A PCP APPROACH TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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Over the past three years, we have been developing learning communities (LCs) with teachers and other school personnel. The objective of these LCs is to improve school success and student perseverance. We took a grassroots perspective to develop a pedagogical leaders LC with the purpose of generating specific LCs between schools. This involved determining priorities, identifying strengths, interests and ambitions collectively. The process generated a significant amount of tensions, especially when participants had opposite visions and perspectives. This paper describes the emergence of conflict and discusses how we used Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) to allow the constructs that underlie these tensions to emerge and turn them into engines of development for LCs.

Keywords*: Repertory grid test, PCP, learning communities, principals, teachers, school personnel, group work, conflict*

INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession has traditionally been an activity that happens in silos (Gidney & Millar, 2012). Still today, when teachers enter their classrooms they seldom work in collaboration with each other. Other school personnel, such as special education technicians, day care workers and resource people, are expected to be present to ensure that the children's needs are fulfilled and that the teacher can deliver their curriculum. At best, teachers build strong synergies during personnel meetings or professional development days, but the projects they undertake are usually done individually. Aside from being challenging, collaboration in schools poses the risk of being forced and controlled. This is called "contrived collegiality" (Hargreaves, 1997) because there is an administrative regulation that obliges the teachers to meet and work together. Several factors can be pointed out, such as the departmentalization and how the time is used in the school schedule (Schussler, 2003).

Aside from the aforementioned characteristics of schools, there are some positional hierarchies that exist in schools, which play a role on the collaboration between school personnel. These hierarchies stem partly from the division of labor, the authority and roles, but also from the qualifications that are necessary to enter the

school environment (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Most school principals in Canada have the equivalent of a Master's degree or some additional qualifications to be able to take the leadership of a school. Teachers have a minimum of a four-year baccalaureate. Special education technicians and daycare workers usually have a college degree. There are also some hierarchies between experienced teachers and those with a precarious status, such as part-time teachers or those that do not yet have a permanent contract, which naturally creates some tensions inside the system. Some people feel less important or less appreciated than others (DeWitt, 2012).

In 2013, six elementary school principals from Riverside School Board, the school board for Montreal's (Québec) South Shore English-speaking population, who wished to improve their schools, approached our research team to accompany them through the process of creating professional learning communities (PLCs) in their schools. The principals' objective was to develop a teamwork structure between schools that would involve different school personnel, including teachers, daycare workers, special education technicians, resource teachers and community support workers, to collaborate in the pursuit of better learning experiences for students.

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Five of the six school principals and a resource person from the Ministry of Education had been working together since 2011-2012. They met periodically to plan common activities, such as an annual professional development day for their teachers. They wrote a paper together titled The Power of Five (Hobbs et al., 2012), in which they outlined the power of group work and concerted efforts. They realized that they needed resources to help them make this project concrete. They decided to seek help from our research team to formalize their activities and to scale their impact. In 2013-2014, we obtained funding from the 'Programme de soutien à la formation continue du personnel scolaire' from the 'Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec' and we engaged in a three-year project with the six schools.

The first section of this article presents a review of literature surrounding professional learning communities (PLCs) and learning communities (LCs) in schools. The second section briefly presents the activities in which we involved the participants to build the LCs from a grassroots perspective. The third section describes the emergence of the conflict that could have broken one of the LCs. In the fourth section we explain how we used PCP to resolve the conflict and allowed the LC to resume its activities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A professional learning community (PLC) is an organizational model that focuses on the relationship between good workplace climate and resources, institutional support, opportunities to work collaboratively and shared decision making. Researchers agree that PLCs help improve school success and teaching quality (Dufour, 2004; Leclerc, Moreau, Davidson, & Dumont, 2010) because they rely on evidence based data (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2008; Leclerc, Moreau, & Leclerc-Morin, 2007), they encourage the development of a climate of trust (Earle & Katz, 2007; Fullan, 2006; Hord, & Sommers, 2008), mutual respect between teachers (Mitchell, 2007), shared leadership (Isabelle, Grenier, Davidson, & Lamothe, 2013), and the professional development of teachers (Fontaine, Savoie-Zajc, & Cadieux, 2013; Hamel, Turcotte, & Laferrière, 2013; Peters & Savoie-Zajc, 2013).

The Canadian provinces of Ontario and Québec use PLCs as an organizational tool to either promote a better implementation of school reform through the professional development of teachers or to help introduce new pedagogical practices (Dionne, Lemyre, & Savoie-Zajc, 2010). These authors mention, however, that PLCs are often implemented in a perspective of school ranking that strives to increase the success on standardized tests, which often leads to unnecessary competition. This is not the perspective we wanted to adopt, despite the request that the principals had made.

In the literature we find, among others, the terms professional learning community (PLC), learning community (LC), and community of practice (CoP). For example, Bouchamma and Michaud (2013) adopted the term CoP because they relied on Wenger's (1998) definition of common concern or passion, shared repertoire and commitment for improving practices. In a different perspective, Dionne, Lemyre, & Savoie-Zajc (2010) used the concept of LC as a concrete tool to help teachers reflect on their practices, to make their repertoire of teaching practices more extensive and to stimulate learning and heavily relied on the evolution of three dimensions – cognitive, affective and ideological, as described by Shussler (2003).

Schussler (2003) made an effort to unpack the definition of learning communities because she noticed that many schools claimed to be learning communities, but that the definitions were nebulous. Her intention was to examine if this was another word for an "effective school" –a school which focuses on attaining high results on standardized tests, or if it was a more comprehensive concept to explain how a "good school" – a school which is "…a thoughtful place. […] The entire place is thoughtful: everything in its routines meets a standard of common sense and civility" (Sizer, 1992, p.128).

While researchers who study effective schools generally use an evidence based approach to identify how the students are scoring on standardised tests, researchers who are interested in studying schools as learning communities, usually approach the topic in a holistic manner, looking at academic achievement, but go beyond that concept and include how people treat each other and how they learn to develop shared ideas. The three dimensions of

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Schlusser's (2003) model overlap and seem to be permeated with pedagogical common sense, which includes focussing not only on the outcome, but also on the process of learning. This includes going above than just the mechanical process of teaching and considering teaching and learning as highly social processes. The affective dimension focuses on interpersonal relationships and care. This involves making an effort to build good relationships between school personnel, between teachers and students and between students as peers. Building positive relationships requires that everyone see the school as a place where they belong and feel comfortable, but also ensuring that teachers and other school personnel work well together and have good contacts with members of the community, as if they were members of a family. The ideological dimension refers to core values and shared vision, and purpose that are developed by the school as a learning community. This includes working on developing an identity, knowing which values define the school and what it strives for together. Despite the apparent effort in operationalising the construct of learning communities, Schussler warns the readers that it should not be translated into a formula: "Although there is a natural proclivity to take a construct and translate it into a formula, the intention here of describing the learning community construct is not to define a prescriptive framework. Rather, the intention is to describe a viable lens through which schools can be viewed in a meaningful manner" (Schussler, 2003, p. 499).

Group work

This section covers two models of group work, notably Tuckman's model (1965) and Frances' model (2008). While Frances' model builds on Tuckman's, they both contribute important distinctions on the process of group development.

Tuckman's model

Working in learning communities immediately brings the topic of group work, because people who do not usually interact on work-related tasks end up collaborating together. One of the most commonly used models of group development stems from Tuckman's (1965) research. He describes group formation as a life cycle comprised of four stages: forming, storming, norming and performing. Essentially, during the 'forming stage' the group comes together and starts to interact during activities that have shared purposes, but are highly dependent on the leader. Moreover, team members usually demonstrate positive behaviors within the group, but they remain highly focussed on themselves as individuals who need to take something out of the experience. During the 'storming stage' disagreements start to emerge about various roles, relationships and values, who takes the leadership and who controls the decisions. This is the stage when members of the group start to question the opinions of the others and start to voice their opinions about members who either neglect their responsibilities or try to dominate the group. If the personality conflicts are not resolved, the group cannot continue to progress to the next stage. During the 'norming stage', the roles, responsibilities and expectations of each member begin settling. Members of the group start working towards the goals they have and they are willing to put aside the idiosyncrasies of the others in order to move on the next stage. Finally, in the 'performing stage', the way the group works together and the processes members follow, allows members to work within constraints while reaching their goals. During that stage, roles are established and certain norms exist within the group. The group's motivation is high, they are knowledgeable and autonomous, and they are successful. They do not need supervision to make their decisions and they can disagree with one another, but dissent must be expressed through a means that is accepted within the group.

Frances' model

Building on Tuckmann's (1965) model, Frances (2008) describes the life cycle of group development from the lens of personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1955) by keeping activities and tasks as the central area of focus. Frances proposes four stages, in parallel to Tuckman's stages, but with a flavour of how a person con-

strues their interaction with others when engaging in group work. She explains her stages with the following approach: Stage one: individual anticipation –of the group; Stage two: individual experimentation –in the group; Stage three: collective construction –by the group; Stage four: collaborative action –as a group.

During the 'individual anticipation' stage, the group might not be entirely sure of what will come and might be going through some phases of *anxiety* because of a lack of existing constructs to deal with group activities and interactions. During the 'individual experimentation stage', conflicts might emerge between members of the group with regards to issues relating to who is controlling the group, who feels included or excluded, which sub-groups are emerging. As Frances puts it "In PCP terms, the more *core* the issues involved, the more turbulent this phase will be" (2008, p.13). During the 'collective construction stage', the group develops a sense of shared values and has a clearer understanding of the roles each member might play. They develop common constructs from previous experience in working together. During the 'collaborative action' phase, the group works on common projects and the activities and roles of each member are well understood and flexible because the group has developed a synergy. The members are able to review objectives and outcomes as new situations arise.

OBJECTIVE OF OUR STUDY

The overarching objective of our study was to develop a pedagogical leaders' learning community that could generate specific learning communities with various school personnel from the six schools. We had three specific objectives for the project.

1) To develop a model of professional development with the school personnel of schools from one geographical sector, based on a learning community of pedagogical leaders that could generate specific learning communities in schools to help improve students' perseverance and school success.
2) To pursue the development of the professional competency to work collaboratively to help all students, including those with special needs, develop Québec Education Program's competencies.
3) To analyze the potential and the process through which a pedagogical leaders' learning community can foster and sustain specific learning communities for school personnel.

Initially, the six principals had approached us to create a PLC, but their local understanding referred more to a grassroots perspective of developing a learning community as defined by Schussler (2003) because it does not focus on evidence based data in order to improve school success. Instead, the principals wanted to focus on a variety of ideas that were associated to Schussler's construct of learning communities. For instance, they wanted school personnel to develop common ideas about practices and to be open to others' ideas, which is associated to the cognitive dimension. They also wanted school personnel to break the hierarchies, to develop good relationships and to communicate efficiently, which is associated to the affective dimension. Finally, they wanted the school personnel to develop common goals and to commit to improving student learning, which is associated to the ideological dimension.

METHODOLOGY

We recruited participants from six schools of the Richelieu Valley (Riverside School Board, South Shore of Montreal, Quebec). Our initial group was comprised of twenty-four participants, namely principals (6), teachers (9), resource persons (3), special education technicians (1), daycare workers (2), and researchers (3). We asked for an initial commitment of one year and we explained that participants could withdraw anytime without fear of reprisal. A few participants left the first year and the second year (for example: illness, family responsibilities, change of school), and some were added, but generally the core group of participants stayed the same. In the last year, the group grew to thirty-six participants.

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Activities of the first year

Given that this was a collaborative action-research that was planned to spread over three years, we decided to use a variety of tools to encourage dialogue, understand the system, engage in diagnostic thinking, negotiate consensus and solve problems. Our team relied on the collection of collaborative action research tools and techniques developed by Chevalier and Buckles (2009).

Because of the highly collaborative character of this research, and because the objective of this article is to explicitly describe how the repertory grid test (RGT) can be used to untangle group conflicts as people learn to work together, we need to describe what pre-empted the conflict. During the first year, we designed two types of activities: activities that could help the development of priority areas for the learning communities and team-building activities to allow members of the learning community to learn to know each other.

To determine priority areas for the learning communities, we allowed everyone to share their ideas on what a school in which students are successful looks like. The purpose of this was to establish a vision. We started by asking participants if they had success stories to share and we extracted the positive success factors from these stories. To reach saturation, we asked participants to imagine a school where students failed and where personnel would be generally dissatisfied and disengaged. Once they listed all the criteria, we turned them into positives and we completed the list of positive factors. We proceeded to grouping some of the factors in families to identify categories around which we would like to work for the years to come. We used a technique called the Socratic Wheel (Chevalier & Buckles, 2009) that is used to position participants on a variety of axes, which in this case corresponded to an evaluation of how well the six schools were doing with these priority areas and what progress should be made in the next three years. The group identified three priority areas, notably psychosocial, special needs and better teaching practices, that needed some improvement. The group was divided in three priority-area learning communities that had to map out the process and determine activities

that would be undertaken by their specific learning communities in the two years to come.

We were aware that the participants needed to build a group synergy, so we also organized team-building activities. We used ice-breakers, extracting strengths and competencies through passions that participants had, knowing to know ourselves in a group context, becoming a pedagogical leader, recognizing the strengths of the other, learning to work as a collaborative group trough collective understanding, etc. While participants generally didn't find that these activities had an impact on improving the services they give to students, they understood the benefits of building good rapport with their colleagues.

Emergence of the conflict and conflict resolution

The next section describes the emergence of the conflict and how the repertory grid technique was used as a process of conflict resolution.

Once the groups reached the stage where planning for the next two years should be undertaken, we proposed to conduct an activity called "Timeline". The timeline process helps individuals and groups to concretely envision the steps in a current or planned activity chronologically (Chevalier & Buckles, 2009). We invited the three priority learning communities to reflect on the plan they foresaw and to identify the milestones to complete, the stakeholders to involve in the process, and the tasks to distribute.

While the Psychosocial and Individual Needs learning communities had no problem engaging in the activity, the Better Teaching for Better Learning (BT4BL) learning community encountered several problems as they entered in a 'storming' or 'individual experimentation' stage. The problem within the BT4BL learning community emerged when the members were unable to describe the activities they wished to implement in their schools or to identify the milestones on the timeline. They repeated statements that they had shared previously without seeming to build solutions. In her journal, one of the members said: "we were more on individual islands". Another member noticed that the problem lied in the fact that not all members shared the same understanding of the vision within the

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learning community, and that their incapacity to consolidate their ideas was a big challenge they needed to overcome. The group could not find a common ground or a clear foresight of where they would be headed as a team. The frustration escalated. Some members could not find their voice and others wanted to abandon the project. At that point, we realized that being incapable to

visualize activities suggested a problem with how members of the BT4BL learning community understood the activities they proposed. Moreover, there seemed to be dissent with regards to how they construed what "best teaching practices" were. They needed an immediate intervention.

Figure 1: *Pedagogical leader's learning community preparing the timeline of their activities*

We asked this group to meet with us at least one more time, to engage in a consensus building exercise. The idea was to generate a repertory grid with them. The purpose of the exercise was to allow each of the members to list activities that they thought could improve teaching, to help them express how they construed these activities, and to negotiate a consensus around these explanations. We hoped that the exercise would allow participants to discuss differences and to develop a common negotiated understanding for the activities that were to come, which was consistent with the Schussler's (2003) ideological dimension.

The group took a corner in the room and sat around a table with one researcher. They wondered what the objective was and from the outlook of the rigidity of their postures, the prognostic was not good. For the first few minutes all participants avoided eye contact. One member sat next to the researcher, opened her laptop and

started taking notes. Another was speaking while looking at his hands. The rest were listening while gazing at anything except each other.

To identify the elements to examine during the RGT, the researcher asked the group to imagine activities they could do to improve teaching to foster student success. The researcher gave three index cards to each participant and she asked them to write three ideas for activities that they could develop as a learning community. She then proceeded to a pile sorting activity. During the pile sorting activity, the participants were expected to group together similar activities and sort them into piles. In order to do that, participants had to explain their ideas and answer clarification questions. They paid special attention to how they spoke to each other. We heard expressions such as "This is not what I mean…", "What I hear is…", "What do you mean by this?", "When I wrote this I was referring to...". Gradually, we noticed an obvious change in the

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body language and the posture participants were adopting. The laptop was closed and put away and participants started speaking with each other instead of speaking solely with the researcher. Some even got closer to one another.

The following step was to generate the constructs through the process of triadic elicitation with the elements or the activities identified by the members of the BT4BL learning community. The researcher started shuffling the index cards when one of the members couldn't help but to say: "You look like a magician!" Another said: "Or a professional poker card shuffler!" The researcher answered: "I am a dealer. A dealer of ideas. I bet it all and take the risk to lose all, or win all." One participant cried out in joy: "We're going to win it all together!" Everyone laughed. From this point forward the ambiance became more relaxed and members were ready to start negotiating. Yet, the researcher knew that despite the fact that walls between participants seemed to be coming down, they were still on very fragile ground and conflict could easily resurface.

As members negotiated the meaning of the constructs that emerged, they were gradually feeling more at ease with each other. They sometimes used different words, but as one was explaining the meaning of the concepts, the others agreed that they had the same idea. For example, the emerging construct on the dichotomy *Organizational structure / Learning tools and strategies* was not easy to identify, partly because there were some administrators who insisted that this was about attitudes and not about the organizational structure. The participants decided to duplicate the construct to allow both possibilities to be present within the realm of these activities.

As the participants began rating the elements against the constructs on a scale of one to five, they started to identify their role and the nature of their contribution within this learning community. Some of the participants who were

afraid to speak-up, notably a new teacher who felt vulnerable within this group dynamic, began to share ideas and opinions, which gradually became part of the group voice. For instance, one participant asked: "Creating relationships, do we think it's likely successful or uncertain?" Another participant answered: "We need to open a dialogue with various school personnel. We have no choice". They strived to find a common ground and were willing to compromise. One member said: "I'll say a 2. But the majority rules". Eventually, the group decided to give it a "1" because through creating relationships, students would likely be more successful.

The group then proceeded to visually identifying similarities within the repertory grid and explained what these similarities meant. At that point, it was obvious that every activity they had named was associated to the pole *likely success* on the *likely success / uncertainty* construct. To project the group into their insecurities, the researcher decided to ask them to imagine an activity, perhaps 'social', 'high risk', that would relate to a 'tool or a strategy' that could bring positive results, that the group had not named yet but that could be interesting given that it was associated to constructs that they appeared to hold dear. Participants started to propose ideas such as blocking time where all the students would do an activity and a few teachers would take care of them while the others would work in groups. They seemed to enjoy to think of original ideas and share success stories they either experienced or heard about from someone they knew. They decided to keep two of these activities and rate them against the constructs: Free time and Freeze with the Principal (see activities in blue in figure 2). By the end of the RGT, the group had regained energy, was focused and had a clear understanding of the goal they wanted to pursue and how to proceed.
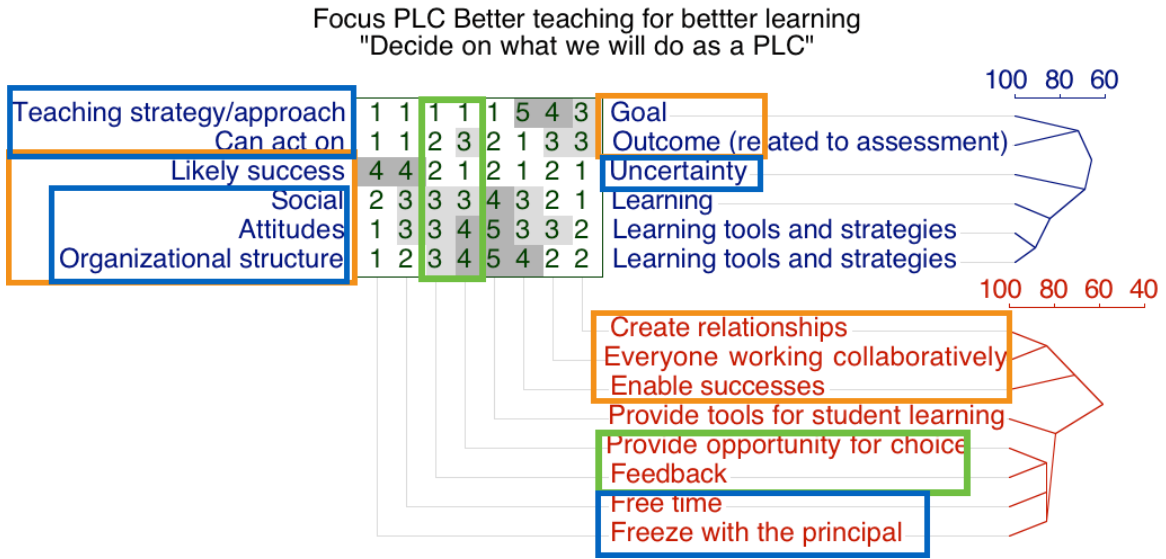
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Focus PLC Better teaching for bettter learning
"Decide on what we will do as a PLC"

Teaching strategy/approach	1	1	1	1	1	5	4	3	Goal
Can act on	1	1	2	3	2	1	3	3	Outcome (related to assessment)
Likely success	4	4	2	1	2	1	2	1	Uncertainty
Social	2	3	3	3	4	3	2	1	Learning
Attitudes	1	3	3	4	5	3	3	2	Learning tools and strategies
Organizational structure	1	2	3	4	5	4	2	2	Learning tools and strategies

100 80 60

100 80 60 40

Create relationships
Everyone working collaboratively
Enable successes
Provide tools for student learning
Provide opportunity for choice
Feedback
Free time
Freeze with the principal

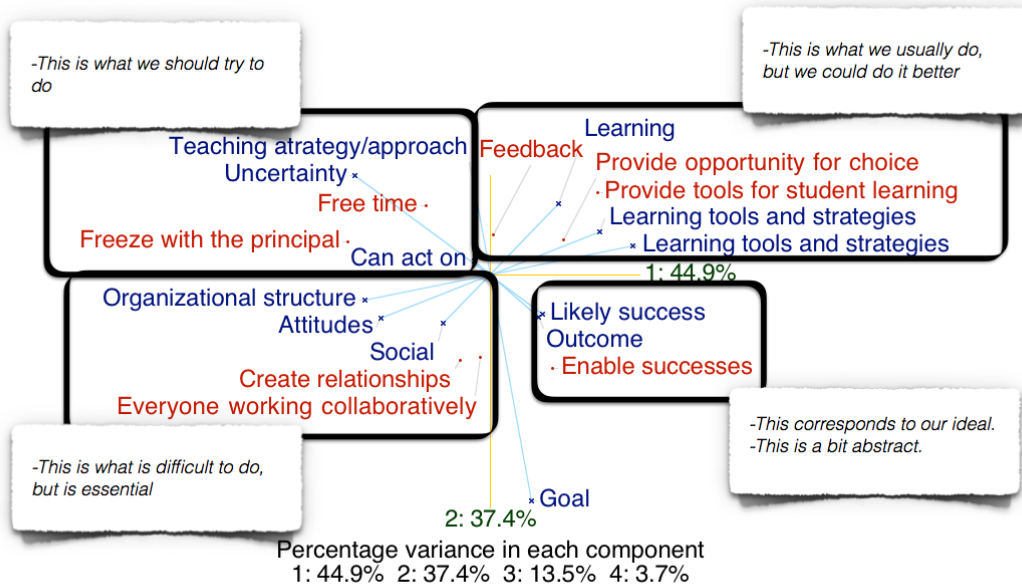Figure 2: *Analysis of similarities between the elements and the constructs*

Figure 3: *PrinGrid with clusters identified by participants and labels.*

The researcher entered the data in a repertory grid software (Rep 5) over lunch hour and shared the results with the group members for feedback. She used the graphic called PrinGrid to identify clusters with the participants and asked them to name the clusters, to add one layer of interpretation (see figure 3). Beginning in the lower right quadrant, participants stated that enabling success corresponded to their ideal and was a bit abstract. In the lower left quadrant, participants stated that these activities 'Create relationships' and 'Everyone working collaboratively' were difficult to do but essential. In the upper right quadrant, participants said that activities such as 'Provide opportunity for choice', 'Provide tools for student learning' and 'Feedback' were things they did, but could do better. When looking at the activities in the upper left quadrant, namely 'Free time' and 'Freeze with the principal', participants agreed that this is the direction they should take. Interestingly, these were the activities they had not named until the researcher asked them to list activities that were closer to the pole *uncertainty* of the construct *likely success / uncertainty.*

Some of the comments that we retrieved from the members of the BT4BL learning community's individual journals were: "All voices were heard and great traces of learning", "Everyone was heard, validated, and focused. It was an incredible process of emergence - it felt like giving birth! Pushed and pushed and finally a beautiful baby!", "The construct analysis activity was extremely impactful. It was the first time our LC had the experience of sharing a vision and working together. We all felt relieved after this activity and excited about moving forward. Finally!" and "Of course, for our LC, the construct analysis was most impactful. It really forced us to voice our opinions, merge our ideas and come to a consensus with regards to the direction of our LC."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Developing learning communities (LCs) between schools from a grassroots perspective is riskier business than implementing professional learning communities (PLCs) as an organizational model in schools. On one hand, while PLCs are more likely to run smoothly in terms of logistics, they do not tend to form durable relationships between members of the PLC, nor do they tend to involve various members of school personnel in important roles with regards to piloting concerted activities in several schools. This is largely because the focus of PLCs largely relies on evidence-based data to improve student success (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2008; Leclerc, Moreau, & Leclerc-Morin, 2007), which in turn seems to help improve the school climate. On the other hand, developing LCs requires work on a variety of fronts, notably the cognitive, the affective and the ideological dimensions (Schussler, 2003) to ensure that the group can develop a shared vision and become better at what they do as they work together (Wenger, 1998).

The conflict we discussed above emerged when the BT4BL learning community needed to make decisions about which better practices they wanted to work on for the following two years. This is when they entered into the 'storming' (Tuckman, 1965) or 'individual experimentation' (Frances, 2008) stage and many of the group members wanted to leave the project. This was a normal reaction because the members of the group were all investing a significant amount of time to participate in the project and each day required organizing the logistics for the substitute teachers. The needed to overcome the problem otherwise they did not see how they could continue.

Tuckman (1965) considers the 'storming' phase of group project development as the most difficult phase of a project's life cycle. During this phase, members negotiate their roles, values, relationships, and visions and determine leaderships. The focus is more on the self than on the project to accomplish. The members exhibit "emotional responses and resistance to group influence" (p.78), which often results in intragroup conflict. Frances (2008) examines this stage through the lens of personal Construct Psychology and dubs it 'individual experimentation'. She underlines that the level of turbulence experienced correlates with the extent to which the issues touch core constructs. During this phase, members could experience 'anxiety' or 'threat', but also could display different levels of 'aggression', which Kelly defines as the active elaboration of one's construct system.

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To help the various school personnel, including teachers, principals, resource teachers, daycare monitors, special education technicians and community resource persons develop "good schools", as Sizer (1992) suggested, they must first learn to work together, develop relations of trust and respect and good companionship. When fundamental differences, about what sound pedagogy is, emerge at the core of discussions and hierarchies between various members blur the conversations, tensions are likely to arise. As Frances (2008) puts it, the more the issues are at a core, the more likely tensions are likely to escalate during the individual experimentation phase –or during the storming phase (Tuckmann, 2065).

In the case of our project, the tensions were so high that members of the learning community were ready to abandon the project before we decided to intervene. Using the principles of personal construct psychology through the elaboration of a repertory grid, we were able to untangle much of the noise that was occurring in the conversations. While the "Freeze With the Principal" activity was not pursued further, because it was too risky, it allowed the group to be projected within the realm of underlying constructs they commonly shared. Both the process that underlies the method and the moderation skills of the facilitator were key to allowing the group to come to a consensus and learn to speak to each other without fear of being dismissed, regardless of the role they played in the school.

Moreover, PCP had a large role to play in the conflict resolution process. Because Kelly's theory focuses on how people anticipate events, rather than how they react to events, key decisions are understood in terms of how a person anticipates the outcome of their decisions. Using PCP enabled participants to discuss experiences about their practices, which contributed to the conflict resolution process. In revealing their constructs, participants were no longer in the realm of common sense party-line response. Instead, they shared their "real" hopes and insecurities with the group. The fact that the young teacher, who did not previously have a voice, was the one to identify the activity titled "freeze time with the principal" demonstrates the strength of using PCP in a group context. The conflict was largely due to thoughts and worries, which remained unsaid, and the repertory grid

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tool made it possible to reveal how the participants understood such practices. As Bannister and Fransella mention, "We can only make assumptions about what reality is and then proceed to find how useful or useless these assumptions are" (Bannister, & Fransella, 1971, p.18). Last but not least, the fact that participants generated their own characteristics of their experiences was an enabling condition to the conflict resolution. If the researchers had identified the characteristics of such activities, the uncertainty related to some of them, which was a key construct, would have likely been ignored.

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