

**Public Abstract**

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Graduation Term:SP 2012

Department:Educational Leadership &amp; Policy Analysis

Degree:EdD

Title:TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS A CASE STUDY OF THE 2011 PROED PROFESSIONAL

LEARNING COMMUNITY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CREATING A CULTURE FOR ORGANIZATIONAL

LEARNING IN SCHOOLS IN THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA

While evidence of organizational learning through empowered teacher collaboration has been established in many international school studies, no such relationship has been investigated in public and/or low-middle socioeconomic private schools in the Republic of Panama. This observation provides a framework for exploring how schools in Panama learn. This qualitative ethnomethodological case study was driven by the void in empirical knowledge and the guiding question that asked: How and to what extent does participation in the monthly 2011 ProEd Professional Learning Community influence a culture for organizational learning in schools in Panama. Data were collected in a three-step interview process conducted with a sample of 25 randomly selected 2011 ProEd PLC teachers from 5 low-middle socioeconomic public and/or private schools in Panama. Data analysis included open coding of emerging themes from the interviews and field notes. Walkthrough observations of ProEd PLC teachers and focus groups with non-2011 ProEd PLC members were conducted to triangulate for trustworthiness of this study. This study sought to discover how participation in monthly PLCs supports teacher collaboration and empowerment; and to understand how and to what extent these conditions influenced organizational learning in schools in Panama. The participant researcher of this study was involved as lead facilitator and coach of all monthly PLC workshops and in data collection during the interview process. Emerging themes surfaced from conversations with teachers who created meanings from stories shared about their roles as educators in a developing nation.

**Key Terms:** Organizational Learning, Collaboration, Empowerment, Communities of Practice, Professional Learning Communities, Knowing-Doing Gap