




ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΙΚΟ ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ
ΚΥΠΡΟΥ



The power of leadership in the
teacher professional learning program
of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute:
an (un)easy relationship

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Aim of the presentation

Since **the way key-roles interact with different aspects is vital for Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL)** (Avgitidou, 2015), the aim of this presentation is

- to reflect on the role of school leadership to the 2015 policy for Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL) in the Cyprus educational system



Outline of the presentation

- A. The framework
 - Cyprus Educational System Reform
 - Theoretical underpinnings for the new Teachers' Professional Learning policy
 - The Cyprus context on Teachers' Professional Learning
 - Leadership and Teacher Professional Learning
- B. The study
 - Research questions
 - Methodology
 - Results
 - Discussion



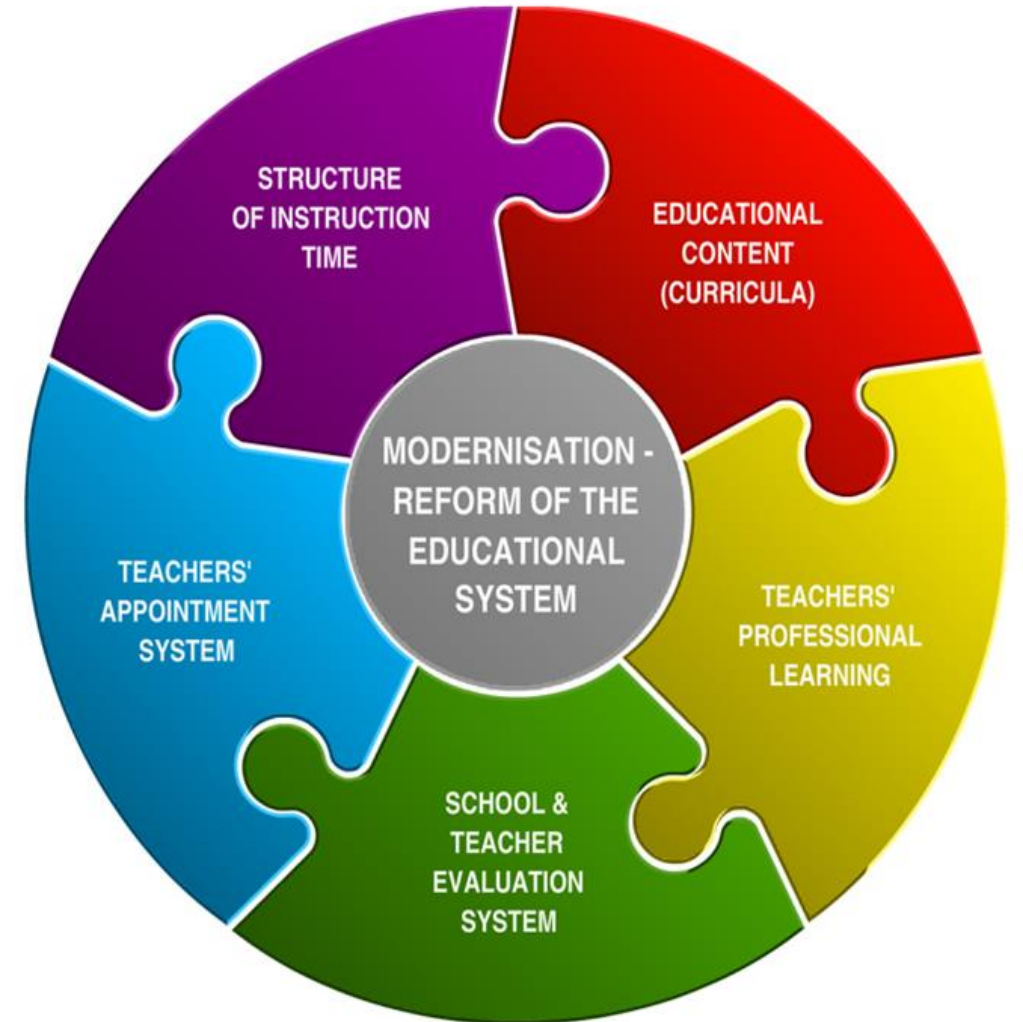
A. The framework



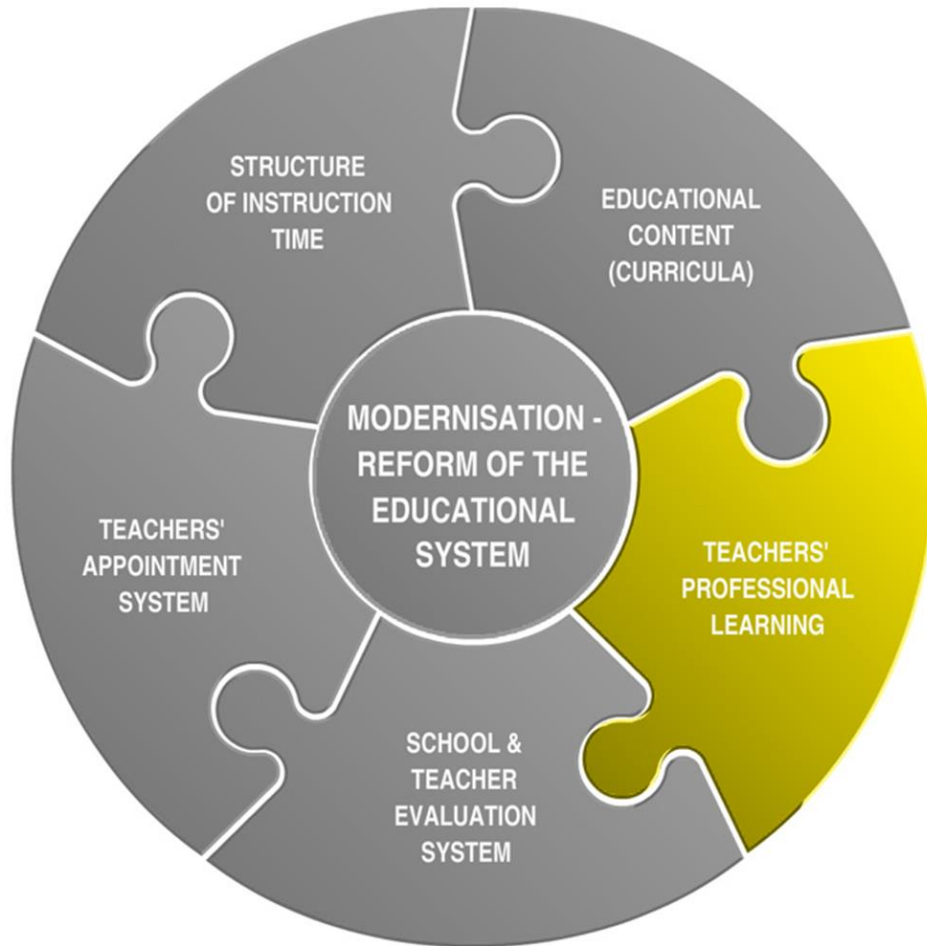
Cyprus Education System Reform

- During the last decade

Cyprus has followed the worldwide efforts by educational policymakers to raise standards of achievement for all students through various school reforms.



A framework for teachers' continuous professional learning



- The new TPL policy aimed at
- opportunities for professional learning
 - to all teachers in a systematic way
 - based on a needs analysis of the school and the individual teacher.
- a shift of paradigm

Theoretical underpinnings for the new TPL policy

- From...
 - Informative seminars and workshops to collaborative action research
 - Transferring knowledge to Co-construction of knowledge
 - Trainers to facilitators
- Because...
 - One-day training sessions failed to account for differing levels of knowledge and expertise among teachers
 - One-size-fits-all trainings did not account for contextual issues
 - Professional development activities did not provide follow up support for participants (Robb, 2000, Borg, 2012)



Theoretical underpinnings for the new TPL policy

- Teachers' professional learning
 - ...is a complex activity
 - Multicausal
 - Multidimensional
 - Multiquarrelational
- (Opfer and Pedder, 2011)

- ...relates to
- The teacher as an individual
 - Prior experience and knowledge
 - Orientation and beliefs
 - Enactment in classroom practice
- The school
 - The context
 - Collective orientations and practices
 - Norms of the school
 - School level beliefs about learning
- The learning activities



Theoretical underpinnings for the new TPL policy

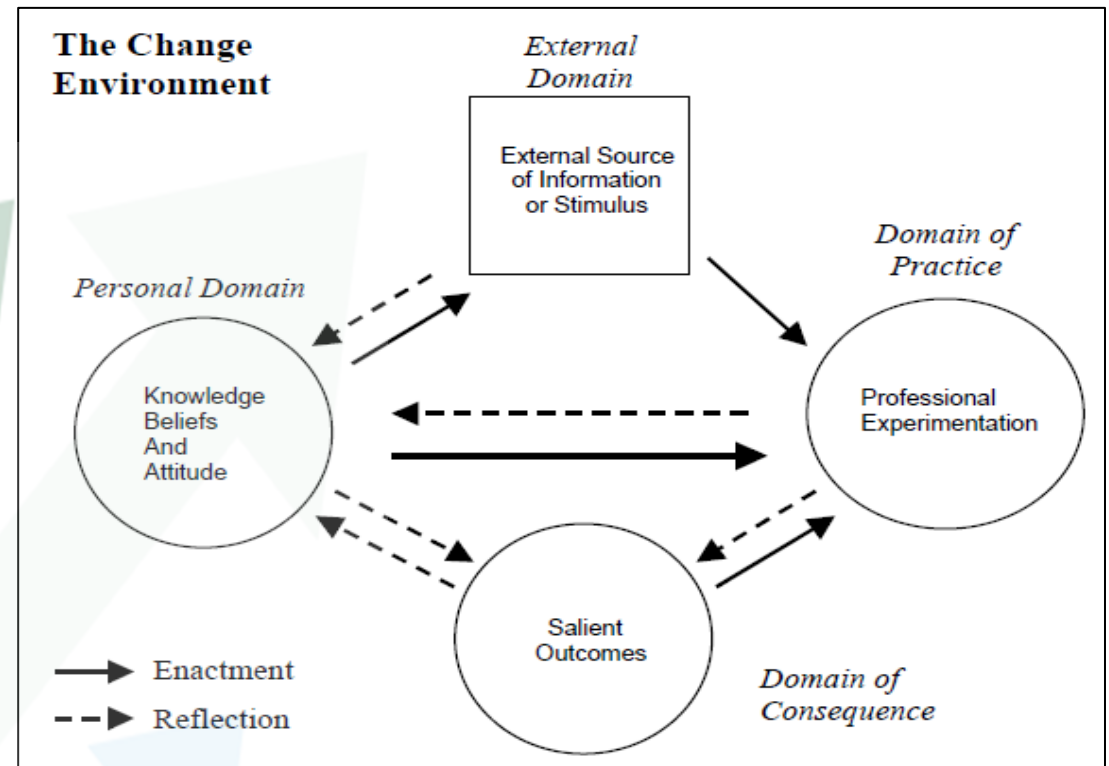
- **Effective teacher learning activities** provide
 - Field and classroom **experiences**
 - Opportunities for **reflection**
 - Teacher **cooperation**
 - **Opportunities** for understanding oneself in a secure environment under challenging circumstances
 - Applied **knowledge**

(Opfer and Pedder, 2011)

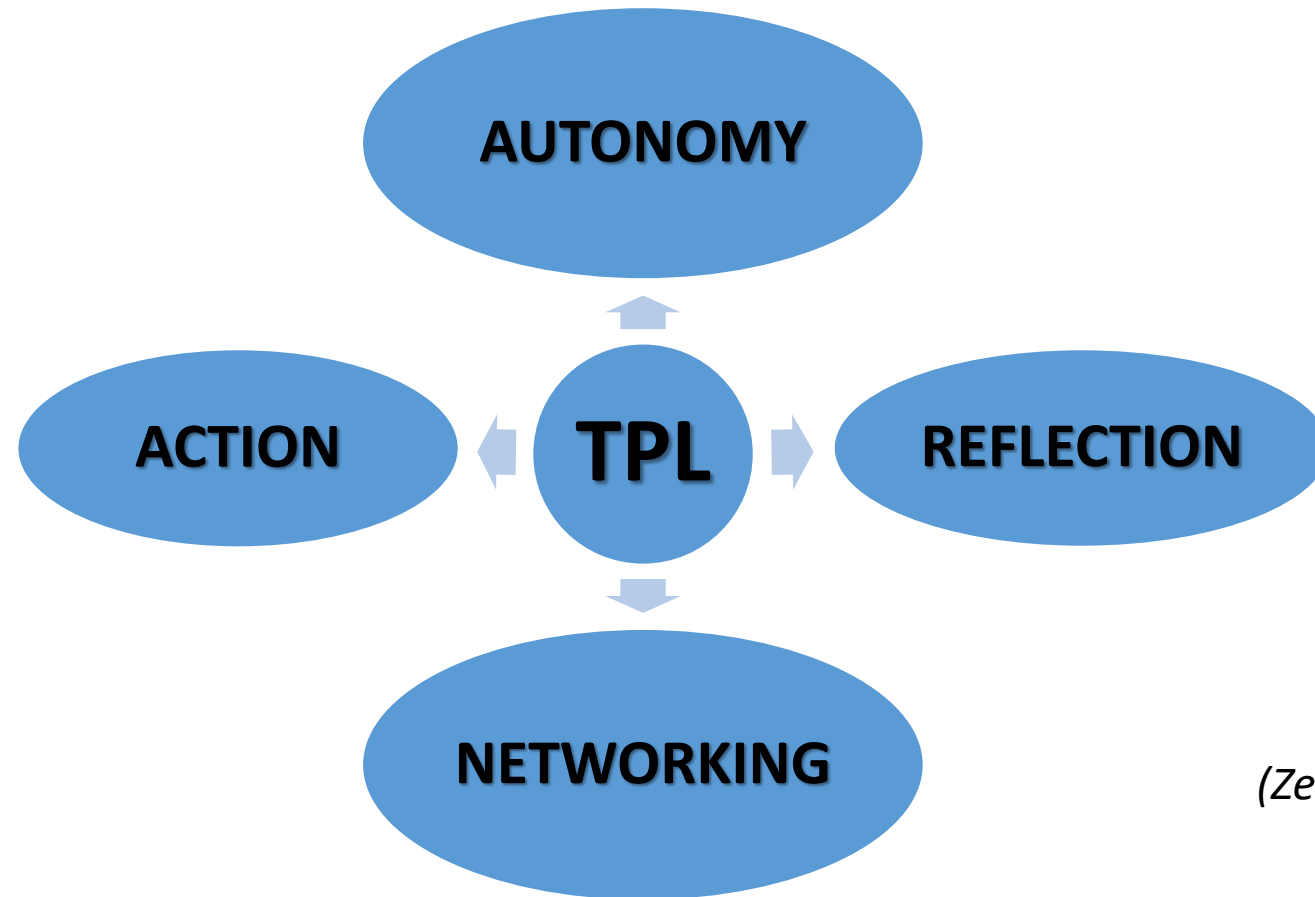


Theoretical underpinnings for the new TPL policy

- Teachers' change is of cyclic nature (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002)
- **Change** in one system can affect the other(s) through reflection and enactment on:
 - Practice (experimentation)
 - Personal domain (beliefs, knowledge, attitude)
 - Consequences (outcomes)
 - External structures (sources of information, stimulus)



Theoretical underpinnings for the new TPL policy

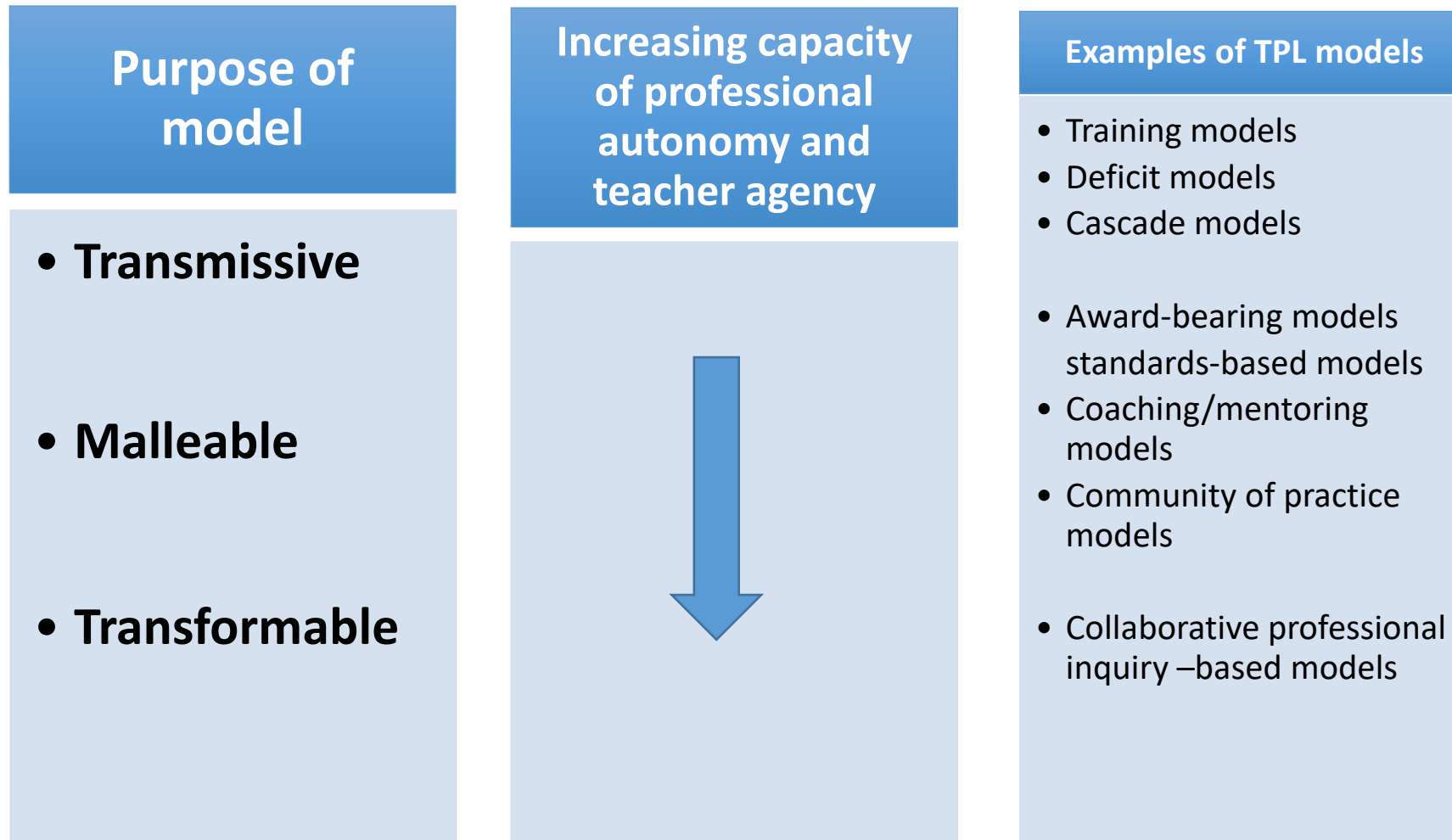


(Zehetmeier et al, 2015)

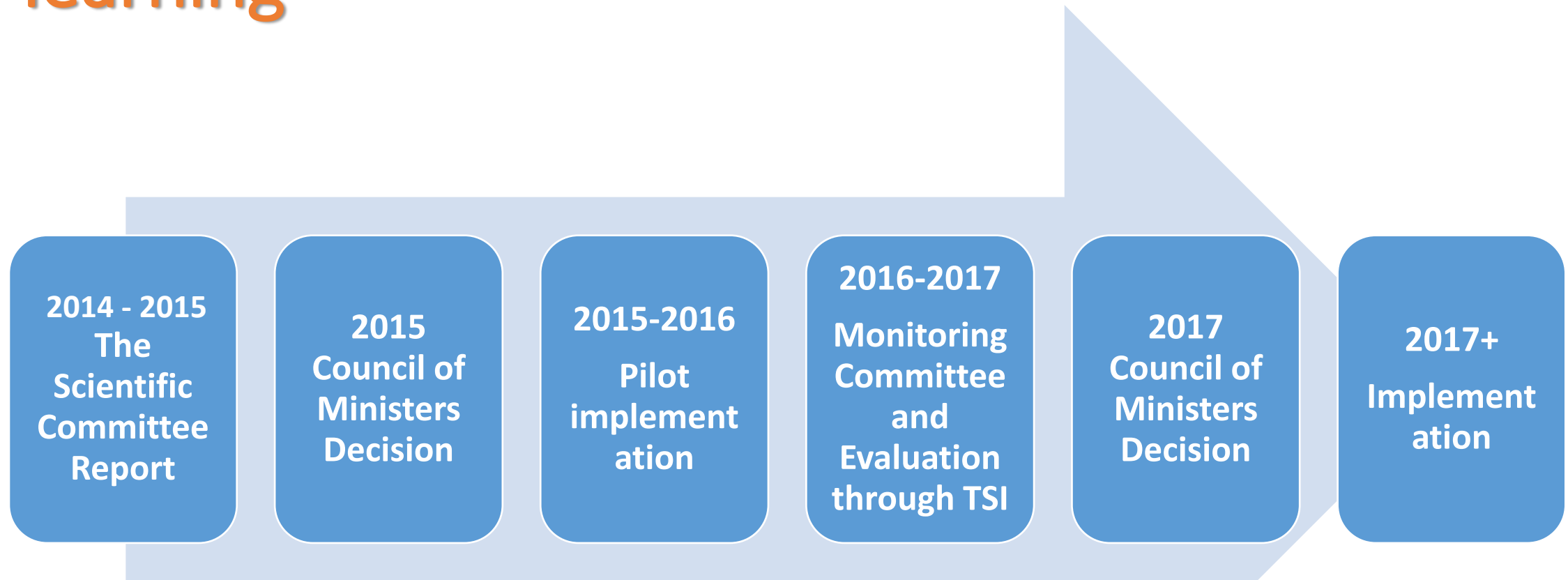
Theoretical underpinnings for the new TPL policy

Teachers' professional learning models and professional autonomy

(Kennedy, 2014)



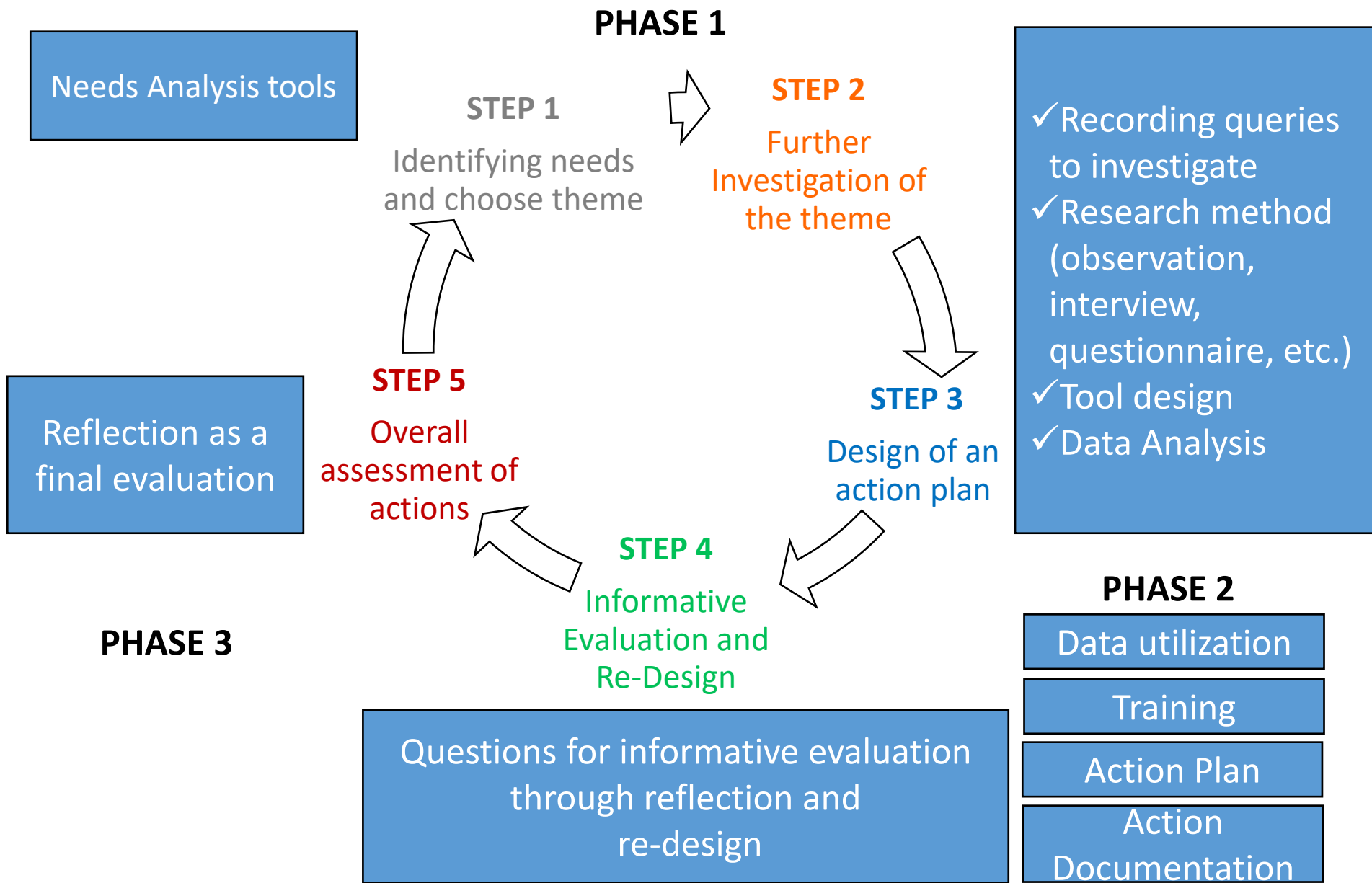
The Cyprus context on teachers' professional learning



The Cyprus context on teachers' professional learning

- The focus of professional learning is transferred to school
- All schools are expected to develop their professional learning action plan (School-Based Professional Learning and Individual Professional Learning) as part of the school improvement plan
- A Portal for the Teachers' Professional Learning was developed (<http://epaggelmatikimathisi.pi.ac.cy>) and all schools are encouraged to use it throughout the school-year
- This inquiry-based framework has been structured in four stages:
 - Perspective inquiry – needs analysis -
 - Planning and organization of actions – selection of a teacher learning priority
 - Implementation of actions
 - Evaluation





The Cyprus context on teachers' professional learning

- The policy promotes inquiry-based and school-based learning and the creation of a professional learning community (PLC)
 - There is no agreement on defining PLCs but there is agreement on their characteristics which are the aim to be achieved in the TPL policy implementation
- “Decentralized-centralism”, a state agency of teacher professional learning (Lee & Lee, 2018)
- A small number of schools can apply to work on their TPL action plan in cooperation with a facilitator from the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute
 - The facilitator acts as a critical friend, in collaboration with the school staff and in particular the head teacher and the school coordinator.



Up to now participation in facilitator-supported TPL.....

	PREPRIMARY EDUCATION	PRIMARY EDUCATION	SECONDARY EDUCATION	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	SPECIAL EDUCATION	TOTAL
2014-2015	3	7	1	0	0	11
2015-2016	4	25	8	1	0	38
2016-2017	1	5	17	1	0	24
2017-2018	1	20	18	2	0	41
2018-2019	3	6	21	2	0	32
2019-2020	4	26	22	3	0	55
2020-2021	4	26	13	1	0	44
2021-2022	8	16	12	1	1	38

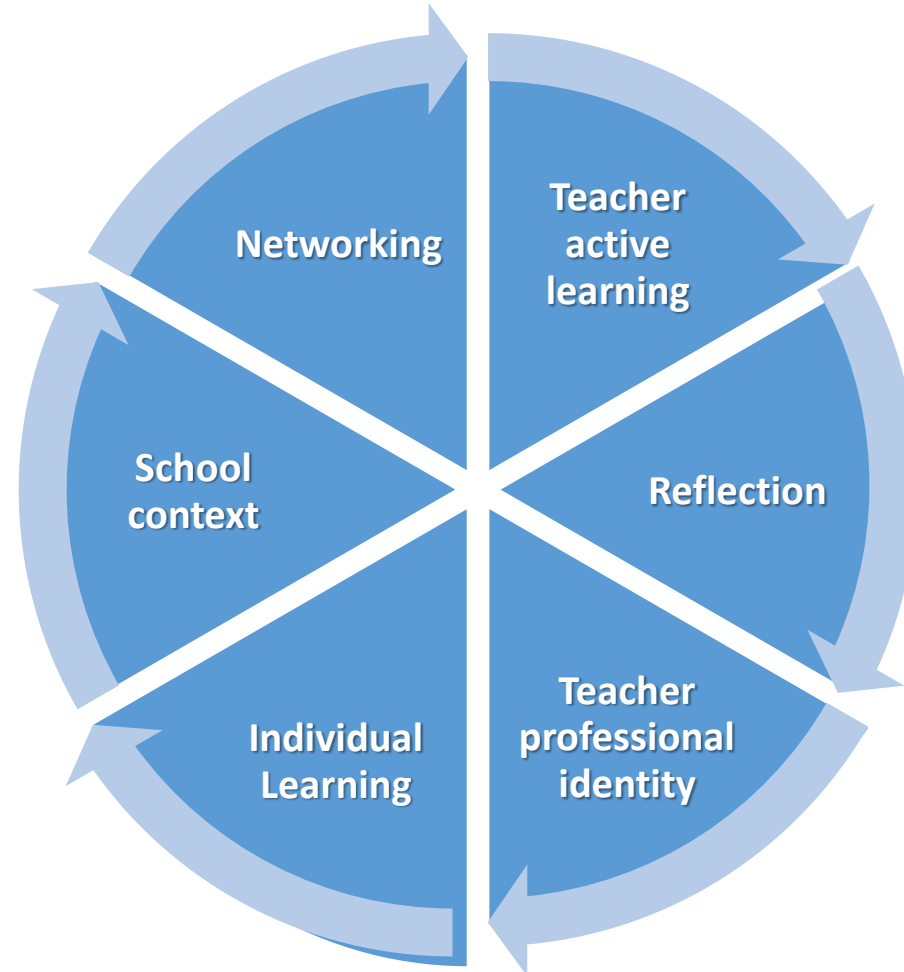


Data set collected over the implementation period

- 2014-15
 - Questionnaires
 - Interviews
 - Facilitators' diaries
- 2015-16, 2016-17
 - Headteachers' and school coordinators' interviews
 - Questionnaires
 - Facilitators' diaries
 - Conference workshop reports
- 2017-18
 - Self efficacy questionnaires
 - Facilitators' diaries
 - Facilitators' evaluation reports
- 2018-2019
 - Facilitators' diaries
 - Facilitators' evaluation reports
- 2019-2020
 - Facilitators' diaries
 - Facilitators' evaluation reports
- 2020-2021
 - Facilitators' diaries
 - Facilitators' evaluation reports
- 2021-2022
 - Questionnaires
 - Coordinators focus interviews
 - Facilitators' diaries
 - Facilitators' evaluation reports



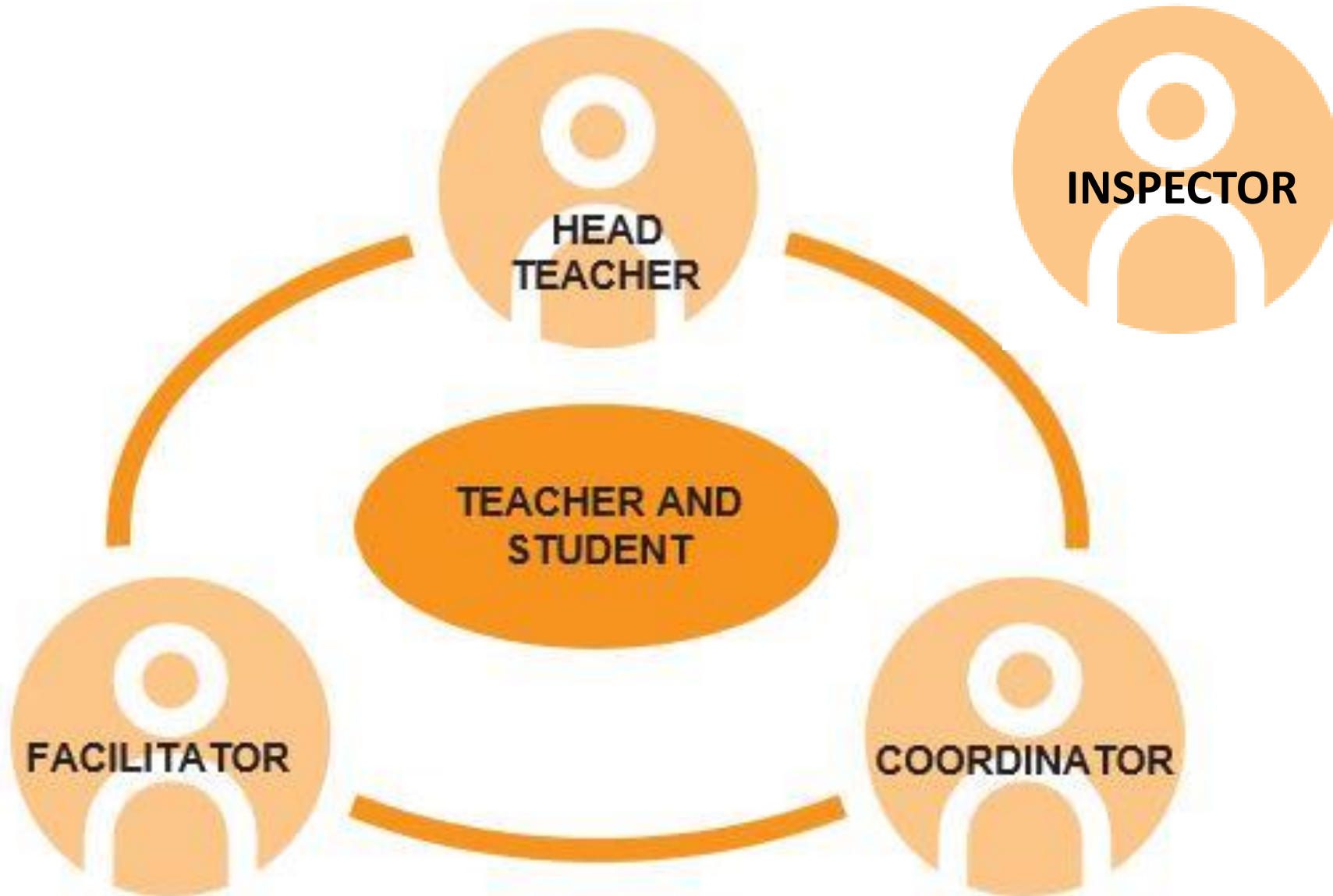
The different areas of Cyprus Pedagogical Institute research and reflection



Eracleous et al (2020)



The TPL roles and the interaction



Why focus on leadership?

- There is consensus that “effective school autonomy depends on effective leaders” (OECD, 2012, p. 14).
- Positive and negative impacts of leadership are identified on
 - school organization
 - culture and conditions
 - the quality of teaching and learning and student achievement (Day et al, 2016; Hallinger, 2010)



Leadership and Teacher Professional Learning

- Professional learning communities (PLCs) have been recognized as *having* the potential to raise the quality of teachers, teaching and student learning through structured teacher collaboration.
- Leadership is an essential element to build a PLC (Day et al, 2016; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).
- PLCs are developed through
 - Scanning
 - Focusing
 - Developing a hunch
 - New professional learning
 - Taking action
 - Checking (Timberley et al, 2018)



B. The study



Research Questions

- How does the leadership role enhance the different aspects and phases of TPL in the Cyprus context?
- How does the leadership role interact with the other roles?



Methodology

- Participants
 - Head teachers and teachers from schools participating in TPL
 - Facilitators in TPL
- Data
 - On-line questionnaire (2021-2022)
 - Semi-structured interviews with school personnel in ten schools (2016-2019)
 - Facilitators' Reflection diaries, evaluation reports and external conversations from three schools (2020-2022)
- Analysis
 - Questionnaires:
 - Descriptive and Inductive analysis
 - Case studies:
 - Reviewing of the transcripts and other data to identify themes/patterns in the data
 - Meaning Coding
 - Analysis and categorization
 - Discussion of analysis using memos between the research team (Kvale, 2007, Kuckartz, 2014)



Data collection

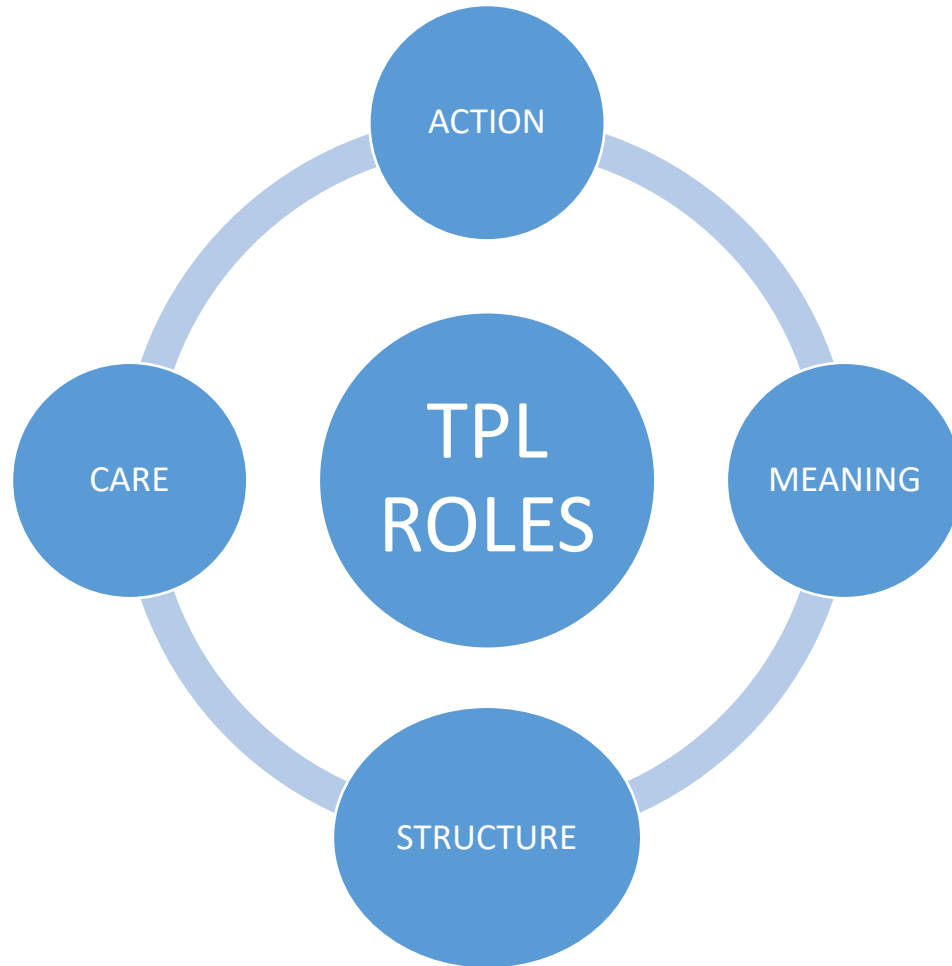
- Participants' profile
 - 2016-19: first steps, before pandemic
 - 14 interviews
 - 4 facilitators; diaries
 - 2020-22: further steps, during the pandemic
 - 257 questionnaires
 - 3 facilitators' diaries, evaluation reports and external conversations



2016-2019: First steps, before the pandemic



How does the leadership role enhance the TPL phases in the Cyprus context?



- **During 2016-2019:**
- The headteacher has a central role in promoting TPL actions and structures and to caring about the teachers
- When the leader's vision gives priority to TPL, then it can become a common "reculturing" vision



How does the leadership role enhance TPL in the Cyprus context?

- At the beginning it seems that TPL is promoted and even “imposed” by the headteacher
 - *He (the headteacher) helped... he helped a lot on the action plan .. When the facilitator was here he was present... In general terms he has a crucial role (seconady school coordinator, 2019)*
- *The headteacher who feels responsible for the pedagogy in the school, has TPL under his/her responsiltiy and monitoring (primary school headteacher, 2019)*



How does the leadership role enhance TPL in the Cyprus context?

- Gradually this consistency and insistence creates the critical mass of developing TPL and creating necessary structures and routines as well as investing on the “right” people through close cooperation with the other roles
 - *The cooperative school climate which enables learning and teacher professional learning... This we keep it... There is a community of learning we still try to work more with teachers who still keep at distance (headteacher, primary school, 2017)*
 - *As regards the leadership the first thing is the organizational issues... so that you can have your meeting with the facilitator... If she would see something that did not go so well she was there to support(teacher, primary school, 2019)*



What is the role of the leadership in a decentralizing professional learning procedure?

- The profile of the TPL headteacher in the Cyprus context
 - Having a TPL vision
 - Supportive
 - Facilitating and listening
 - Distributing both power and responsibilities
 - Controlling and monitoring

Moving between leadership, management and headship (Townsend, 2015)

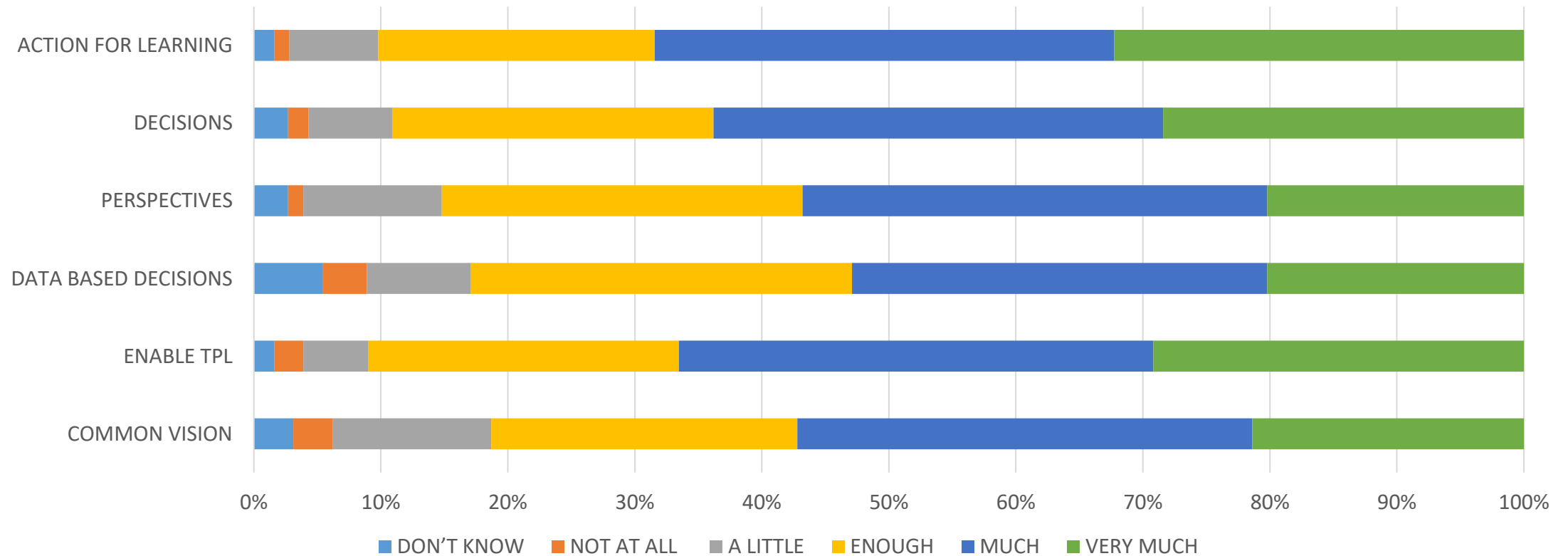


2020-2022: Further steps, during the pandemic

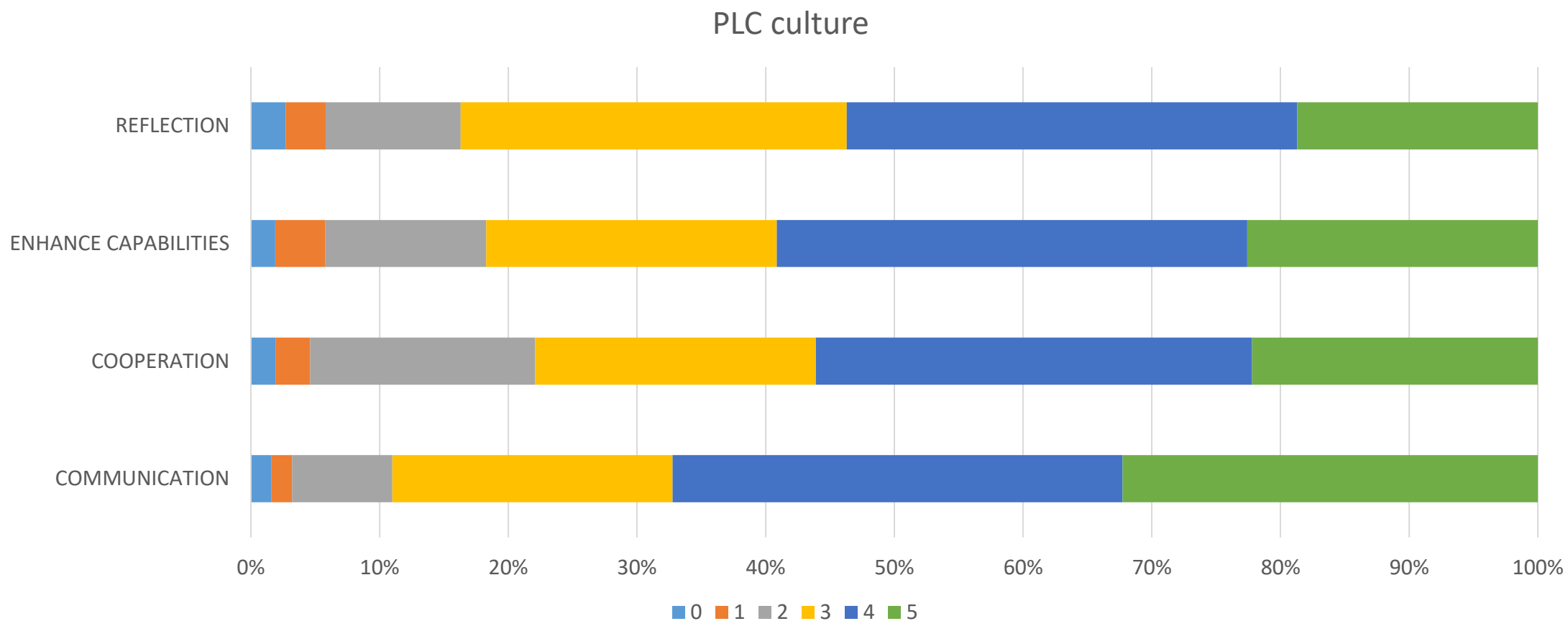


How does the leadership role enhance TPL in the Cyprus context?

LEADERSHIP ROLE during 2020-2022



...need to see the whole picture...



Going deeper on leadership through three case studies...

- School 1

- Secondary school
- First year in TPL support
- The coordinator had worked in schools which participated in TPL support
- The headteacher is TPL-oriented

- *In the meantime until february nothing was done... Not so much due to the pandemic but mainly due to the new semester exam policy which according to the teachers it converted the school into an examination centre*

- *On teachers' day in February teachers shared their work in TPL... as the teachers said it was the first time they shared pedagogical practices and reflected collectively on them*

- *The head teacher and school TPL coordinator are concerned in a meaningful way for the professional learning of the school staff. They are concerned on integrating all activities and actions in learning experience mode so that TPL is visible in school*

- *The first reflection meetings between the facilitator, the headteacher and the school coordinator were particularly effective and helpful for discussing and negotiating issues and priorities with the school staff*



Case study 1

- Despite good intentions and efforts of both the head teacher and the coordinator the school did not manage to make essential steps forward due to structural constraints
- *The head teacher is ready to enable ways to overcome structure constraints and she does believe in TPL and the coordinator has the ability to enable encourage participation... However I do feel disappointed as this excellent school climate and dynamic powerful character profile of the school have been suppressed... All thoughts, suggestions, actions were TPL-oriented. It is as if the new exam policy and the measures against the pandemic have “disarmed” the school. There are actions under pressure and there is no time for reflection.... The aim of the headteacher to organise teacher quality rounds was not achieved due to limitations and time pressure ...*



Case study 1

- School 1 reminds us that
 - Figuring out how to negotiate a professional orientation in a bureaucratic structure is a difficult task (Lieberman & Miller, 2011)
 - Effective transformation and innovation do not easily happen in hierarchically dominated organizations “where getting teaching practice right and changes in test results are the only thing that they count” (Timberley et al, 2018)



Case study 2

- School 2
 - Primary school
 - Second year in TPL support
 - The coordinator is deeply TPL-oriented
 - The headteacher was appointed in another school after the first years. The new headteacher is indifferent as regards TPL
- Second year
 - *During the first year TPL activities were organized in a snowball mode... There was a training... then some teachers participated in other trainings... gradually they themselves became trainers... The focus and deep involvement in diagnosed school needs was very crucial...*
 - *The pandemic did not affect the TPL flow... The cooperation with the school coordinator remains excellent and the teachers' interest in TPL is great*
 - *During the second year there were some difficulties in coordination between teachers and thus actions were diverted when compared to last year... however this was partly the aim of this year*



Case study 2

- *The head teacher role was critical in giving space and status to TPL. Every week she asked for coordination and interaction during the teachers meeting in order to inform, coordinate or ask for evidence...*
- *A school that worked without making too much fuss, a school that had the maturity to focus on the essential, giving emphasis to relations, teachers' and children's sentimental equilibrium... A school that made the best out of the abilities of all teachers*
- During the first TPL year, the headteacher contributes to school improvement in an indirect way by shaping the nature of the school conditions (De Neve and Devos, 2017; Leithwood et al, 2004)
 - creating a formalized structure for communication among the members of the school team
 - monitoring the implementation of TPL
 - allocating time for teachers to meet so that reflective dialogue and deprivatized practice can occur
- A sustainable PL culture is created which remains during the second year with a new headship.



Case study 2

- *There was satisfaction, even enthusiasm after the final reflective meeting with the coordinator and the head teacher... They expressed their own satisfaction of achieving their aim and expressed their commitments for next year.*
- *Good relations, cooperation immediate reaction to need make the teachers feel that their role and work are appreciated... Although they had a bad previous experience in the piloting (TPL year) (headteacher as quoted by the facilitator)*
 - *When you are well organised... there are no difficulties... The role of cooperation (with the head teacher), we had scheduled time every week in the teachers' meeting for TPL... My role was just coordinating... Your role was supportive (coordinator as quoted by facilitator)*



Case study 3

- School 3
 - Early school setting
 - Second year in TPL support
 - The coordinator of the first year had worked in schools which participated in TPL support.
 - The acting head teacher seems to be TPL-oriented
 - *During the first year there were difficulties in the cooperation between the staff... the aim was that the whole team sets the priority and all teachers are involved in action and interaction... The head teacher supports TPL and tries to get the teachers involved, trying to have an equilibrium... However moving from training to action was promoted by the facilitator... There are still difficulties in cooperation and active participation*



Case study 3

- First year
 - *I am worried about relations... there seems to be a distance between teachers... I am not sure if there is any cooperation or trust... I organised a meeting with the headteacher and the coordinator... I was under stress...*
 - *I am still worried about relations... Although the coordinator proposed an activity to share... there was once again tension when allocating responsibilities*
 - *Reflecting back... I realised that I should have tried to create small groups or pairs to work, to cooperate, creating a team brought up too much stress*
- Second year
 - *There are still difficulties in cooperatoin, active participation in discussions and sharing ideas and actions... The new coordinator has a passive stance... I am concerned with the headteachers stance... there is collegiality.. They all try things but in isolation*



Case study 3

- Data reflects tensions between the roles of teachers, coordinator and the school acting headteacher.
 - Revealing probably tensions between being a member of the learning community and the task of teaching, as well as between different views on the role of teacher in the community (Schaap & De Bruijn, 2018)
- Building trusting relationships needs to be a priority
 - “synergistic influences”
 - combination and accumulation of various relatively small effects of leadership practices that influence different aspects of school improvement processes (Day et al, 2016)



Case study 3

- In school 3 the acting headteacher needs to work further on the *cultural perspective* on her role to shape a school culture (De Neve & Devos, 2017)
 - create an environment of mutual responsibility
 - stimulate and coordinate professional activity
 - sustain a common vision on schooling (Kruse & Louis, 2009).
- *“When headteachers succeed to evolve a vision of learning, that is supported by the teaching team and is based on consensus regarding common interests and goals, unity within the team is created”* (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008)



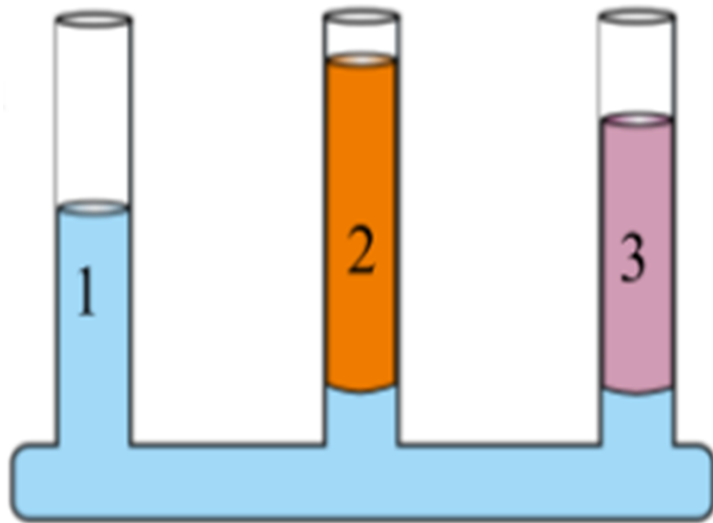
How does the leadership role interact with the other roles?

Throughout all years of TPL implementation...

- Leadership has a crucial role in enabling TPL as regards
 - Relationships
 - “Transmitting” leadership roles to the coordinator
 - Giving space and time to teacher-teacher and teacher – facilitator interaction
- Structural constraints cannot always be confronted and the leadership impact may be limited



How does the leadership role interact with the other roles?



- The leadership – TPL interaction works as a communicating vessel system in which each fluid – role is affected by the other.
- Equilibrium and high level of TPL can be achieved when leadership is in continuous interaction with the others in order to promote TPL

Discussion – reflecting on the leadership role on TPL

- It is necessary to work on three levels of the education system in a mixed mode (Feger & Alluda, 2008; NESSE, 2008)
 - Macro-level (Centralized taken decisions and policies)
 - Meso-level (Changes and decisions in the school context)
 - Micro-level (Role of teachers)



At the macro level

- TPL can function in the hierarchical-centralized system of Cyprus.
- Hierarchical work structure itself does not hinder successful implementation of PLCs.
 - *The case is when the aspirations and day-to-day concerns on teaching and learning of teachers and headteachers are not aligned with those of educational policymakers. (Hairon & Tan, 2017; Lieberman & Miller, 2011)*
- A key component to PLC success is the process in which central administration supports PLCs. (Feger & Alluda, 2008)



At the macro level

- There is need to enable continuing exchange and mutual learning (Melville & Yaxley, 2009).
 - School timetable should be centrally adopted in a way that schools are recognized as learning organizations (Feger & Arruda, 2008; Mak & Pun, 2015)
 - *provide teachers with time and facilitation to interact, learn together, reflect and “jump-start new ideas and fine-tune promising teaching strategies given students’ reaction”* (Hayes et al, 2004).



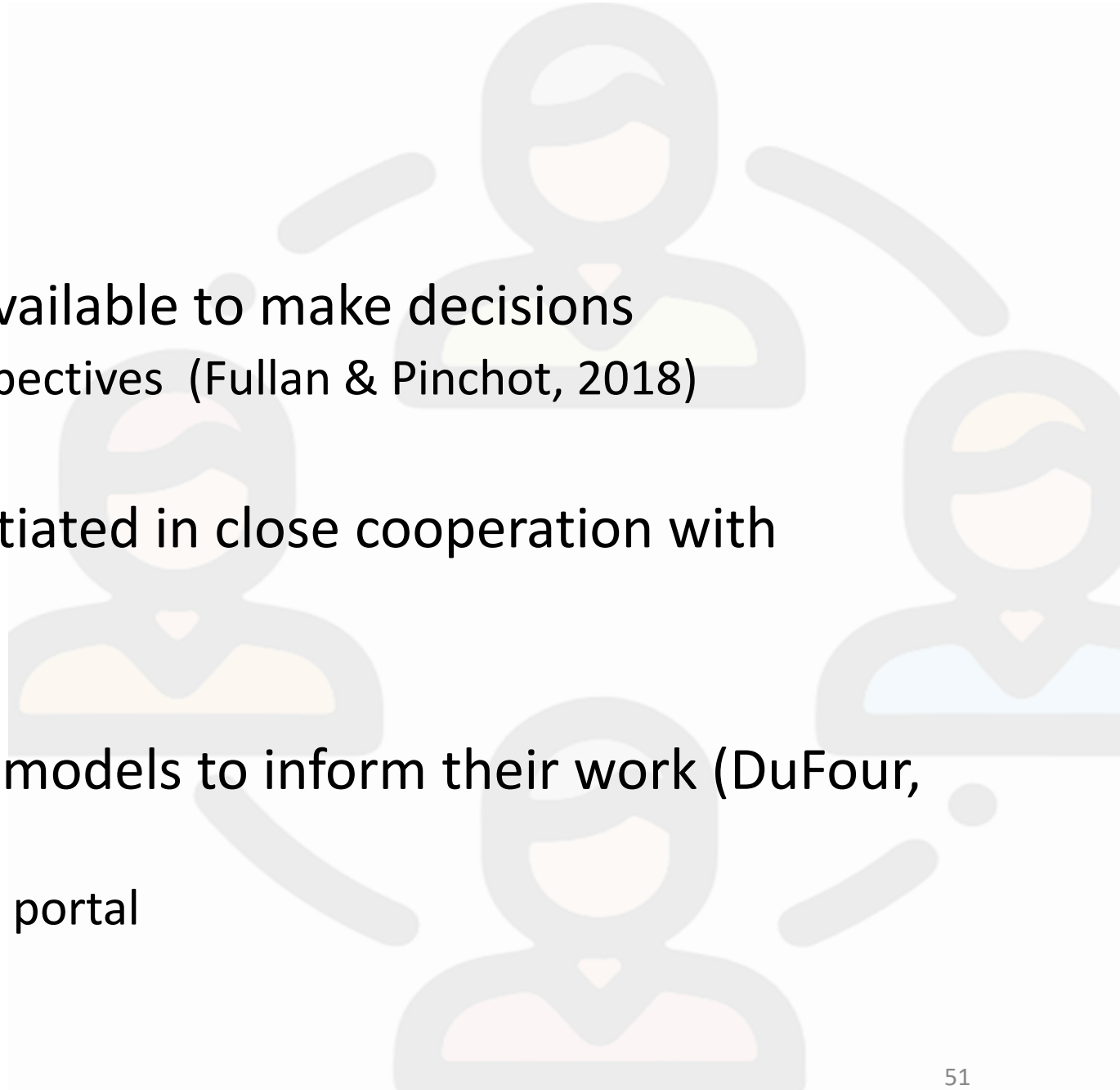
At the meso level

- Schools ought to adapt, rather than adopting state-defined frameworks wholesale, thus accompanied state-reform disseminations (Lee & Lee, 2013).
 - *cultural perspective* of leadership (De Neve & Devos, 2017)
 - *solidarity* of the group
 - *solidity* of its ideas and methods (Hargreaves & O' Connor, 2018)
- *“If head teachers do not identify a shared focus, they are not able to guide their staff in developing and articulating a collective vision for their students or their school”.* (Morissey, 2000)



At the meso level

- Appropriate knowledge base available to make decisions
 - Use evidence and different perspectives (Fullan & Pinchot, 2018)
- Training provided and differentiated in close cooperation with coordinator and facilitator
- Access to tools, templates and models to inform their work (DuFour, 2007)
 - Use of existing tools and the TPL portal



At the meso level

- Teachers' involvement and discussions enhance learning and positive improvements in classroom teaching (Hairon & Tan 2017; Day et al, 2016), aligned with what is valued in schools.
- Creating space and time at school
 - Time and regularity of time to meet and reflect are crucial factors for the implementation of PLCs (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Leclerc et al, 2012; Hairon & Tan, 2017)



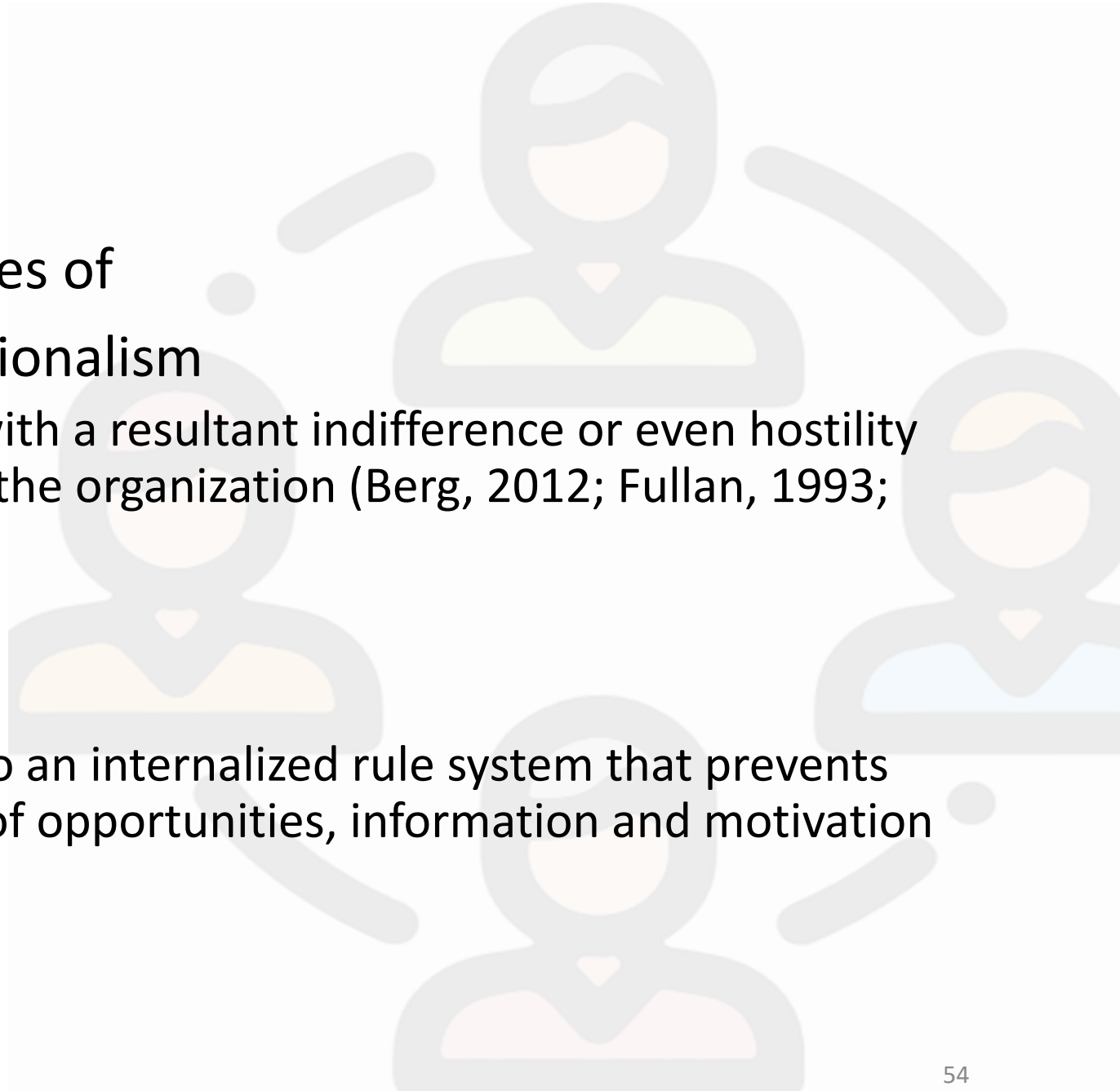
At the micro level of teacher interaction

- The health of TPL in a PLC depends on the voluntary engagement of its members and the teachers' willingness to learn (Wenger et al, 2002).
 - Learning does not mean copy-paste ideas from training examples
 - Some teachers want to do everything alone and others, who are willing to share, need support
- *“Teachers have to get their heads out of the sand and acknowledge that sustainable improvement requires both solidarity among colleagues and a solid grounding in research, expertise, and well-designed tools and protocols”.* (Hargreaves and O' Connor, 2018)

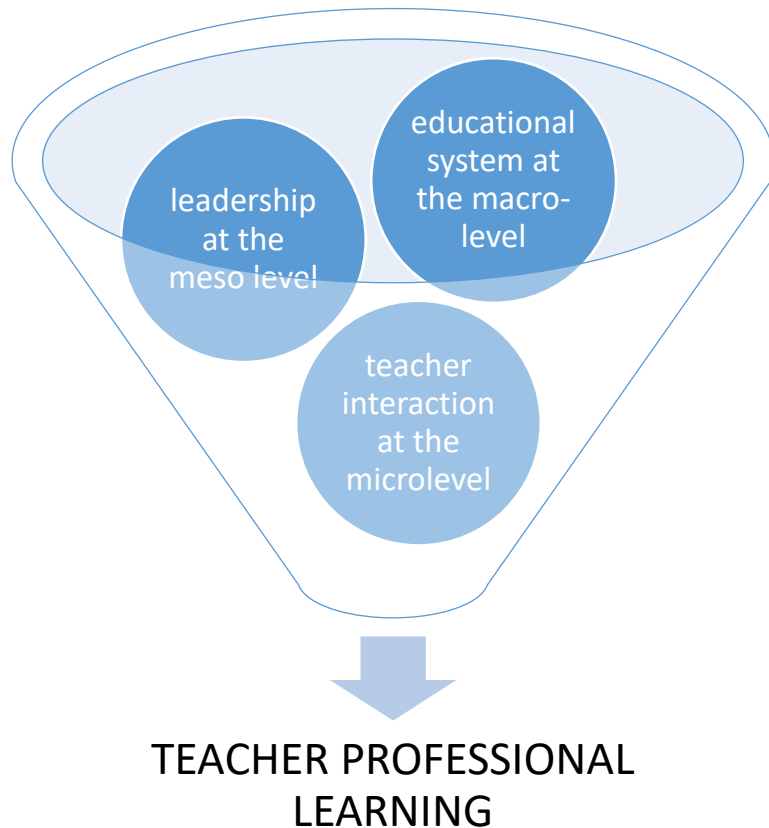


At the micro level

- There is need to reflect on issues of
- Balkanisation/Marginality/Factionalism
 - strong loyalties within a group with a resultant indifference or even hostility to other groups' and the rest of the organization (Berg, 2012; Fullan, 1993; Wenger et al, 2002)
- Professional Fossilisation
 - teachers as learners trapped into an internalized rule system that prevents new learning despite existence of opportunities, information and motivation (Smith, 2003)



Conclusions



- The challenge is **to improve the quality of work, moving in the direction of collaborative professionalism together with collaborative leadership.** (DeWitt, 2017; Hargreaves & O' Connor, 2018; Lachini et al, 2019)



Conclusions

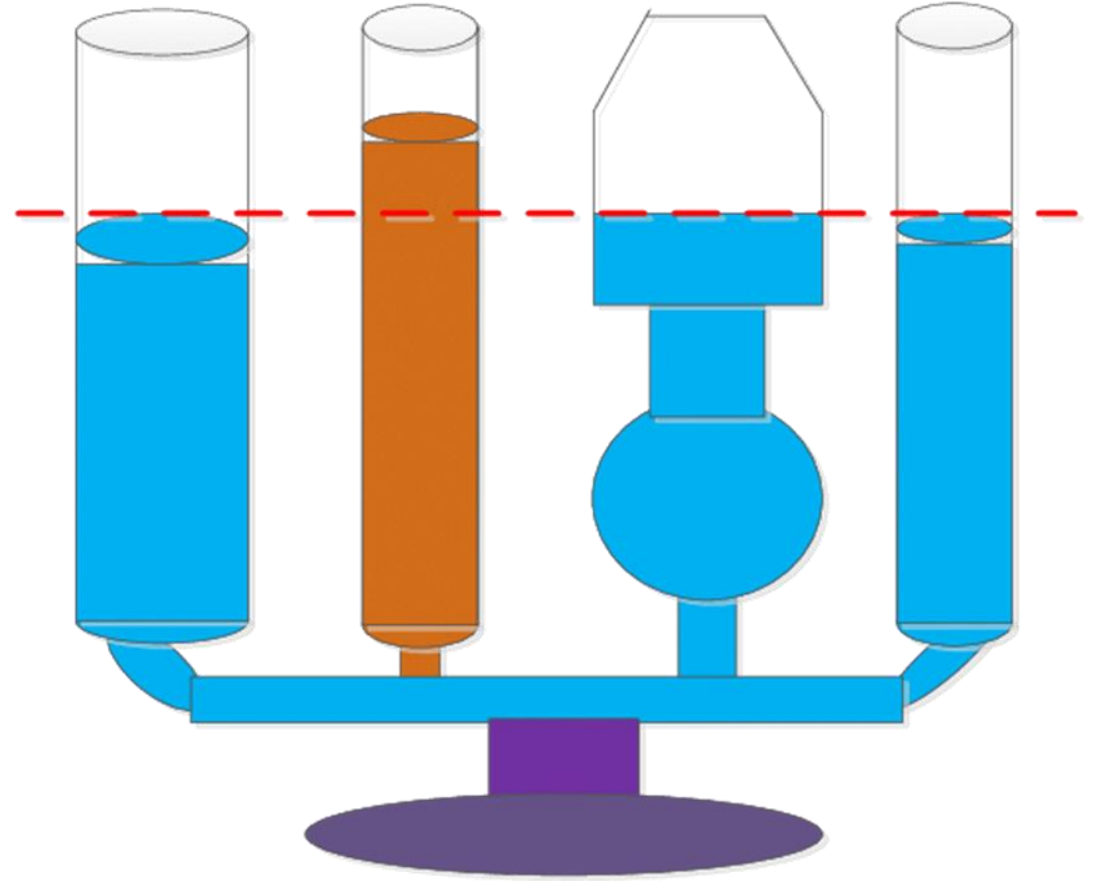
Taking into account that ...

- Many things have to be in place for a PLC
- Different education contexts are bounded by their own social norms and rules
- School-based staff can play a variety of roles
 - The role of leaders in schools is to provide the structural and cultural support to nurture teachers' will to learn (Feger & Alluda, 2008; Hairon & Tan, 2017; Prenger et al, 2021)



Conclusions

- Leadership and TPL can be an (un)easy relation
 - Leadership can be both a facilitating factor and constraining factor
 - Leadership is in close interaction with other roles in the TPL role set



Conclusions

*The extent to which influence is perceived, felt, and “measured” in terms of students’ academic gains can only be judged over time; and **how influence is exercised positively or negatively over time can in part be seen in the conditions, structures, traditions, relationships, expectations, and “norms” that make up the **cultures** of schools.***

(Day et al, 2016)

... And leadership has power in (re)culturing



Thank you very much for your attention



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