, and reported (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Unlike codes, which refer directly to the data, themes are "almost entirely based on the analytic interpretation of the data" (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017, p, 177). King and Horrocks (2010) define themes as "the recurrent and distinctive features of participants' accounts, characterising particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question" (p. 150). Aronson (1995) argues that for a study that uses ethnographic interviews for data collection, thematic analysis is the best way to understand the ideas that emerged from the conversations. With this in mind, the study utilises thematic analysis to piece together the themes that emerged from participants' stories to create "a comprehensive picture of [their] collective experience" (Aronson, 1995, n.p.).

In the study, thematic analysis will be carried out immediately after creating the categories. Using categories after identifying codes is helpful in relating each code and in bridging the data to the analytic interpretations. "Categories bring together various coded passages and assign meaning about their relationship,

differences, similarities, or interactions" (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017, p. 176). Once categories are established, the researcher will start to identify sub-themes and overarching themes across the full data set. Creating an analysis map or diagram will also help the researcher in finding relationships among the themes and how they are "interrelated to tell an overall story of the phenomenon under study" (Creswell, 2016, p. 162). In addition, Lochmiller and Lester (2017) argue that using an analysis map helps the researcher build transparency around the research process, as it shows an abbreviated summary of how the analysis moved from codes to categories and to themes.

In summary, this chapter has described the research design and the methodology used in the investigation. It also demonstrated the research process including the ethical procedures required to carry out the research. And lastly, it has explained the data analysis procedure that involves coding and thematic analysis. In the chapter that follows, the researcher will be presenting the findings of the investigation.

Chapter Four
FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings that emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data generated through the use of semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview was used to gain understanding of the roles and views of the principals to the formation of professional learning communities (PLCs) in their schools. The interviews also aimed to explore the views and experiences of the principals on the professional development (PD) of teachers in the Philippines. It is the underlying assumption in the study that principals' understanding of their roles in the implementation of existing teacher professional development policies in the Department of Education is central to the successful formation of PLCs.

Using the interpretive framework to guide the analysis of the semi-structured interview data, the following statement themes emerged:

1. The lack of continuing professional development programmes for teachers in the selected schools.

2. There are aspects of the secondary school culture that may contribute to the formation of PLCs; however, there are also barriers that may hinder in their formation.

3. Effective leadership style is viewed as a key to support teachers in pursuing continuous growth and development in their professional career.

It is important to bear in mind that these statement themes are quite broad and each of them comprises sub-themes. This is done in order to further present the ideas embedded in every broad statement's themes. Likewise, it must be taken into account that the results of the policy analysis are not directly indicated in this chapter; rather, they are implied through the overall findings. The reason for this is that policy analysis is not the primary research instrument in the study; hence, the findings are focused on the results of the interview, which is the primary instrument.

4.2 Lack of continuing professional development

The lack of continuing professional development of teachers is evident in the responses made by the participants to the interview questions. This was shown

when the participants were asked about their views and experiences on the National Competency-based Teaching Standards (NCBTS) and the Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) as educational policies that support professional development of teachers. The participants revealed that the lack of continuing professional development of teachers is attributed to the barriers in the implementation of these policies. These barriers included overwhelming responsibilities, strong-respect for hierarchical authority, a ratings-focused performance appraisal system, and insufficient pre-service training of teachers. Another factor that is attributed to the lack of continuing professional development of teachers is the many different professional development (PD) activities teachers engage in.

4.3 Barriers to the implementation of NCBTS and RPMS

Respondents were asked to indicate their views on the implementation of the NCBTS and the RPMS. It is noteworthy that the findings show recurring negative comments about its implementation. The participants described the barriers that are keeping them from successfully implementing these policies. These barriers include overwhelming responsibilities, strong culture of hierarchy, a ratings-focussed teacher appraisal system, and insufficient pre-service training.

4.3.1 Overwhelming school responsibilities

Participants shared a common disappointment on teachers feeling stressed and anxious of the quantity of evidence they were required to comply with the NCBTS and the RPMS. They argued that this resulted in teachers not being fully committed to their own professional development. The comment below from P1 illustrates this.

> *I hear them complain about the paper work, activities, and reports that they have to accomplish, making them less focussed on their own professional development. You see, the teachers' focus now is only how to meet the quantity of the requirements. Like what are the mode of verifications required. The purpose of these policies is for you to meet the goals, for you to develop the competencies that come*

along with it as well. But for the teachers, it looks like they
are overburdened with so many tasks required of them.

Another principal shared the same disappointment, because the overwhelming feeling of the tasks at hand has resulted in some teachers undervaluing the essence of these policies. For example, on the NCBTS requirement, he remarked:

There are instances in the past that as part of the NCBTS
requirement, teachers have to answer a series of questions
to help them assess their professional development needs. I
understand that some questions are complicated, but I am
so saddened to notice that some teachers didn't take them
seriously. They end up hitting the check buttons
continuously, without really understanding the questions.
The result: most of their answers are superficial. (P2)

This was further emphasised by P4 in the comment below:

But I can see that the problem is there are too many
responsibilities required from teachers nowadays that they
tend to overlook the good purpose of NCBTS and RPMS.
This makes them feel overwhelmed, there are so many
complaints these days. In fact, there are tasks that we are
not only required to comply, but we are somehow forced to
do.

4.3.2   Strong respect for hierarchical authority

The findings in the study revealed strong respect of participants for hierarchical authority in the Philippines. It is not unexpected to hear one of the principals share her hesitation in making creative opportunities for teachers' professional development in fear of bypassing the system of hierarchy that is prevalent within the organisation. Talking about this issue, P3 said:

I have an issue with that, because I could see that for some
policies of the school, if the manager of the school would

somehow offer or propose initiatives for teachers'
professional development, there has to be a mandate from
the division office. Any activity that would affect, or would
be taken from academic learning, would mean asking
permission from the division office. Specifically, from the
superintendent.

Similarly, P2 said that there are times when he finds his efforts futile because of the lack of support coming from the head office. He explained:

There are activities that I want to integrate in the school
time-table which I think would help my teachers cope with
stress and help them perform well. But honestly, there are
instances that I have to hold back because that would mean
a hard time proposing it to the superintendent. And I think,
the superintendent, though open to the integration in the
timetable, I think because it is not a mandate from the
central office, then our efforts are futile.

4.3.3   Ratings-focused performance appraisal system

Besides being used as a tool for professional development of teachers, the RPMS also serves as a system for their performance appraisal. School principals evaluate teachers' performance based on evidence of competencies measured against agreed performance targets. This evidence is justified through verifiable documents, certificates, and testimonies. The ratings that teachers achieve through RPMS serve as the basis for their compensation, bonuses, and chances of getting promoted to a higher position in the organisation. When asked about how they view RPMS as a tool to support teachers' professional development, there were some negative comments elicited. One principal reported:

The promotion system is generally based on the ratings of
teachers. I feel like it's more about ratings, more about
numbers so that teachers get promoted. Because of the low
salary of teachers, of course, they strive to have higher
salary, so they become more conscious of the promotion

rather than focusing on the learning of the students. It is like, based on my assessment, this new system of teachers' appraisal is developing this culture for the teachers of DepEd. (P2)

Echoing the same sentiment, P1 shared that instead of helping them develop their competencies to become better teachers, the appraisal system is making teachers salary-driven rather than performance-driven. He asserted:

You know what's happening now? Teachers are starting to become so conscious with ratings–what I mean is, teachers are doing these things because of the rating. It is sad that there is this prevailing belief that being a good teacher is reflective of the kind of rating one gets. So sometimes we cannot focus on our personal growth but it is the conscious effort to achieve high ratings. It is not natural dedication anymore, not genuine commitment.

Supporting the same issue, another participant raised a noteworthy observation. He said:

You will see it. Those who are promoted into higher positions, they seldom teach. Most of the time, they are out attending training for a more personal purpose—to get certificates. Those who are left behind in the classrooms, those are the dedicated teachers. And yet, they don't get promoted, right? (P3)

Attending national or international conferences is seen as one of the opportunities for teachers to acquire higher performance rating. P3 added:

If there are national conferences, or any conference at a higher level, teachers go crazy over them. That requires personal expenses, right? But because it is given a higher point value in the appraisal, I feel that educators are forced to attend training not really to learn, not to share their best practices, or to share their own research works, or what

they do in schools. But they are forced to attend and spend a lot of money for the sake of having MOVs or mode of verification that they can use for future promotion. It saddens me, because I, for one, I could say to myself and to the Lord, that I have undergone a lot of training and studies, not actually for those purposes, but first and foremost, for my own fulfilment and growth.

4.3.4 Insufficient pre-service teacher education

Findings in the study also revealed that a minority of the participants felt that insufficient pre-service education of teachers is one of the barriers in successfully implementing the NCBTS and RPMS. One interviewee noted there were teachers who were struggling in their roles because of the insufficient, if not lacking, of pre-service education before entering the profession. P5 narrated:

I believe teachers really need further professional development. Most of the teachers these days are not really teachers in the real sense of the word, because most of them took up, or bought–forgive me for using that word, but it is true–everyone knows that there are teachers who just purchased their education diplomas for some horrendous amount to get qualified for the teachers' board exam. So they are not really teachers. From my observation, these teachers do not really know how to teach. They do not know the actual methods of teaching. They do not have the strategies in teaching. That's why their students find their lessons boring. And that is one of the reasons why some students do not attend their classes.

Not having sufficient pre-service teacher education is also the concern of P4. She argued that those teachers who did not go through rigid training to become educators were lacking the basic skills for them to perform their duties well. P4 asserted:

Through observation, I see that many teachers lack things, especially those who did not go through proper pre-service education. For example, the basic planning of lessons and constructing the right test questions. In writing their lesson plans, some of them don't even know how to write the lesson motivation section. I really emphasise it with them that the lesson's motivation is very important. We need to see in their lesson plan, how they will motivate the students. Also, we need to make sure that they know how to construct test questions. Because you know, how can the students answer the test when they do not understand the question itself.

These views surfaced mainly in relation to participants' responses when asked about their perspectives on NCBTS and RPMS. It is interesting that they did not respond directly to the given question, rather they talked about the barriers they faced in realising the goals of these professional development policies.

4.4   Different PD activities teachers engaged in

The participants were asked to indicate whether they have enabled opportunities for continuous professional growth of teachers as prescribed by the NCBTS and RPMS. The overall response shows that the most common types of professional development activities teachers engage in are: attending international, local, or district conferences and seminars, LAC sessions, in-service training, and school-based mentoring.

4.4.1   Attending conferences and seminars

International, local, or district conferences and seminars are made available to all educators throughout the academic year. These conferences, however, are normally held in venues that are not easily accessible for teachers. This means that those who would like to participate in these conferences and seminars would have to spend a considerable amount of money not only for the registration but also for the accommodation and transportation. Nevertheless, many teachers are still encouraged to participate in these professional development activities. A participant commented:

Actually I am happy that some of my teachers have attended international conferences in their particular subject areas. Some attended regional or even national level conferences with their own money, at their own expense. I feel relieved that they are willing to spend their own money to somehow improve themselves. (P3)

Limited funding to send teachers to these conferences is what P4 believed was one of the big issues why not all teachers are able to participate. However, she commented that it is a good opportunity for those who were able to attend to become trainers and share their learning with their colleagues. P4 said:

One of the biggest reasons why we cannot send all our teachers to these conferences, though they are relevant to their professional development, is because of our very limited school budget. But I see the positive in this, because they can also be good opportunities for those who have attended to become trainers themselves. The new curriculum states that if you have attended seminars or training at a national level or higher, you are already considered a division trainer. Before, it is only for a chosen few. But now, each school must have a representative for the division training who will end up being a school trainer. Meaning to say, whatever they have been trained in the division or national level, they are required to cascade that in the school. (P4)

4.4.2   LAC Sessions

A unique professional development activity that most teachers in the Philippine public schools engage in is the School Learning Action Cell, that is more commonly known as Learning Action Cell or LAC sessions. The interviews revealed that among five schools under study, four of them have LAC sessions or similar learning action cells, while one school does not have one. The participants who conduct LAC sessions in their schools describe their experience below. P1 explained:

In my part, we are doing the LAC sessions to support teachers' professional development in our school. It is through LAC sessions and also during staff conference, where I am able to integrate my views on how they can improve their role as a teacher. Sometimes I encourage them to reflect why we are here in this profession? Is it just because we are here to make a living? Or is it because the passion is there?

In the same way, another participant emphasised that the teachers who have the opportunity to attend training, seminars, and conferences outside the school play a significant role in the LAC sessions. The following comment by P5 illustrates this point:

During our LAC sessions, we include roll outs of all training they have attended. All of the training they have attended, may it be national or division level, we always have a roll out within the school. That's the very purpose why they get those opportunities to train outside. Such as training of trainers. That means they have to roll out the same training in the school to share it with their fellow teachers, so that the others can also benefit from what they have learned, not just those who had the chance to attend the training.

On the one hand, one principal shared the notion that LAC sessions in their school are only practised by a group of teachers. P3 argued:

I know that only the elementary schools are required to have LAC sessions. But in my school, we have already started it with the Science Department. Science teachers, including the department head, would conduct LAC sessions on how to teach science effectively. There will be lesson demonstration and someone from their group would serve as the moderator. The demonstration teacher could

learn from the teachers' feedback and the teachers also
learn from the demonstration teacher. So, there is a sharing
of best practices. And as a school leader, I also learned
from them. (P3)

On the other hand, one participant asserted that LAC sessions are not practised in their school, although she is open to the idea of having one. On this concern, the interviewee explained:

Actually, LAC sessions are only for elementary schools. We
don't have a formal term for that kind in the secondary
schools. But I think we can also have that in secondary, but
we are not used to having those sessions. We need to be
more open to those activities and study how it is done before
we do it in our school. (P4)

4.4.3   In-service training

The participants' responses in the interviews revealed that among the professional development activities teachers engaged in in schools, the in-service training is the only mandated professional development program for teachers. The in-service training, or more commonly called "in-set," is an annual, week-long, school-based training where teachers are required to attend during the semestral break from students. Interviewees described the activities they do in the in-service training. As one participant explained it:

Sometimes we review teaching methodologies. We also
include lesson planning, as I have said many teachers are
lacking this basic skill. We ensure to make it a part of the
in-set because many teachers still find it difficult how to do
it properly. (P4)

In a like manner, P3 asserted that activities in their in-service training are based on the most common learning needs of the teachers, instead of focusing individually. She explained that:

Actually in our case, we base the in-set from the general learning needs of teachers. Because of the limited time and the range of topics we have to cover, we cannot address each specific need. We evaluate what is the need of the majority, what the topics are that will benefit everyone as a whole.

Sharing the same experience, P1 added:

During the school's in-set, I give my teachers some roles to be speakers of certain topics. I choose the teachers who are capable of giving life to the topic. Aside from that, those who have ongoing research studies as part of their post-graduate education requirement are required to share the story of their research journey with their colleagues. For example, one of our teachers was completing his master's degree last year. He willingly shared his learning and his findings with his colleagues. I think it is also one way to encourage our teachers to strive for higher degrees.

4.4.4   School-based mentoring

More than half of the participants mentioned that school-based mentoring is one of the professional development practices they have in school. Mentorship takes place in these schools when one teacher who is experienced or who is an expert of certain subject matter helps or guides another teacher who is less knowledgeable. The comment below of P5 illustrates this.

For us, we have the so-called mentoring program. I am trained when it comes to mentoring. As a school leader, I was practised, that's why my teachers are practised as well. For example, I have one teacher who already has a doctorate degree and who is also very knowledgeable; I encourage her to mentor her colleagues who are teaching her expertise. But not just her, I encourage everyone to do

mentoring. And when they do so, it has to be documented. Mentors have to submit proof of it.

One participant explained that mentoring takes place in the school only when the need to have it arises. She elaborated:

We also have a mentoring program in our school. But it only happens depending on the needs of teachers. If their schedule would allow it, then they can. Because they have an extra hour daily, that is from four to five in the afternoon, they are already free. But they are still required to stay in the school. Some of them, if they are having teaching difficulties, they use that time to consult the experts of that subject area. They convene and help each other. (P4)

Nonetheless, one principal identified concerns regarding her struggle in keeping mentorship among her teachers. She argued:

I think mentoring is very helpful when it is sustained. But I observed that some beginning teachers are shy to approach the more experienced ones. Maybe because they feel intimidated to ask questions. So I try to tell them, especially for the experienced teachers to reach out to the beginning teachers. Likewise, I ask the beginning teachers to open themselves up for growth. (P3)

4.4.5 Community of practice (COP)

Of the five principals, one principal mentioned that besides mentoring and in-service training, the teachers in her school also engaged in Community of Practice (COP). The participant explained that COP was introduced to her when she was still a teacher and she wanted her teachers to practice the same thing, as she found it useful in the school organisation. P4 emphasised:

We have the Community of Practice, or we call it COP here. It was introduced to me in my training back when I was still a teacher and I still continue doing it with my teachers

because it helps a lot. We do it in every department, where teachers convene and share best practices with the subject coordinators and year level coordinators. Actually it is the subject area which meets most often. Every year level just meets every quarter.

4.5   Effective professional development

In response to the question: "What does effective professional development of teachers mean to you?", a range of responses was elicited. One participant argued that effective professional development should not be a "one-size-fits-all approach." It should be personalised and based on the interest of teachers. The participant explained it below:

Ahh! For me it should be experiences like, for example, activities that are not confined within the classroom, for example physical and mental training, then engaging in other extra-curricular activities such as joining scouting, athletic competitions, organising music groups. It helps a lot if the professional development is based on one's passion. Professional development should focus on where one's interests really are. (P2)

Whilst P2 viewed effective professional development as an extra-curricular activity, other participants shared that effective professional development means genuine dedication and commitment to learning. Talking about this, P3 explained:

Based on my experience, the most influential professional development activity for me is aiming for further professional learning. It is in my postgraduate studies where I learned so many things about managing the school, your relationships with your colleagues, with the community, and a lot more. I am happy to say that I have been able to finish my masters and doctorate degree.

Sharing the same perception about the value of professional learning, P5 argued that commitment to learning is not only done within the confines of classrooms. She narrated her experience with the teachers in her school. She said:

> *Many think that the only time teachers are able to professionally develop themselves is when they attend conferences or workshop in some venues like halls or classrooms. But if you ask me, professional development is more than those activities. The simple updating of yourself by reading newspapers, magazines, or journals, it is already a form of professional development. If you ask them if they even update themselves through those means, I don't think you will hear a yes. In fact, I don't think they even have time to watch news on the television. I observed that one time in the school, every morning after the flag ceremony, I would announce some current events before the students. After that, some teachers would come to me and ask, "Is it really true, Madam? Did it really happen last night?" And I would answer them, "Yes, why? Have you not watched the news on TV?" I would tell them, "You need to watch TV to at least update yourself of the current events.*

In sharing the same notion on genuine dedication and commitment to learning, another participant asserted that:

> *Sometimes I cannot stop myself from reminding them that we are not here for the salary alone, because I am afraid that they will end up being salary-driven. So they may also realise that they are teachers. And as teachers, we also have professional needs that we need to attend to and we have standards as professionals that we need to also practice regularly. (P1)*

4.5.1 Lack of continuing professional development

The most striking result to emerge from the data is not that participants have a variety of responses on how they view effective professional development but the evident lack of continuing professional development programmes designed to support the classroom needs of teachers. A common view amongst principals was that professional development of teachers is demands-driven. Reiterating the comment of P4 earlier, she said that:

> *We also have a mentoring program in our school. But it only happens depending on the needs of teachers. If their schedule will allow it, then they can.*

Sharing the same experience, P1 emphasised that they only engage in professional development activities in school when the organisation sees the need for it. He confirmed that:

> *It is based on demand only. If we see there is a need, then we do it.*

P5 echoed the same response; she added:

> *If I have time, I give my teachers the in-set. It is not something we only do annually, but whenever I feel that my teachers need help. I ask all of them to convene and train.*

On the whole, and sharing the same experience of conducting a demands-driven professional development of teachers, P2 explained that he uses every available opportunity to do pep-talks and casual mentoring with his teachers. He claimed that:

> *Actually, there is no scheduling. It is only when the need arises, then if there is time, just casual mentoring. We meet, then we talk informally about what they have done, if they have problems. It has become part of the daily routine, if you have time to talk, then talk. There are also times that it is just spur of the moment, like informal approaches to them.*

4.6 Views of secondary school principals on professional learning communities (PLCs)

The participants were asked to indicate their understanding about PLCs. It is noteworthy that although the term PLC is unfamiliar to them, they all agreed that the concept of PLC is quite similar to learning teams. The participants called the small group of teachers who work together in every LAC session or in-serving training as learning teams. It is noteworthy in their responses that their previous experiences with small learning teams in their school contributed to their understanding of PLCs. The main themes that emerged in their responses are culture of school and the viewed barriers to the formation of PLCs.

4.6.1 Culture of school

The majority of the participants shared their understanding on what makes PLCs successful. They all agreed that it is the same with establishing learning teams through LAC session, that the culture of the school determines the success of these teams or of these communities. The findings indicated that the interviewees identified the culture of the school in the values of the majority of teachers. These values are categorised into: willingness to collaborate, collective inquiry, and openness to change.

4.6.2 Willingness to collaborate

The willingness of teachers to collaborate is argued to be one of the factors for a successful PLC. The majority of those who shared their experience of the willingness of teachers to collaborate affirmed that having this culture makes teachers happy towards working with each other. The response below of P4 illustrates this.

> *Actually, they are happy when they are asked to work together. It is because when they have problems or struggles that they need help, they learn from each other. Anyway, they don't meet when they are all busy. They find time to meet when everyone is free. And they also make sure that they are all available.*

In addition, one participant shared that the willingness to collaborate is one value that she appreciates in her teachers. She argued that willingness to collaborate should not only come from the teachers, but school leaders must also be willing to collaborate with the teachers. Her comment below illustrates this:

I am very positive that PLCs are possible in the Philippine schools. I think it is also feasible in my school. My teachers don't have issues about helping each other. They really find time to help each other. In fact, because TLE [Technology, Livelihood, and Economics] is my specialisation and you know we are a tech-voc school, they would come to my office and ask for my help as well. They are proactive in seeking help and as a leader; I should also be proactive in helping them. (P5)

Lastly, P2 shared that their school has an existing culture of collaboration. He pointed out that having this culture helped the teachers to become responsive in any challenge that arises in the organisation. He emphasised:

The culture of collaboration is not something new in my school. Although you hear some complaints of getting stressed because of work, or something like that, I think because everyone is willing to help, they become responsive instead of becoming reactive. They are used to being called for help and I see that they are also willing to share their best practices with their fellow teachers.

4.6.3 Collective inquiry

The participants argued that collective inquiry is present in the small learning teams they have in their schools. One of the participants pointed out that collective inquiry for them is highly dependent on their purpose of working together. For example, P3 shared that collective inquiry is working together to improve their daily teaching practice. She explained:

Because we only have eleven teaching staff in the school, we are like a small learning team. We meet from time to

> *time to help each other improve the staff's teaching practice. Say, for example, our topic is how to improve in writing test questions. We help each other. We share our opinions, our best practices. Everyone will give examples then all of us will suggest if the question is an easy or an average item. We also do critiquing of the test questions. We make recommendations. We are all learning how to write test questions to make sure that they are properly constructed so that the students can easily understand.*

Another participant shared the same view. She argued that even though she is not familiar with the term PLC, she assumed that as with LAC sessions, PLCs also aim to improve the teaching practice of classroom teachers. She pointed out:

> *I am not really familiar with the existence of PLC, about its functional existence in the Philippines. However, I think PLC somehow, though not actually the same as our LAC session, it also improves the teaching strategies of classroom teachers. (P5)*

Moreover, P5 commented that the main difference between PLC and LAC sessions, when it comes to collective inquiry, is the purpose of the inquiry. She added:

> *And so going back to the LAC session, that is the difference between the two. Because in the LAC session, we are only focusing on the theories around teaching methodologies not so much about sharing of best actual classroom practices to improve the teaching methodologies, which I think PLC does.*

4.6.4   Openness to change

The findings of the study indicated that openness to change is one of the values that principals believe to be important in the creation of PLCs. One principal commented that openness to change is a value that can unleash the potential of the teachers in her school. P3 explained that:

I can see a future of PLCs in my school. With the in-sets, I have seen that my teachers have potential. I could see that they are only waiting to be given responsibility. Though that is not perfect, I feel that since they have the potential, they can grow with it. As long as they are always open, open to suggestions, and also open to learning new things.

Likewise, another participant underscored that with the advances of the current technology, it is crucial for teachers nowadays to be open to change. He also observed that teachers who are new to the profession are the ones who can most likely adapt to these changes. He elaborated this below.

As what they say on our training, which I also strongly agree with, the education system itself upgrades. The traditional method of teaching needs to be changed, because we need to adapt to new technologies. That's why in that training, those who were sent were also newly hired teachers. Because if you send teachers who are used to traditional teaching strategies, when they go back to school, they will still go back to their old strategies. That's what I observed. Those who are new to the service, they are the ones who can easily adapt to what we call paradigm shift. (P1)

Although P2 argued that in his school, openness to change is one of the values which he hopes his teachers will acquire, he agreed that indeed the education system is changing and it is critical for teachers to be open to new learning. He expounded that:

I believe that teachers should become part of learning communities so that they will appreciate the importance of learning new things. Because I sometimes observe in my school that there are teachers who are so comfortable with the way they teach their lessons, they don't seem to try harder to innovate. Some would just do the talk and chalk.

They don't try creative ways to teach. Which is dangerous,
because our education system is changing. It is really
necessary for our teachers to be open to change and to
learn new things. (P2)

4.7 Viewed barriers to the formation of PLCs

The findings of the study revealed the barriers to the formation of PLCs as perceived by the secondary school principals. These barriers were categorised into four sub-themes such as: absence of policy guidelines, limited school funding, lack of time, and the attitude of teachers. The headings below present these views.

4.7.1 Absence of concrete policy guidelines

The absence of policy guidelines emerged as one of the barriers to the formation of PLCs in the secondary schools, as viewed by the participants. One participant argued that PLCs could exist in the Philippines, if the formation of them was mandated by the superintendent. She contended that:

> *Now, as regards to undertaking that process, not actually*
> *tedious, however, each superintendent has a policy. And*
> *correct, it could exist in the Philippines, if it was part of the*
> *mandate of the division. Or there is policy that requires*
> *schools to have a time for PLCs. Or it should be included*
> *in the school calendar as provided by the central office.*

P1 also affirmed that there is a future for the formation of PLCs in the secondary schools in the Philippines. He pointed out that it was made possible for LAC sessions, then it could also be a possibility for PLCs in the country. However, he argued the challenge for schools is keeping PLCs consistent with the help of an existing school policy. He said:

> *If some schools implement LAC sessions, then I think that*
> *PLC would not be far from being a realisation in the future.*
> *I think it is feasible. The only problem is, going back to the*
> *issue, could we do it on a regular basis? There needs to be*
> *a directive coming from the division for schools to do it.*

Because as for LAC sessions, we do not have an existing memo or any guideline that we have to do it, so not everyone does it.

This response was also echoed by P4, when she pointed out that the LAC session is not mandated for in secondary schools. She argued:

LAC sessions are actually just for elementary teachers. They have guidelines on how to do it. They have training for it. And the elementary school principals are also required to include it in their year-end reports. But for us secondary schools, we don't have those kinds of training. We don't have a policy that requires us to do it.

Another participant also emphasised the significance of having an existing school policy for the formation of PLCs in the school. P2 pointed out that:

As for me, even though the school head would not be physically present when teachers convene for such purposes, the fact that there is an order coming from the division office or maybe even from the school head, then it would be enough to create a professional learning community within teachers.

Additionally, P5 narrated one of her experiences with her teachers when it came to absence of a mandate coming from the superintendent. She recalled:

So we have roll outs in our school but they are very minimal. As far as I can remember, I made one roll out with them of one of the seminars I have attended. And unfortunately, nobody followed my footsteps. Not because they do not want to but basically there was no guideline from the division on how to do a roll out or even just a policy that requires those roll outs.

4.7.2   Limited school funding

Some participants expressed that limited school funding is one of the reasons why schools cannot fully support the professional development needs of teachers. In their accounts of previous professional development experiences of teachers in their schools, it came out that the financial constraint of the school would also become one of the barriers for the formation of PLCs. As one principal explained:

> *In our division, there are only selected teachers who were sent to the region to train for mentoring. The rest, they do not perform mentoring in their school because they were not trained for it. I think what limits everyone to take advantage of these opportunities is the limited budget of every school. That is the same with PLCs, I think. Because we also need to train teachers how to become PLCs, right? We need to be knowledgeable on how to work it out. (P2)*

Another interviewee alluded to the notion of limited school funding as one barrier to the formation of PLCs. She related her experience with LAC sessions and how it was affected by the limited school funding. She explained:

> *I think one of the reasons why it was not sustained is financial constraint. Because there are times that you have to invite speakers who are experts of the subject area, well, of course, you need to pay for their transportation to come to your school. Also, you need to prepare for their food. And because you don't have enough school funds to cover the expenses, most of the time, it will be the teachers who will cover for it. They will contribute from their own pocket. That is what I see as one of the problems why some schools stop doing it. And I think it will be the same problem when we also do PLCs. (P5)*

4.7.3 Lack of time for collaborative learning

It was evident from the responses of the participants that they view the lack of time for teachers to learn collaboratively as one of the barriers to the formation of PLCs. Most of them affirmed that teachers would always try to find time to convene among each other. However, P3 explained that a directive from the Department of Education (DepEd) prohibiting learning gaps makes it more difficult for them to catch up with each other. She demonstrated this below.

> *So, the only element that is not with us graciously is time. Because it is a directive of DepEd not to have learning gaps. And we also adhere to what we call "time on task." No learning gaps. So it is really hard to squeeze everything in one setting or in a few days. Actually, our roll outs would cost us one day, or somehow, half a day. So, Friday afternoon becomes like our LAC session. And then in the following week, we will have another half day to complete the remaining topics. Or there are two days, as we have four half days in a month. So the difficulty there is if there is a more important activity for that particular Friday which may consume the whole day, then we would somehow sacrifice the LAC session.*

A parallel argument was also shared by another principal. She justified that being a specialised school makes it difficult for them to make time to learn collaboratively. She commented:

> *We are a school specialising in a certain field. Our teachers teach ten subject areas daily. That means that we do not have vacant periods. Even the kids. In the general-curriculum schools, they only have eight subject areas but for us, we have ten daily. We have two additional subjects for their specialisation. That's why teachers have difficulty making remedial classes with their students. How much more making time for each other? (P5)*

4.7.4   Issues in the attitudes of teachers

The principals admitted that negative attitudes of teachers towards work is another barrier they suspect to the creation of PLCs in their school. They narrated their experiences with some of the attitudinal problems they encountered with their teachers. P5 raised her concern about one teacher in her school who reacted negatively when advised to attend a training. She recounted that:

> *Just like one time, I sent a message to one of my teachers and asked him to go for a training in IT. But he refused, but I told him, "Obey first, before you complain because this is very important. We cannot say no to this." And you see, when he arrived at the venue, he called me. He told me about everything that they were doing. So I told him, "You see, that's why it is really very important that you are there. As for me, I really want my teachers to be good teachers, dedicated, and committed.*

Another issue around the attitudes of teachers, which one participant observed in his school, is being too conscious of the time they spend at work. He commented that after school hours, teachers tend to rush home. He viewed this as a problem. He explained:

> *Well, ahh… at this point in time, maybe it will be a struggle if we introduce the concept of PLC to them. You know because I noticed that it has become like a culture in this school that when the clock strikes at 5pm, they are already in a hurry to go home. They are very time conscious. But there are also a few who are willing to stay for a few more minutes to extend work so they can prepare for the following day. I imagine, for example, if I ask them to stay just for a few minutes for some PLC time, I don't know how they will react to that. Maybe it will take a generation for them to adapt into the culture of PLC. There is a need for "paradigm shift." (P2)*

On the other hand, one participant emphasised that it should always be expected to received mixed responses from the teachers when something new is introduced to them. He pointed out that:

> *There will always be mixed responses. Some are happy and positive, especially those we call passionate teachers. But there are those who are really negative thinkers. So what I do is I slowly introduce to them these initiatives, not abrupt implementation. Because chances are, you will get negative responses. (P1)*

4.8 Effective school leadership style

It is remarkable in the findings that the principals recurrently mentioned a range of effective school leadership styles. Participants argued that role modelling, collaborative leadership, ethical leadership, good management skills, and leading to create leaders are the key qualities of a leader in order to support teachers pursue professional growth and development.

4.8.1 Role modelling

The principals remarked that it is an important aspect of their leadership to become role models in the school. One principal noted that as a school leader, he must always lead by example. He elaborated that:

> *Well, as a school leader, you are supposed to be… I mean, it is with your peers, as a leader, they are looking up to you. It is my guiding principle in my profession and in my leadership as a whole that you always have to set good examples, professionally and emotionally. That is despite your problems at home; you should not bring them to work. (P2)*

It is also part of the expectations in the role of school leaders to lead followers into the right path. Hence, P2 added that:

> *And of course, most of the time, you need to be always on top of them. That you can raise them up in whatever*

struggles they are in. That's it, basically they are looking up to you. It needs to come from you first. You have to lead them to the right way. You have to lead by example.

Similarly, another participant argued that setting a good example as a leader creates a ripple effect of excellence in the school. P3 pointed out:

Because there is a ripple effect you know. Like when the school administrators are great leaders, that also cascades to the teachers. When they have great leaders, inspiring leaders, they are also motivated not only to learn but to apply their learning, and share their best strategies, and aim for excellence. And if we have teachers aiming for excellence, we can also expect to produce excellent students.

Role modelling is also critical in the Filipino culture of giving great respect to authorities. One participant pointed out his observation on how teachers value school authority. He explained that:

part of our culture is giving high regards to authorities. I see that in my teachers. In my school, I notice how important for teachers to seek approval in everything from the school head. They always value authority and respect. That's why, I believe that the passion for professional growth has to come first with the principal. Without the support of the principal, teachers will have a hard time. (P1)

4.8.2   Collaborative leadership

It is evident in the findings that collaborative leadership is one of the effective school leadership styles as viewed by the participants. The principal interviewees shared their experiences in demonstrating collaborative leadership in school. P5 commented:

I believe in shared governance in everything. Meaning to say, authority and accountability in schools must be shared by the school community and the stakeholders. It is about working together to achieve the goals of the school and of the DepEd, in general.

Collaborative leadership also serves as a key for schools to become successful. To achieve this, P3 argued that it must begin with the acknowledgment that no leader is perfect. She explained:

I believe the key to becoming successful in your leadership is making sure that everyone takes part in the leadership. As a leader, I am not perfect. I believe that no one is perfect. As for me, I have my own misgivings and imperfections. It is important that a school leader understands this. For me, I also learn from my colleagues, because there are just some things that I do not know. Sometimes I would think that my strategies are the best, but maybe my colleagues have better ideas. Maybe I can get pointers from them. That's why I want to call them my co-teachers, not my teachers, because I want to have that climate in my school where teachers feel that they are valued equally.

Additionally, P4 cited a situation in her school where collaborative leadership is regularly exercised. She narrated that:

Yes, we also do that [collaborative leadership]. I gather their suggestions all the time. Especially when we formulate our School Improvement Plan (SIP). It is not just the school planning team who does it. I really require everyone to take part in it. I ask the department heads and the school-level coordinators to gather the priorities of their teachers. Because I want everyone's priorities to appear in the SIP, not only my priority, or the priority of a selected few. There must be involvement of everyone. In fact, our student

governance and the parents' association are also invited to
be present during the SIP formulation.

P2 concluded that the secret to collaborative leadership is open communication among the staff. He pointed out that it is important for a leader to know how to listen. He argued:

In every decision that would affect the school as a whole, I
always make sure to consult the staff so I would hear their
opinions or expectations. As a leader, I have to listen to
them. I do not just make my own decisions; I have to also
listen to them.

4.8.3   Ethical leadership

The participants also identified ethical leadership as leading to serve the best interest of the common good as an important school leadership style. For example, one participant commented that in the midst of chaos and indifference that sometimes exist in the school organisation, striving to serve the common good of the organisation encourages her to keep steadfast in her role. She stated that:

I want to change the culture that is not somehow good for
growth and change in the school system. In January alone,
I have changed some things. I knew, even in 2015, that there
would be some negativities and complaints, but even if
negativities are there, even if there are complaints from the
colleagues, or students, parents, and community, I would
always stick to my guiding principle that when you do
something that is good for everyone, then you are sure that
you are doing it right. (P3)

In a like manner, P1 commented that leading for the common good would also mean serving the best interests of the students. He explained:

Although we will always have our own differences,
especially on our views about some issues such as our
obligations in the school, I would always tell them not to

think of ourselves, of our own convenience. I always ask
them to think about our sworn profession and the passion
that ignited us to be in this profession. Because, you know,
we are all here not for ourselves but for our clients, for our
students. We should always serve for their best interest.

This is also further emphasised by P2 when he argued that a good leader must always seek to serve the common good at all cost. He articulated that:

As a leader, you have to decide what is good for everybody,
not just for one person or a group of people. It has to be
always for the good of everybody. Even if that risks your
position as a leader, as long as it is for everyone's welfare.

4.8.4   Good management skills

Another effective school leadership style that emerged from the findings is good management skills. According to the participants, good management skills mean that school leaders know how to be strict to enforce authority and discipline. As one participant cited:

And of course, in dealing with your subordinates, it is
always a prerogative that as a leader, we have to practice
good management skills. In my part, I hear some comments
from the teachers that I am being strict, but I think that's
part of your role as a school manager. Because if you are
not strict, then what will happen to your school? There will
be chaos inside the school, right? (P1)

On the other hand, one participant argued that good management skills also translate to knowing how to put balance between being strict and being approachable. P5 explained:

They say I am strict, but that is when it comes to work. I
want them to realise that as teachers, we have serious
responsibilities. We are not here to play games because the
learning of our students is a serious business. But of course,

it needs to be balanced. I don't want my teachers to be intimidated by me as well. I want them to feel that they can also count on me. There were instances when some teachers were having difficulties in their lesson preparation for K to 12, some would approach me directly, which I am completely fine with. I am happy with that, because I know that even if I am being strict sometimes, I am still able to maintain camaraderie with my colleagues.

4.8.5 Leading to create leaders

It is evident in the findings that the participants recognise an effective leader when he or she is leading to create leaders among their followers. They argued that an effective leader is not selfish of the opportunities that would enable the teachers to grow in their career. As one participant put it:

As for me, I am not selfish. Because if there are memoranda for training, I always encourage them to take advantage of these opportunities. Just recently, in fact, I have asked one of my teachers to apply as a head teacher because I see his potential to become one. I have also informed two of my teachers who can be qualified to apply for principalship. So I really share information, not only in my school, but also to other teachers in other schools. Sometimes I hear them say that they only learn about such information from me. That's one way that I think I could be of help. (P3)

Similarly, P4 asserted that as a principal it makes her proud and fulfilled when her teachers get promoted to become school leaders themselves. She argued that it is not only about sharing of information for leadership opportunities but it is also about guiding them in the process. She commented:

Especially that I am encouraging them to become school heads also. Actually, in the school where I was first assigned as a principal, three of my teachers there were promoted to principalship before I left. I was the one who

constantly encouraged them to attend training and eventually to take the principal's exam. Aside from the professional development training I share with them, I was there to guide them in the process. I helped them review and understand how to effectively manage the school. It was some form of informal mentoring whenever I had time. Actually, right now in this school, I am very proud to say that five teachers already got promoted as head teachers. It is so fulfilling for me.

Lastly, one participant suggested that one effective way to train teachers to become leaders is by engaging them with administrative tasks. She recalled that her best learning experience before becoming a principal was when she was given leadership responsibilities in the school. She explained:

Experience gives us the best learning, I would say. When I got promoted as a head teacher in my previous school, I was given bigger leadership responsibilities. Those responsibilities trained me to become a good leader. I learned so much from them that when I took the principal's exam, I only took it once. You know, there were teachers who took the exam more than once and still didn't make it. Most of the questions in the exam are actually practical questions, so my hands-on experience helped me nail it. That's what I also do here with my teachers in whom I found leadership potential. I require them to take on every administrative task in the school. Well, of course, under my guidance. (P5)

These findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Five
DISCUSSION

5.1   Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings as presented in the previous chapter. It brings together these findings and the literature review to deliberate the implications of the study to the formation of professional learning community (PLC) in the Philippines. The overall structure of this chapter takes the form of three sections. The first section revolves around the factors that influence the lack of continuing professional development of teachers in the Philippines. The second section deals with the views of the principals on the formation of professional learning communities in their respective schools. And the remaining section proceeds with the effective leadership styles that principals considered to foster the development of such communities.

In the study, three main themes emerged. These themes however are quite broad; therefore, it is important to bear in mind that each theme comprises sub-themes. The first theme is the *lack of continuing professional development of teachers in the Philippines*. This theme highlights the two main categories which are the barriers to the effective implementation of the National Competency-based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) and the Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) as educational policies for teacher professional development and the range of professional development activities teachers engage in. It was in this theme where the loopholes of the NCBTS and RPMS as educational policies were highlighted. The second theme is the *varying view of secondary school principals in the development of PLCs in their schools*. This theme is divided into two main categories: the aspects of the school culture that contributed to the formation of PLCs and the corresponding barriers that hindered their successful formation in the schools. The third and final theme is the *effective leadership style as a key to support teachers in pursuing continuous growth and development in their professional career*. The principals revealed that role modelling, collaborative leadership, ethical leadership, and good management skills are among the effective leadership styles that support teacher professional development.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the semi-structured interview was the main data generation method for the study. It proved to be a highly useful method for allowing participants to express their views and experiences using their own words (Rouikera, 2013). This method helped the researcher establish a free-flowing conversation with participants that preserved the authenticity of their answers to the research questions. It likewise promoted a natural setting for the interview which ensued genuine collaboration from the interviewer and the interviewee (Cohen et al., 2000). Furthermore, in order to aid her in the resulting conversations regarding the NCBTS and the RPMS, the researcher employed policy analysis prior to the interview. The policy analysis was utilised to complement the interview data during data analysis.

5.2 Lack of continuing professional development of teachers in the Philippines

It emerged from the findings that principals view the lack of continuing professional development of teachers to be related to the implementation of teacher professional development policies. They pointed out that the barriers to the implementation of NCBTS and RPMS are the reasons why they fail to establish continuing professional development programmes for teachers. In this section, aspects within these educational policies are explored to justify the barriers such as overwhelming responsibilities, strong respect for hierarchical authority, and insufficient teachers' pre-service education.

5.2.1 Overwhelming school responsibilities

In the study, principals referred overwhelming school responsibilities to the "tremendous amount of paper work, outside-of-the-classroom activities, and clerical reports teachers have to comply with" (P1) relating to the RPMS and the NCBTS. As mentioned in the literature review, the NCBTS as a teacher professional development framework reinforced by the Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 32, series of 2011, is an assessment checklist of teachers' training and development needs. This assessment checklist requires "honest assessment of oneself to inform future professional development activities" ("DepEd Order No. 32," 2011, p. 3) designed for teachers in the public schools. In his interview, P2 remarked that he found the activity trivial. He commented, "I am

so saddened to notice that some teachers didn't take them seriously. They end up hitting the check buttons continuously without really understanding the questions." It is possible that this behaviour is due to the lack of "buy-in" from teachers. As Shorter (2013) explains, "buy-in provides opportunities for motivation and engagement" (p. 91). It is necessary therefore that teachers understand their participation of the appraisal process will make a positive impact not only to their teaching role but more importantly, to the learning of their students.

It is likely that the lack of buy-in from teachers is also the reason of the overwhelming feeling experienced by teachers as perceived by the principals. As mentioned in the literature review, the third phase of the RPMS requires review and assessment of teacher performance measured against the amount of documented evidence they are able to produce. The principals pointed out that this need to produce modes of verification or documented evidence spurred many teachers to "collect certificates" (P3). In addition, the principals admitted that this performance management policy has created stress to teachers resulting them to lose focus in their responsibilities inside the classroom. P3 pointed out that these teachers "…seldom teach. Most of the time, they are out attending training for a more personal purpose—to get certificates."

The RPMS and the NCBTS clearly stated in their policies that as appraisal system for teachers, their main purpose is to "be the basis for training and development" ("Guidelines on the establishment and implementation of the RPMS in the DepEd," 2015, p. 4) of teachers. This clearly emphasises that these policies serve as mechanism to support teacher development through performance appraisal. While teacher appraisal is a process that is capable of developing teacher expertise, Shorter (2013) argues that this may become problematic especially when teacher appraisal process becomes directly linked to salary progression and promotion purposes as it is in the Philippines. In the RPMS policy document, it is signified that the result of the performance assessment shall serve as the basis for the awards and incentives of the employee such as salary increment, promotion, and performance-based bonuses (DepEd Order No. 2, 2015). This provision in the policy seems to underpin the neo-liberal mechanism of performativity in schools. The performative competition that these policies promote requires teachers to stand out among each other. Ball (2003) describes this as teacher devolution where teachers are being "de-professionalised" and are reduced into the goods and

services they are able to produce. This reflects Harris's (2007) argument that "performativity requires that everything is commensurable with everything else so that everything and everyone can be measured against standards" (p. 52). This educational thought may help us to understand the frustration of the principals as they noticed that the appraisal system has developed teachers' consciousness on achieving high ratings rather than focusing on their professional growth. It can thus be suggested that the formative nature of these appraisal systems that is critical to teachers' professional growth (Shorter, 2013) may have been overshadowed by the compliance requirements of the appraisal process.

5.2.2 Strong respect for hierarchical authority

The strong respect for hierarchical authority is acknowledged as widely spread in countries around the South East Asia. As Hallinger (2003) argues, this is both advantageous and disadvantageous to the level of authority exercised by the principals in schools. It is advantageous because it increases the day-to-day influence of East Asian principals over their schools. It can be detrimental at the same time because it limits the systemic authority of principals in their schools. The study found that in the Philippines, the strong respect for hierarchical authority may have become a force that limits the principals in the exercise of their authority to support professional growth of their teachers. This is reflected in the statement of one of the principals who said: "… there are instances that I have to hold back because that would mean a hard time proposing to the superintendent" (P2).

This interesting finding echoes the thinking of Keeves and Watanabe (2003) who claim that "principal leadership in East Asian systems is strongly shaped by the cultural and institutional context of their schools" (p. 1003). In addition, in their study on leadership and creativity in East Asian countries, Shouse and Ma (2015) found out that strong respect for hierarchical authority is an invisible wall that guards school leaders from fully realising their creativity and leadership potentials. Lockette (2012) also argued that this widely held cultural norm of leadership that is strongly linked to rank and authority makes it difficult to implement school reforms.

Nevertheless, these findings cannot be extrapolated to all principals in the Philippines. Efforts have been made through policies to reshape the roles of principals by enhancing their autonomy through decentralisation. Keeves and

Watanabe (2003) argue that decentralisation is a key to increase flexibility and responsibility so that principals can respond to their colleague's voice and work closely with them in order to arrive consensus on school-level decisions. It is noteworthy that in the Philippines, not only in its education sector but generally in its politico-administrative setting, there is an abounding conflict between a highly-centralised government and a demand for authority among the local institutions so they can be more responsive to local problem situations (De Guzman, 2007). It was not surprising when the principals in the study mentioned their dilemma about initiating reforms in their schools and their reluctance in pursuing them. Additionally, the Philippine Commission on Educational Reform prescribed that teaching should be the primary activity of teachers and various distractions that remove teachers from classrooms in a regular basis should be eliminated (de Guzman, 2007). This corroborates the fears of P3 when she mentioned in her interview that "any activity that would affect, or would be taken from academic learning, would mean asking permission from the division office." This may have strong implication for teacher effectiveness. As Nir (2002) emphasises in his study, only if there is professional autonomy will teachers achieve effectiveness and commitment to personal growth. In the context of a developing country such as the Philippines however, there is a paucity of empirical evidence that shows how decentralisation affects teacher effectiveness and professional growth.

5.2.3 Insufficient pre-service education of teachers

In the study, the findings indicated that the lack of continuing professional development of teachers was exacerbated by the insufficient pre-service education of some teachers. Some principals expressed disappointment that some teachers in their schools had not undergone proper teacher education before entering the teaching profession. Ideally, teacher education in the Philippines comprises a four-year college degree in education and teacher candidates have to pass the national licensure examination (Agarao-Fernandez & Guzman, 2005). Nevertheless, the increasing demand for teachers in the Philippines resulted in the enactment of the Higher Education Act of 1994 which qualifies non-education graduates to teach in public schools provided that they have earned 18 units in professional education courses and have passed the licensure examination for teachers (Commission on Higher Education, 2009). Villegas-Reimers (2003) pointed out that the increasing

demand for teachers and the lack of candidates entering the profession in developing countries have become a fertile ground for the proliferation of alternative teacher certification programmes.

Consequently, the principals shared their observation that some of the teachers who are non-education degree holders lack pedagogical knowledge and assessment literacy. P5 emphasised that some of these teachers "do not know the actual methods of teaching. They do not have the strategies in teaching." This is also supported by P4 as she argued that the 18 units in professional education courses are not enough for aspiring teachers to completely understand the complexities of the students' cognitive processes. Both principals pointed out that because of the lack of sufficient pre-service education, these teachers fail to create classroom activities that motivate the students to learn and they also fail to construct effective questions that will truly assess their learning needs.

Furthermore, the need for teachers to be fully knowledgeable of teaching pedagogies is strongly urged by the Department of Education. In the policy guidelines it released on June 2016, it specified that teachers must master the content and performance standards and learning competencies required to teach in order for them to plan their lessons well, effectively deliver instruction, and assess student learning to enhance their teaching (Department of Education, 2016a). This may possibly result in a tension between the national expectations from the teachers and what the teachers can actually deliver in the field. It is also disappointing to discover that there is a lack of formal induction programme for new teachers in the Philippines. If there is any, it is in the form of a workshop-orientation that takes place in a few days outside the school. Unlike countries such as New Zealand and Japan, they provide huge amount of support and funding to new teachers so they acquire the essential tools needed inside the classroom. For example, in New Zealand, teachers will not be fully registered unless they have completed two years of classroom experience. While in Japan, new teachers are given lighter workload so they are able to attend in-school training sessions twice a week (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). In the Philippines, teacher-preparation is hugely relied upon the teacher education institutions and new teachers are expected to already know what to do when they enter their classrooms. This was echoed in the disappointment of the principals when they shared their observation about the lack of pedagogical content knowledge and skills of the new teachers. However frustrating this may

seem, these findings suggest the implication of having a continuing professional development for teachers to continuously calibrate teacher practices and role expectations. Yet the question lies in the quality of the available professional development opportunities offered to teachers.

5.2.4 PD opportunities teachers engage in

In the study, one important finding was that there is a wide range of professional development opportunities available for teachers in the Philippines. It emerged from the findings that the most common ones are the following: attending organised convention seminars and workshops held wholly away from the school, LAC sessions, in-service training, school-based mentoring, and community of practice. Theoretically, the diversity of these professional development opportunities for teachers may be beneficial for teachers as it may likely cater to their diverse learning needs. Nevertheless, they remained scrutinised in the quality of content they offer to teachers. Timperley et al. (2007) point out that it is not necessarily about the programmes or activities that work for teachers but the "underlying resources that the programmes or activities offer participants to change what they are already doing" (p. 19). This means that the content of these professional development activities needs to be challenging for teachers so that it provides multiple and ongoing occasions of critical reflection regarding their practice.

Despite educational criticisms mentioned earlier in the literature review, attending organised short-term convention seminars and workshops have become a common opportunity for teacher professional development in the Philippines. As the findings revealed, the principals recognised their benefits to teachers however they reiterated that the lack of school funding makes it difficult for teachers to regularly attend to them. One of the principals mentioned that those opportunities are fertile ground for the blossoming of new teacher trainers who take on leadership of sharing their learning with their colleagues. These teacher trainers are those teachers who have the capacity to "spend their own money" (P3) to attend to these seminars and workshops. Their learning, as revealed in the study, was shared with their colleagues during the school-based professional development activities such as in-service training (INSET) and LAC session. The INSET in the Philippines is a formalised 5-day training that takes place during the semestral break of students. It

reflected in the description of the principals of their INSET that the kind of in-service training teachers receive is a traditional directed instruction where teachers take the roles of speakers and their colleagues as the listeners. This suggests that in spite of the varied opportunities for teacher professional development, they still filter down to the same traditional directed instruction that teachers usually get.

5.3 Views of principals on the formation of PLCs in their schools

The study demonstrates the views of the secondary school principals in the formation of PLCs in their schools. It was mentioned earlier that principals associate their views on PLCs on the formation of learning teams in their respective schools. The formation of these learning teams, as the findings revealed, is attributed to the prevailing school culture that is reflected on the values of the majority of their teachers. In addition, principals also elaborated that despite positive values of teachers that enable these learning teams, there are a number of barriers that impede their successful formation.

5.3.1 Aspects of the school culture that contributed to the formation of PLCs

The third question in the study sought to determine the views of the secondary school principals in the development of PLCs in the Philippines. It was revealed in the findings that they associated their understanding of PLCs in their knowledge about the existing learning teams in their school. P5 narrated that teachers in her school would meet at their available time, usually an hour before time out from work, to discuss issues and concerns in the workplace. This meeting as she argued is a form of learning team as "teachers know their mistakes and weaknesses and it is a learning process in itself" (P5). This willingness to collaborate in solving issues inside the classroom and in the school is one of the aspects of the school culture that principals view to contribute to the formation of PLCs.

5.3.1.1 Collaborative learning

When the concept of collaboration in PLCs was explained to P5, she automatically quipped "it is the same thing that we do around here." She did not stop smiling as she carefully described the culture of collaboration that she believes to be thriving in her school. Her demeanour exuded pride and happiness as she

explained that majority of teachers in her school actively seeks out opportunities for learning with colleagues. P5 argued that this willingness of teachers to learn collaboratively has resulted to a discernible improvement in the school's learning environment. P5 furthered that "when teachers are actively engaged in their learning, you will also see that their students are excited to learn."

These results are similar to the findings of the study conducted by Rosenholtz (1989). She found out that some of the cultural characteristics of schools correlated with student learning in Mathematics and reading. She points out that the schools under study whose teachers rarely spoke to each other and who work isolated from one another are the ones who are not interested in their own professional learning. The student data in these schools appeared low compared to the schools whose teachers are actively participating in learning opportunities with their colleagues (Rosenholtz, 1989). The collaborative culture of learning and problem solving also helps teachers address issues inside the classroom. P2 recalled that despite hearing complaints about teachers getting physically stressed out and exhausted at work, he believed that the value of helping each other makes the work bearable and easier. "Teachers become responsive rather than reactive" (P2). As described by P2, most teachers in his school draw strength from constructive conversations with colleagues, they share with each other practical hints and tricks in resolving classroom issues and managing their students.

The culture of collaborative learning is crucial within school organisations because it sustains a positive relationship among teachers. Teaching is difficult and challenging work hence teachers need one another to help ease each other's burden. If the mentality of teachers inside a school is individualistic— where one only thinks of his or her own classroom or his or her own students, Fleming and Kleinhenz (2007) suggest that this school is most likely going to fail. Teacher isolation is known to be a deep-seated problem in schools around the world. It is reinforced by school timetable as teachers, in most cases, struggle with work overload; hence, withdraw themselves into the confines of their classroom (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). It is somewhat surprising that majority of the principals shared that they have overcome teacher isolation in their schools. They proudly narrated that their teachers are working together to improve their daily teaching practice. Both P4 and P5 commented that teachers find time to meet and discuss issues that will help them improve in their practice.

The reason for the presence of collegiality amidst the pressure teachers face is not clear but it may have something to do with the culture of 'Bayanihan' that is unique to Filipinos. The 'Bayanihan' is a Filipino term for communal unity that is commonly used in the earlier times when a family moves into another village. The whole neighbourhood would help carry the house, made of lightweight materials such as bamboo and dried 'nipa' (a local palm tree) leaves, on their shoulders. Filipinos still use the term nowadays for helping each other in order to ease each other's burden. The bamboo house is a metaphor for the increasing pressure in meeting reform demands placed upon the schools in the Philippines. In order to overcome the pressure and lighten up the burden that everyone carries, teachers resort to 'Bayanihan.' They felt the need to rely on each other and to learn from each other as they continuously face major changes in the workplace. P3 concisely put it, "we help each other. We share our opinions and best practices… I think it is the only way for us to succeed, to help each other."

5.3.1.2   *Openness to change*

The study revealed that openness to change pertains to teachers' being open to new learning resulting from the technological advancements introduced to the classrooms. P2 recognised that it is crucial for teachers to be creative in their teaching strategies because students nowadays have more advanced ways of learning outside the classroom. This was also echoed by P1 as he argued that "… the education system itself upgrades. The traditional method of teaching needs to be changed because we need to adapt to new technologies" (P1). What might have been tried-and-tested in the past years might not work in the coming years. Consequently, the Department of Education provides technical support to teachers by providing them information technology training. They also provide infrastructures such as internet connectivity in every school and multimedia classrooms. Teachers in the Philippines, including those in the rural areas, can now routinely utilise PowerPoint in lesson presentations or use YouTube video streaming to reinforce their lessons.

Nevertheless, P2 pointed out that there are teachers who are still not comfortable in integrating technology in their lessons and teaching practices. P2 also concluded that teachers who have long been teaching traditionally are the ones who are most likely to have a hard time integrating technology in their teaching

practices. Referring to his experience, P2 recollected that this might be the reason why in most training he used to attend as a teacher, the ones being sent to participate were the newly hired ones. "That's what I observed. Those who are new to the service, they are the ones who can easily adapt to what we call paradigm shift" (P2).

It is difficult to explain this result, but it might be related to the existing teacher beliefs regarding instructional strategies. This is expounded by Johnson and Fargo (2010) stating that willingness to embrace change happens when teachers realise the need for them to improve and when they see the benefits of stepping out of their comfort zones. It is important that teachers understand the change process and they get the level of support they need from their principals and colleagues to increase their likelihood of reacting favourably to change. Major organisational change almost always generates anxiety and fear in people, nonetheless, if there is an understanding about why change is necessary, they would feel in control. Researchers point out that teacher change is only acceptable if the ultimate goal is improving practice to increase student learning (Fishman, Marx, Best, & Tal, 2003; Johnson & Fargo, 2010). The principals in the study concurred that the challenge to transform all schools into learner-centred institutions calls for them to refocus the professional development framework. They have to ensure that teachers get the kind of support relevant to what is expected of them inside the classroom. This mentality shows the willingness of the principals to change their views on the delivery of professional development so that it answers the needs of their teachers.

5.3.2 Barriers that hindered successful formation of PLCs in schools

The principals in the study acknowledged that while there were aspects of school culture that could help promote the development of PLCs in their school, barriers in the school systems that make these communities successful were also in place. These barriers were the absence of concrete policy guidelines for the formation of learning teams and limited school funding. It is important to bear in mind that the principals revealed the first barrier before the release of Department of Education Order No. 35, series of 2016. Apparently, all of the principals didn't have any idea that a policy guideline on learning teams was being drafted and was scheduled to be released the same time that the researcher was interviewing them in the field. This section, therefore, will not only tackle the findings during the field interview but this will also deliberate on the resulting conversations the researcher

had with the principals after the department order was released. These conversations were recorded in her reflection journal as they were no longer part of the interview transcript. In this way, the researcher will be able to provide a holistic interpretation of the events related to the study in and out of the field.

5.3.2.1 *Absence of concrete policy guidelines*

Another important finding was that principals place high value on the presence of a concrete policy guideline that will reinforce commitment from teachers. All of the principals argued that should there be a concrete policy guideline, concrete—meaning an actual document or department order that would require action and compliance, it won't be hard for them to seek commitment from the teachers in the formation of PLCs. This is shown when P3 said "… it [PLCs] could exist in the Philippines, if it is a part of the mandate of the division. Or there is policy that requires schools to have a time for PLCs. Or it should be included in the school calendar as provided by the central office." This was also echoed by P1 when he said "there needs to be a directive coming from the division for schools to do it."

Earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that principals have a strong respect for hierarchical authority. The presence of a policy coming from the top-level of the hierarchy was enough to give principals the confidence that they were doing it right. This finding is somewhat disappointing because it might imply that without a concrete policy guideline or the blessing of the people from the higher chain of command in the hierarchy, initiating a school reform would be difficult for the principals. In July 2016, soon after the researcher's field interview with the principals was completed, the Department of Education Order No. 35 was uploaded on the department's website. Upon gaining access to the document, the researcher contacted the principals and asked them through online chat regarding their views about the new professional development policy. Interestingly, only two of them were familiar of the policy and the rest was only about to look it up in the website.

The new policy prescribes the Learning Action Cell (LAC) as a school-based continuing professional development strategy for the improvement of teaching and learning. It recognises that most of the professional development programmes initiated previously by the department is of top-down nature where instruction is directed through lectures or workshops and other short-term courses.

The new policy argues that the locus of teacher learning is at the school and teachers must actively participate in collegial discussions that improve teaching and student learning. The LAC, therefore, becomes a school-based professional learning community as teachers "engage in collaborative learning sessions to solve shared challenges encountered in the school facilitated by the school head or a designated LAC Leader" (Department of Education, 2016a, p. 3). The Department of Education acknowledged that this policy is first of its kind as it promotes a bottom-up approach for teacher professional development. Hence, this policy institutionalises the LAC as a continuing professional development approach for teachers.

It was mentioned in the literature review that some schools in the Philippines have ongoing school learning action cells or SLACs. This was also confirmed by P4 when she mentioned that some schools at the primary level are already practicing LAC during their in-service training or school term break. In the new policy, nonetheless, it is recommended that LAC sessions are conducted "one to two hours a week… or … at least once a month" (Department of Education, 2016a, p. 9). It also urges the principals to prioritise LAC sessions over administrative meetings as it is the "support system for teachers who are tasked to deliver basic education, which is the core business of the department" (Ibid.). The figure on the next page shows the LAC procedure as prescribed by the Department of Education Order No. 35, series of 2016. The formation of LACs begins with the assessment of teachers' learning needs using performance assessment tools, classroom observations, and critical reflection journals. Once teachers' learning needs are identified, the prioritisation of topics for LACs will follow. The LAC Leader and the prospective members of the LAC will arrive into a consensus on which topics to prioritise. The prioritisation of topics will be based on the urgency of need, the time needed in addressing the need, and among others. Finally, once the topics are established the LAC team will be formed. The number of teacher participants in every team may vary but each team must have a leader, a facilitator, a documenter, and members.
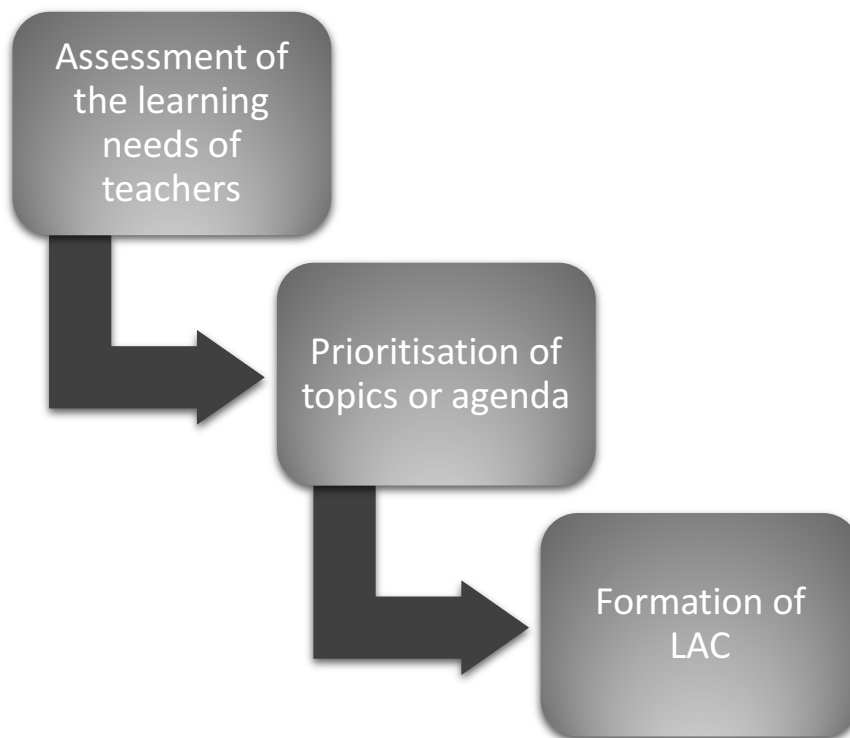
Figure 4: LAC procedure as prescribed by the Department of Education

The technical aspects in the formation of LAC are well stipulated in the policy. These aspects include how are meetings should be scheduled, where to get the resources, what specific roles each member performs, and some LAC norms. While this information is crucial to the formation of LAC, it still does not satisfy the main concern of the principals. In one of the online conversations which the researcher recorded in her reflection journal, P3 shared her apprehension that the policy seems to assume that all K to 12 principals have previous experience in doing LAC sessions. She explained that while the policy appears straightforward in providing instructions on how to form LAC in schools, it does not have any provision on the professional support LAC Leaders are entitled to receive. Referring back to the statement of P4 in her interview, she mentioned that some principals in the primary level were previously given LAC training to perform effectively in their roles. She pointed out "there are many schools who don't know how to do it because none of their teachers have experienced being part of it" (P4). While the principals agreed that the policy would help tremendously in creating learning teams, it is definitely not enough to ensure that collaborative learning conversations will exist in schools. It is equally important that principals are given

support to develop the necessary knowledge and inquiry skills to engage in learning conversations. This support may be in the form of LAC Leaders' training or external coach or mentors who will help promote a reflective inquiry and dialogue among the LAC members. This is an important issue for future research.

In her study about Professional Learning Leaders (PLLs) in a number of schools in New Zealand, Bewley (2012) found out that it is important to have a learning coach that works alongside PLLs as they explore their leadership capacity in a learning community context. One of her participants commented that they would have not done it the way they would without the support of an expert (Bewley, 2012). Furthermore, in their study among 26 New Zealand schools, Robinson, Phillips, and Timperley (2002) observed that principals seldom used student achievement data to evaluate their teaching programmes. They suggest that this was due to school leaders' limited knowledge on how to draw the implications of these data to teaching. "The limitations of this knowledge, in turn, restricted the learning that was possible from data on student achievement" (Earl & Timperley, 2009, p. 22). Hence, both the findings and the literature indicate that for principals to effectively implement the formation of PLCs, a professional learning coach or a resource person would be necessary. Nevertheless, Stover, Kissel, Haag, and Shoniker (2011) warned that the role of the coach or of the resource person must be only to lead the LAC members into self-discovery and self-actualisation as practitioners who are confident of their own inquiry skills.

5.3.2.2 *Limited school funding*

The study also found that principals view limited school funding as one of the barriers to the successful formation of PLCs in schools. This limited funding is related to the expenses that schools will incur through provision of training to the teachers and principals who will engage in PLCs. P2 shared his experience that there are schools in the division who practice mentoring because they have school leaders and teachers who were sent to the regional office to train in coaching and mentoring. He argued that every school could have sent a teacher to participate in the training but unfortunately not everyone would have the luxury to do it. He pointed out that every school has its own priority in their school funding which comes from the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) as allocated

in the national budget. The MOOE is identified through projected enrolment of every school (Department of Education, 2016b).

Similarly, P5 pointed out that if schools were to form PLCs, they would need to train principals and teachers to learn the complexities of reflective inquiry so that it won't be "another lecture or a seminar only that it goes by a different name" (P5). P5 also added that besides ensuring that human resource is adequate and well-prepared, they would need to also tap material resources such as equipment, venues, food, and transportation. Both P2 and P5 expressed their concern that the school's MOOE is always limited; therefore, the formation of PLCs would entail that teachers might have to share the expenses from their personal pocket. Moreover, this was confirmed by the new professional development policy as it is stated in paragraph 17.9 of the document that in the formation of LAC "the budget shall come from the school's respective MOOE and other external grants" (Department of Education, 2016b). One of the principals shared her frustration upon reading the policy document, P3 explained that she was already making both ends meet with the current school funding, thus trying to create LAC that meets once a week or at least once a month might make it more financially challenging for her and her teachers. An implication of this finding is that ensuring that school funding is enough or searching for external grants for teacher professional development activities such as the LAC or PLCs may place an added pressure upon the shoulders of the principals. The researcher argues that policy makers should have allocated a specialised funding for this initiative if they were truly serious about helping teachers in increasing student achievement. A further study with more focus on the relationship between school funding and student achievement in schools in the Philippines is also recommended.

5.4   Effective leadership style

The third and the final theme is the effective leadership style as a key to support teachers in pursuing continuous growth and development in their professional career. The principals revealed that role modelling, distributed leadership, good management skills, ethical leadership, and leading to create leaders are among the effective leadership styles that support teacher professional development.

5.4.1 Role modelling

As discussed earlier, Filipino teachers have high regard for hierarchical authority. The findings showed that one of the implications of this is that teachers look up to their school leaders as role models. This means that as leaders who hold power and authority in schools, they must be worth emulating in the eyes of their followers. P2 explained this further that as a leader, he must set a good example to his teachers and he must be able to lead them into the right direction. Role modelling is basically doing what one says or as cliché puts it, walking the talk. Accordingly, walking the talk generates leadership credibility. Being a credible leader according to Noonan (2003) is being consistent in words and in actions, that a leader is able to demonstrate what they preach. This raised an important issue that if schools have to become PLCs, the passion for learning and professional growth must begin with the school leader. In other words, if principals want their schools to become PLCs, the principal as the role model of teachers must be the leader of learning. They don't leave the learning on the hands of their teachers, they must become an active part of it. As P1 would put it "the passion for professional growth has to come first from the principal." When the principal serves as a role model, Schultz (2013) argued that it puts them "in a position where others are willing to trust and accept directions" (p. 50). Likewise, as a role model of learning, principals also act as instructional leaders. It was mentioned earlier in the literature review that being an instructional leader, principals must involve themselves in continuous professional development just as they require their teachers (Graham, 2009; Marzano et al., 2005; and Sergiovanni, 2009). In this way, they are not only creating a meaningful learning environment in the school but most importantly, they provide a structure of support for teachers to continuously improve themselves.

5.4.2 Collaborative leadership

All of the principals in the study agreed that if schools were to become PLCs, leadership must be collaborative among the members of the organisation. This was highlighted by P5 when she said that "authority and accountability in school must be shared by the school community and the stakeholders." This finding also resonates in the PLC literature that for PLCs to effectively work, teachers must feel they are valued equally by being able to contribute in the school's decision making and where they can freely participate in the school's collective learning

(DuFour et al., 2010; Hord & Sommers, 2008). On the other hand, in the context of the Philippines where hierarchy and top-down leadership still exist, collaborative leadership remains a challenge for both teachers and principals. Teachers are accustomed to looking up to leaders as the ones who are 'all knowing' and 'all powerful'. Some teachers are reluctant to open up themselves and share accountability in the decision-making because they view themselves as followers. Thus, in order to permeate into these long-held heroic leadership belief of some of her teachers, P3 shared a remarkable comment that it must begin with self-acknowledgment that a leader is not a hero or an expert of everything. She commented that:

> As for me, I have my own misgivings and imperfections. It is important that a school leader understands this. For me, I also learn from my colleagues because there are just some things that I do not know. Sometimes I would think that my strategies are the best, but maybe my colleagues have better ideas. Maybe I can get pointers from them. That's why I want to call them my co-teachers, not my teachers, because I want that climate in my school where teachers are valued equally.

This comment aligns with the perspective of Sergiovanni (2009) as he puts emphasis on the change on organisational thinking, particularly developing the understanding that leadership involves many actors who has a variety of expertise that contributes to the success of the organisation. Moreover, the change in leadership mindset promotes liberation that stimulates members to lead themselves and others. Lynch (2012) calls this as empowerment where members become leaders in their own right. This finding has an important implication to the formation of PLCs in the Philippines, particularly in the success of LACs as mandated by the Department Order No. 35, series of 2016. One of the objectives of this policy is to create teachers who are leaders of their own learning. As leaders of their own learning, teachers must believe that they are accountable for their own learning and that participation in professional development activities or in LAC sessions is not enough to change their teaching practices. They must believe that "serious engagement in their own learning is part and parcel of what it means to be a professional and they must expect to be held accountable for continuously improving themselves" (Timperley et al., 2007, p. 192).

5.4.3   Ethical leadership

Another important finding that emerged in the study was that principals viewed ethical leadership as an effective leadership style in the successful formation of PLCs in the Philippines. This kind of leadership as most principals defined it is the ability to serve the best interest of the common good or more specifically, the best interest of their main clients—the students. Most of the principals who suggested that ethical leadership is necessary in building PLCs in schools shared their experience that it is normal to face adversities and chaos in their roles. These adversities and chaos may result to ethical dilemmas that principals have to stick to their moral compass to arrive into a decision. P1 and P5 echoed this in their interview that when confronted by ethical issues inside the school, either complaints from colleagues, students, or from the community, they always stick to their principle that the interest of the students should come first. In an empirical study conducted by Stefkovich and Begley (2007), they found out that decision making in schools is ultimately influenced by the best interest of students. This is especially when principals are confronted with ethical issues and that building consensus becomes difficult, they use ethic as a focus to establish collective and strategic results (Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). In addition, advancing the welfare of the students, teachers, and other school stakeholders must always be the priority of every principal more than their personal interest. According to Branson (2007), the principal must nurture moral consciousness and self-reflection to guide his or her leadership behaviour. P2 exemplifies this moral consciousness when he shared that there had been times when ethical dilemmas were too pressing that it might risk his leadership role, but the good of the students and of the whole school served as the moral compass that steered his leadership. This comment emphasised what Schultz (2013) wrote about being an ethical leader. He explained that ethical leaders should view the job of leadership as:

> A responsibility, not as a platform for adulation and unbound privilege; not as a place to show others how smart, driven, and deserving they are, but as an assignment to create collective good where outcomes are balanced against the potential for harm. (p. 50)

From the perspective of ethical leadership, advancing the best interest of the students and of the whole school means creating the conditions that will improve

student performance. An ethical school leader must view it as a moral imperative that the overall long-term effect of his or her decisions must always be to increase student learning. Lynch (2012) calls it as the ethics of the profession where professionals are constantly aware of their code of ethics, of what is expected of them and what they are expected to do to serve the best interest of the students. This self-awareness is important for teachers as professionals to constantly calibrate themselves in order to serve the diverse learning needs of their students. It can thus be suggested that as a teacher, improving one's self in order to better perform one's duty is a moral and ethical accountability.

5.4.4 Good management skills

Two of the principals in the study suggested that good management skills are also important in the development of PLCs in the Philippines. This finding is one that cannot be overlooked because effective school leadership also involves managing and organising professional learning opportunities that would be of benefit for teachers to improve their practice. Most of the leadership literature on principal's managerial role entails managing the more mundane processes and functions related to the organisation's human, financial, and physical infrastructures (Sergiovanni, 2009; Law & Glover, 2000). In the study however, good management skill is defined in the perspective of managing a learning organisation. P1 and P2 mentioned that in order to become an effective leader, a leader must know when to employ different leadership and management styles. For example, P1 narrated that there were instances when he had to be authoritarian to enforce engagement from the teachers. He added that he heard from a number of teachers complaining about him being "strict" but he argued that it was necessary to maintain order and to avoid chaos. In addition, another principal pointed out that it is important that a leader knows how to maintain balance between leadership and managerial roles. She said:

> You have to be strict but not to the point of being intimidating.
> Your teachers must be able to feel that you are approachable so
> that they will not hesitate coming up to you to seek for help. It is
> crucial that as a leader, you know different management
> strategies. (P5)

This finding agrees with Colmer's (2008) study about learning organisations in Australian early childhood schools. She shared her reflections as a

school leader that articulating a vision is not sufficient. She recalled an experience when she attempted to set a vision to stir her colleagues into action and commitment, yet they remained unwilling and went back to old practices. At first, she was reluctant but eventually decided to get tough with her team. Her situation is related to what P1, P2 and P5 also experienced in their schools. This finding suggests that a leader will always encounter different situations that will call for different leadership styles. Therefore, a "leader must have a repertoire of strategies and management skills to ensure team performance" (Colmer, 2008, p. 110).

Thus far, the thesis has identified the three broad themes that emerged from the findings. It has also explained the implications of these themes to the formation of PLCs in the Philippines. The chapter that follows moves on to the conclusion of the study. It is where the summary of significant findings and the recommendations for further research work are presented.

Chapter Six
CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The study examined the roles and perspectives of secondary school principals in the development of professional learning communities (PLCs) in the Philippines. It specifically investigated the approaches of secondary school principals to the formation of PLCs in their schools. The underlying assumption was that principals' understanding of their roles in the implementation of existing teacher professional development policies from the Department of Education is central to the successful formation of PLCs. It is in this light that the first and second research questions were aimed at exploring the perceptions of the principals about the existing professional development (PD) policies for teachers, and their approach to implementing them.

While the participants have provided rich insights towards the research questions, it cannot be overlooked that a limitation of the study lies in the relatively small sample size. As mentioned earlier in the third chapter, purposive sampling was used so that the data generated by the study would be reflective of the diversity of backgrounds of the schools where these principals came from, and be of benefit to a diverse audience. Despite this intention, the small sample size did not allow the generation of a more holistic view of the experiences of the principals, as they represented only a minute number of the general school population in Masbate. A larger number of participants—that perhaps included head teachers and classroom teachers—could potentially have provided a wide range of professional development experiences that would have resulted in more inclusive findings.

To some extent, the study was also limited by the lack of information on PLCs in the Philippines. This was evident in principals' limited understanding on how PLCs operate. Such limited understanding also became one of the challenges encountered by the researcher during the field interviews. Lastly, the study did not employ multiple interactive data collection methods. The use of these could have provided a more effective approach to capturing data on a larger, deeper and richer scale from the participants. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study has proved

effective and successful in providing significant insights into the experiences of principals in the development of, and approaches to PLCs in the Philippines.

6.2   Summary of significant findings

The most obvious finding to emerge from the study was the lack of continuing professional development programmes for teachers in the Philippines. It has been shown in the findings that there were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the principals in the study identified that the overwhelming school responsibilities, strong respect for hierarchical authority, and insufficient pre-service education of teachers were the major barriers that made it difficult for them to introduce and implement professional development programmes for teachers. These findings were drawn from the experiences of the principals as they implemented the Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) and the National Competency-based Teacher Standards (NCBTS), the two main teacher professional development policies for public schools. Secondly, despite having a wide range of professional development activities available for teachers, the nature of these opportunities is still the same traditional directed instruction, which has been hugely criticised in the education literature. This suggests that in spite of the many policies aimed at teacher professional development reform, the idea of Timperley et al. (2007) still holds true—that the problem does not lie in the type of programmes or activities teachers engage in but in the content of these activities that would lead and motivate teachers to change their current practices.

The second major finding was the lack of continuing professional development programmes. This suggests that the principals in the study are not able to establish PLCs in their schools. Nonetheless, the principals shared significant insights into what counted as important factors that would help in the creation of PLCs, and what they believed would be the potential barriers that they might face upon creation of these communities. It emerged from the findings that having a culture of collaboration in a school and a staff's openness to change are two significant characteristics that support the formation of PLCs. These are attributes which principals considered to be most effective in engaging teachers in continuing professional development. The principals believed that being open to change would make it easier for teachers to embrace changes in the teacher professional development framework of the school.

It can be argued too that this research has shown that the culture of collaboration, as demonstrated by teachers, is connected to the unique Filipino culture of 'Bayanihan'. The 'Bayanihan' is an invaluable aspect of Filipino culture where people are always ready to help carry each other's burden. This spirit of collegiality exemplifies the collaborative relationship that is present in PLCs. The implication of this for schools in the Philippines is that the willingness of teachers to help each other could be a driving force for the successful formation of PLCs in the country.

In spite of the abovementioned factors that may contribute to the formation of PLCs in their schools, the principals identified a number of barriers which they claim are deterrents. The absence of concrete policy guidelines and limited school funding were articulated as two major concerns. The findings have shown that principals' strong respect for hierarchical authority instigated their reluctance to establish learning teams within their schools. This finding may have a strong implication in relation to the level of confidence of the principals in their leadership. Moreover, limited school funding was also viewed as a barrier to the formation of PLCs, because the principals anticipated that establishing professional learning teams would require human and physical resources, which are costly. The new Learning Action Cell (LAC) policy reinforces this, as it requires principals to use their existing school funding or to generate external grants in order to sustain the activities related to the formation of LACs. This may be problematic, as incorporating LAC expenses into the existing operational expenses of the schools may increase the principals' stress level at the work place.

Finally, the findings of the study also reinforced the idea that effective leadership style is a key to the successful formation of PLCs or to support teachers in pursuing continuous growth and development in their professional career. The findings suggest that these effective leadership styles are role modelling, collaborative leadership, ethical leadership, and good management skills. Although it cannot be argued that top-down leadership predominantly exists in school organisations involved in the study, it was found that it served a good purpose, as teachers and the other school staff looked up to their leaders as role models. The downside of this, however, is that some principals considered strong culture of hierarchy in the organisation as an obstruction to the promotion of culture of collaboration inside the school. This highlights the importance of a leadership style

that recognises teachers as leaders of their own learning. In addition, the study has raised an important question about the nature of ethical leadership—that advancing a school's common good also translates into creating teachers who are leaders of their own learning and who are aware that making themselves better is their moral and ethical responsibility. Finally, a further and significant finding of the study is that when schools adopt PLCs, the leader must have a repertoire of strategies and management skills to be able to respond to different school situations. Overall, this strengthens the idea that continuing professional development should not only be focused on teachers but more so on the development of school leaders.

6.3   Recommendations for further research work

The study aimed to investigate the development of PLCs in the Philippines looking through the lens of the principals and their leadership experience. It was discovered in the study that the principals have not established PLCs in their schools and that there is a lack of continuing professional development programmes available for teachers. In the course of the data generation, the principals raised important issues that are worthy of further investigation. Firstly, it was identified that strong respect for hierarchical authority dominates the Philippine school culture. Further research is recommended to establish the influence of strong hierarchical authority on the confidence of principals in their leadership. This study must be carried out in the context of Philippine schools, as there is a paucity of information in this field. Further research that could usefully explore the possibilities of having separate national funding for the professional development of teachers and school leaders is also recommended. This funding would need to be dedicated to programmes and projects that cater to the learning needs of teachers and school leaders. Likewise, it could be funding that supports learning infrastructure, and human and physical resources required to the formation of PLCs.

Thirdly, it would be interesting and pertinent to explore the Filipino culture of 'Bayanihan' and how it might be employed to fight teachers' isolation in their respective schools. This unique spirit of collaboration in times of difficulty challenges educational theories to an extent, as often when teachers in the Philippines (and other nations) are confronted with difficulties in their roles, they tend to withdraw to the confines of their classroom. The Department of Education, particularly the Human Resources Development, could capitalise on this invaluable

virtue of people helping each other and develop innovative projects designed to further enhance teacher engagement. Lastly, another possible area of future research would be to investigate the content of the existing professional development policies and programmes of teachers in the Philippines such as the NCBTS and RPMS, among others. As mentioned earlier, these policies still promote approaches to teacher development that use traditional directed instruction through seminars, workshops and conferences. In fact, even the Department Order No. 35, series of 2016 that institutionalises LAC as a continuing professional development programme for teachers, prescribes a speaker-listener relationship among teachers and school leaders. Further studies need to be carried out to examine these policies and their appropriateness to the diverse demands of the role of teachers.

While the study found that PLCs were not yet established in the schools involved in the research, the researcher continuously hopes that the time will come when they will finally thrive in the Philippine public schools. Every great undertaking begins with a small step. Thus, the researcher believes that with collaboration, openness to change, effective leadership styles, and the institutionalisation of LAC sessions, it is not impossible that such a day will come.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A   Ethics Committee's approval for research

Dean's Office
Faculty of Education
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The University of Waikato
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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

MEMORANDUM

To:	**Wenefe Capili-Balbalin**
cc:	Jenny Ferrier-Kerr
From:	**Dr Carl Mika** Chairperson, Research Ethics Committee
Date:	11 May 2016
Subject:	**Supervised Postgraduate Research – Application for Ethical Approval (FEDU033/16)**

Thank you for your request for ethics approval for the project:

The roles and perspectives of secondary principals in the development of professional learning communities (PLCs) in the Philippines

I am pleased to advise that your application has received approval.

Please note that researchers are asked to consult with the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee in the first instance if any further changes to the approved research design are proposed.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

Carl Mika

Dr Carl Mika
Chairperson
Research Ethics Committee

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Nene Rosal-Merioles
Schools Division Superintendent
Department of Education
Masbate City

Dear Madam,

SUBJECT: REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT FIELD INTERVIEW

Kia Ora, Greetings from New Zealand!

I am a Master of Educational Leadership student in the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, New Zealand. As part of the requirements for this degree, I would like to carry out a research project regarding the roles and perspectives of secondary principals in developing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in Philippine schools.

With this in mind, I would like to ask approval from your good office to allow me conduct one- time individual interview of up to approximately 180 minutes with three of the principals in your division. May I also request you to identify the principals you believe will most likely participate in this undertaking and provide me with their contact information. Be assured as well that this project will not cause any disruption of classes as I intend to commence interview with the principals in the late part of May 2016, while the students are still on summer break.

Attached is a letter and consent form that I will send out to the participants. This will give you an idea of the research conditions and of the research activities that the principals will be involved in.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to receiving your favourable response.

Kind regards,

Wenefe Capili- Balbalin

Jose L. Doncillo, CESO VI
Schools Division Superintendent
Department of Education
Masbate Province
Rodeo Road, Masbate City
Masbate

Dear Sir,

SUBJECT: REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT FIELD INTERVIEW

Kia Ora, Greetings from New Zealand!

I am a Master of Educational Leadership student in the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, New Zealand. As part of the requirements for this degree, I would like to carry out a research project regarding the roles and perspectives of secondary principals in developing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in Philippine schools.

With this in mind, I would like to ask approval from your good office to allow me conduct one-time individual interview of up to approximately 180 minutes with two of the principals in your division. May I also request you to identify the principals you believe will most likely participate in this undertaking and provide me with their contact information. Be assured as well that this project will not cause any disruption of classes as I intend to commence interview with the principals in the late part of May 2016, while the students are still on summer break.

Attached is a letter and consent form that I will send out to the participants. This will give you an idea of the research conditions and of the research activities that the principals will be involved in.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to receiving your favourable response.

Kind regards,

Wenefe Capili- Balbalin

Appendix C   Information sheet distributed to the Principals

Orchard Park
183 Silverdale Road
Hillcrest
Hamilton
New Zealand

(Date)

The Principal

_____

_____

Dear Principal,

SUBJECT: INVITATION FOR A FIELD INTERVIEW

Kia Ora, Greetings from New Zealand!

I am a Master of Educational Leadership student in the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, New Zealand. As part of the requirements for this degree, I would like to carry out a research project regarding the roles and perspectives of secondary principals in developing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in Philippine schools.

The Office of the Schools Division Superintendent identified you as being the most likely to be willing to participate in this research project. With their approval and consent, may I please invite you to participate in one, digitally-recorded semi-structured interview of up to approximately 180 minutes duration. The purpose of the interview is to gain deep insights of your roles and perspectives in the inclusion and development of PLCs in your school's professional development programme. To give you a background of the interview, I have attached a list of the main questions that will be asked.

Please be informed that you have the right to decline participation in this project. However, should you decide to participate, you are assured of utmost anonymity and the data you will be sharing with me will be accorded every effort to ensure confidentiality. More information about this is provided in the consent form which I attached along with this invitation letter. Kindly complete the consent form. While I hope to collect this form prior to the commencement of the interview, if this is not possible, I will collect it on the day of the interview. Should you have any concerns of an ethical nature regarding the study, please feel free to let me know or my supervisor, Jenny Ferrier-Kerr, of the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, at the following email address jfk@waikato.ac.nz or telephone number 8384466 ext. 6665.

Lastly, the superintendent's office has provided me with your contact information so please expect a call from me within this week to confirm your participation, and to request for the date and time of the interview which best suits your schedule.

I am looking forward to hearing your favourable response on this request. Thank you so much for considering it.

Kind regards,

Wenefe Capili- Balbalin

Appendix D   Consent form

Please read each statement carefully. Put a tick against each box to confirm that you understand the conditions of the research and the activities that you will be involved in. Once completed, kindly fill out the information required below.

☐ My participation in the research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw any information I provided prior to data analysis.

☐ I understand that I will participate in a digitally-recorded semi-structured interview of up to approximately 180 minutes duration.

☐ I am aware that I am allowed to use either Filipino (lingua franca) or Minasbate (mother tongue), whichever medium I feel comfortable with using.

☐ Once transcription is completed, I expect a phone call from the researcher inviting me for a meeting of up to approximately 60 minutes where I can review, amend, and approve the information I provided during my interview.

☐ I am aware of my right to receive information about the findings of the research project. When the findings are ready for presentation, I will inform the researcher whether I am available for a Skype conference call of up to approximately 45 minutes or I wish to receive a copy of the findings via postal mail.

☐ I am aware that the research project, once completed, will be uploaded to the University of Waikato Research Commons Database.

☐ I, the name of my school, address, and other information that may directly be linked to me will not be identified in any discussions or publications of this research. However, I allow the use of pseudonyms to protect the school's identity and my right of privacy.

☐ While every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality in the data I will be sharing with the researcher, I understand that it can not be fully guaranteed because it will be reported in the project. Nevertheless, I expect the researcher to handle every information pertaining to me and my school with utmost prudence and care.

☐ I am aware that the information about me obtained during the research will be destroyed five years after the completion of this research project.

☐ I am aware of my right to express any concerns about the research process or any worries of ethical matter regarding the study to the researcher and/or her supervisor, Jenny Ferrier-Kerr, of the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, at the following email address jfk@waikato.ac.nz or telephone number 8384466 ext. 6665.

☐ My signed consent will be completed before the commencement of the interview.

☐   I have read and understood the above research procedures and guidelines.

Name: _____

School: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E   Interview schedule

1. Tell me about your position or role as a secondary school principal.

    Probe: -can you tell me some more about…?

    - Responsibilities in reinforcing/implementing national policies within the school context
    - Effectiveness of these policies in the school context
    - Teachers' response regarding these policies
    - How you feel about it

2. How would you describe your professional development experience as a teacher before becoming a principal?

    Probe: -can you give me some examples of…?

    - Effective professional development based on experience
    - Scenarios when collaborative learning took place

3. What do you think about establishing professional learning communities (PLCs) in your school to support teachers' professional development?

    Probe: -can you tell me some more about…?

    - Teachers' collaborative learning
    - Support for teachers' professional learning
    - Shared mission and vision of the school
    - School culture

4. Have you established PLCs in your school before?

    Probe: -if yes, were they sustained?

    - what factors contributed to its sustainability
    - steps made to establish PLCs
    - teachers' response

    -if no, what are the constraints you can identify

    - what would be helpful steps or needs to establish it in the school
    - what would be the affordances you perceive to sustain it