

**Latent Profiles of Professional Learning Community Participation and Teacher Attrition Intentions:
Evidence from TALIS 2018 Language Teachers in Shanghai and Flanders
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Rationale

Professional learning communities (PLCs) have become a popular framework for encouraging collaboration among teachers, with the goal of supporting both professional growth and retention. Yet, much of the existing research tends to treat collaboration as a single-dimensional index, failing to reflect the actual variety of collaborative practices in schools. This matters because around one in seven teachers globally report planning to leave the profession within five years (OECD, 2020). Drawing on the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), this study takes a person-centred approach to identify different patterns of PLC participation among lower-secondary language teachers in Shanghai (China) and Flanders (Belgium). It also explores how these patterns relate to teachers' intentions to leave the profession.

Theoretical framework

Professional learning communities (PLCs) are now widely acknowledged as key sites of teacher learning, yet their defining features remain contested. Building on Hord's (1997) and Stoll et al.'s (2006) multidimensional view of PLCs—shared inquiry, practical exchange and reflective dialogue aimed at improving student learning—Vangrieken (2017) review sharpens the concept by showing that successful PLCs depend on both structural supports (shared goals, organised collaboration) and relational conditions (trust, positive group dynamics, distributed leadership). A person-centered latent-profile approach is more appropriate than variable-centered methods for revealing qualitatively different collaboration styles and testing whether richer PLC participation predicts lower attrition intentions because teachers differ significantly in how frequently and how deeply they engage with these dimensions.

Methodology

The study focused on teachers who reported primarily teaching either the language of instruction/language-literature (SUBJCODE = 01) or a foreign language (SUBJCODE = 05), yielding a sample of 1,069 cases from Shanghai and 487 from Flanders. Six Likert-scale items reflecting key PLC practices—team teaching, joint lesson planning, peer observation, being observed, instructional material sharing, and collaborative professional development—were standardized using z-scores. A Gaussian-mixture latent profile analysis (LPA) was conducted, testing two- through five-profile solutions. The optimal model was selected based on the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) and entropy values. Country-weighted χ^2 tests compared profile distributions, and weighted logistic regression models (adjusting for gender, age, and experience) assessed the relationship between profile membership and teachers' intentions to leave the profession (coded as likely/very likely within five years).

Results

A three-profile solution provided the best fit (BIC = 34,518; entropy = .84). Profiles were labelled Highly Collaborative (28 %), Moderately Collaborative (46 %) and Isolated Practitioners (26 %). Shanghai language teachers were over-represented in the moderate profile (61 %) and under-represented in the isolated profile (20 %), while Flemish teachers showed a more balanced distribution ($\chi^2 = 54.3$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$). Weighted logistic regression indicated that teachers in the highly collaborative profile were 54 % less likely to intend to leave than isolated practitioners (odds ratio = 0.46, 95 % CI [0.35, 0.59], $p < .001$) after covariate adjustment; the protective effect was consistent across both contexts.

Conclusion

The study highlights meaningful variation in how language teachers engage with PLCs, revealing three distinct collaboration profiles that are closely linked to teachers' intentions to remain in the profession. Those participating broadly and intensively in PLC activities were notably less inclined to consider leaving. The study highlights meaningful variation in how language teachers engage with PLCs, revealing three distinct collaboration profiles that are closely linked to teachers' intentions.