



UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

TEACHER LEADERS AS AGENTS OF INNOVATION DIFFUSION

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WHERE DOES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT START ?

There are many ways how to improve the process of teacher professional development (PD) and student learning



Teachers as change agents (Fullan, 1993)



Innovations enter the school through teacher initiative

WHAT IS TEACHER LEADERSHIP ?

- **Previous research in Latvia**

Teacher leaders systematically collaborate in CPD networks nationally, initiate joint learning groups, develop authentic teaching materials

Having awareness of their professional learning needs, and acting accordingly to them ([Namsone, Čakāne, Sarceviča-Kalviške, 2016](#))

- **Definition**

Teacher leadership is the **process** by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other member of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices ([York-Barr, Duke, 2004](#)).

WHAT IS INNOVATION DIFFUSION ?

- **Innovation diffusion** ([Rogers, 2003](#)): the extent to which teachers in a school are willing to adapt new ways of professional collaboration
- **Social innovations = new ways of collaboration and professional relationships**

Lesson study ([Lewis, 2009](#)): PD approach for identifying teachers' teaching problems, plan, observe and analyse lessons together

RESEARCH GOAL AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **Goal:** to explore how teacher leaders affect the diffusion of innovative teaching approaches and collaborative approaches among other teachers.
- **Research questions:**
 - How do teacher leaders affect the diffusion of innovations among other teachers?
 - What other agents are involved in this process and what is their influence?
 - What promotes and what inhibits teacher leaders to affect the process of innovation diffusion?

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews

- **2 experts:**

director of the teacher PD program under *The Interdisciplinary Center for Educational Innovation (ICEI)* at the University of Latvia

deputy official representing one Latvian municipality board of education

- **5 teacher leaders:**

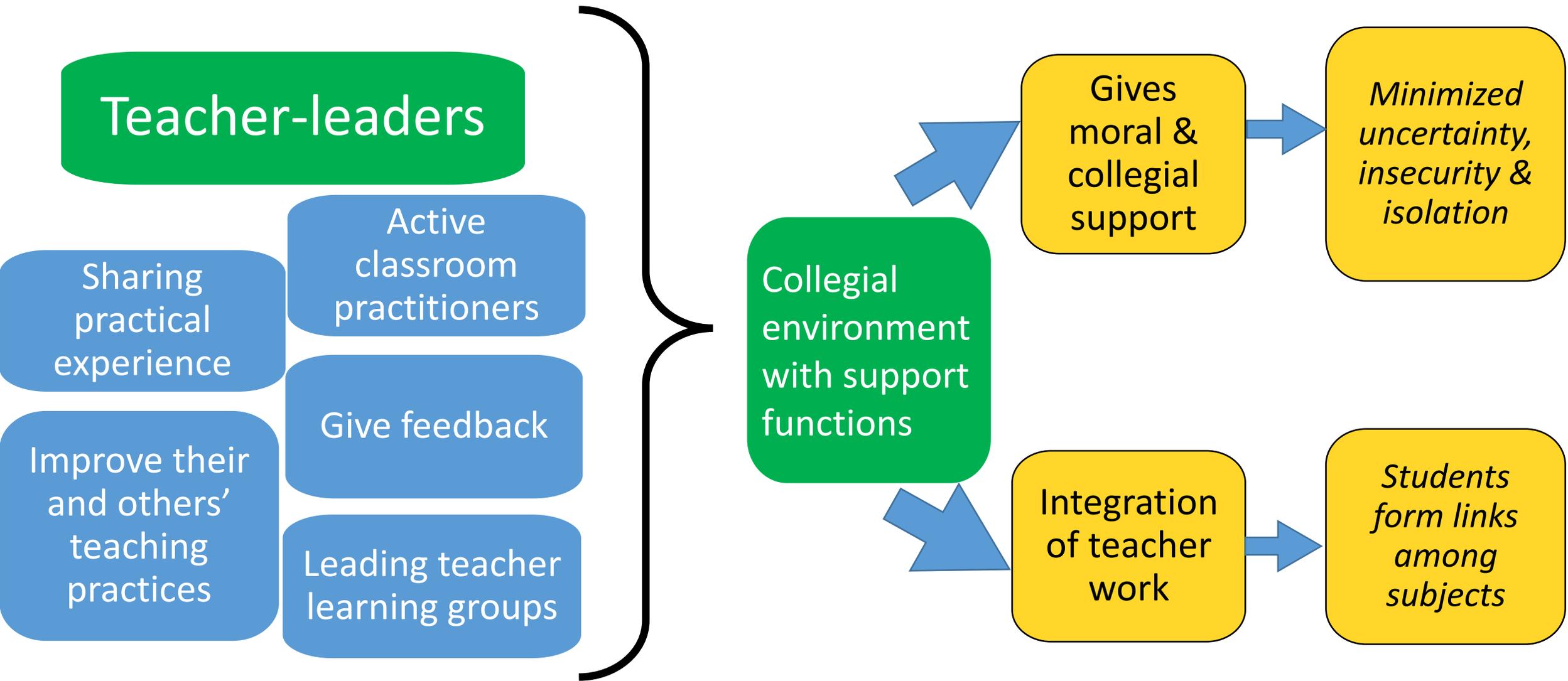
Selection based on expert advice

Subjects: mathematics, chemistry, physics, and Latvian language

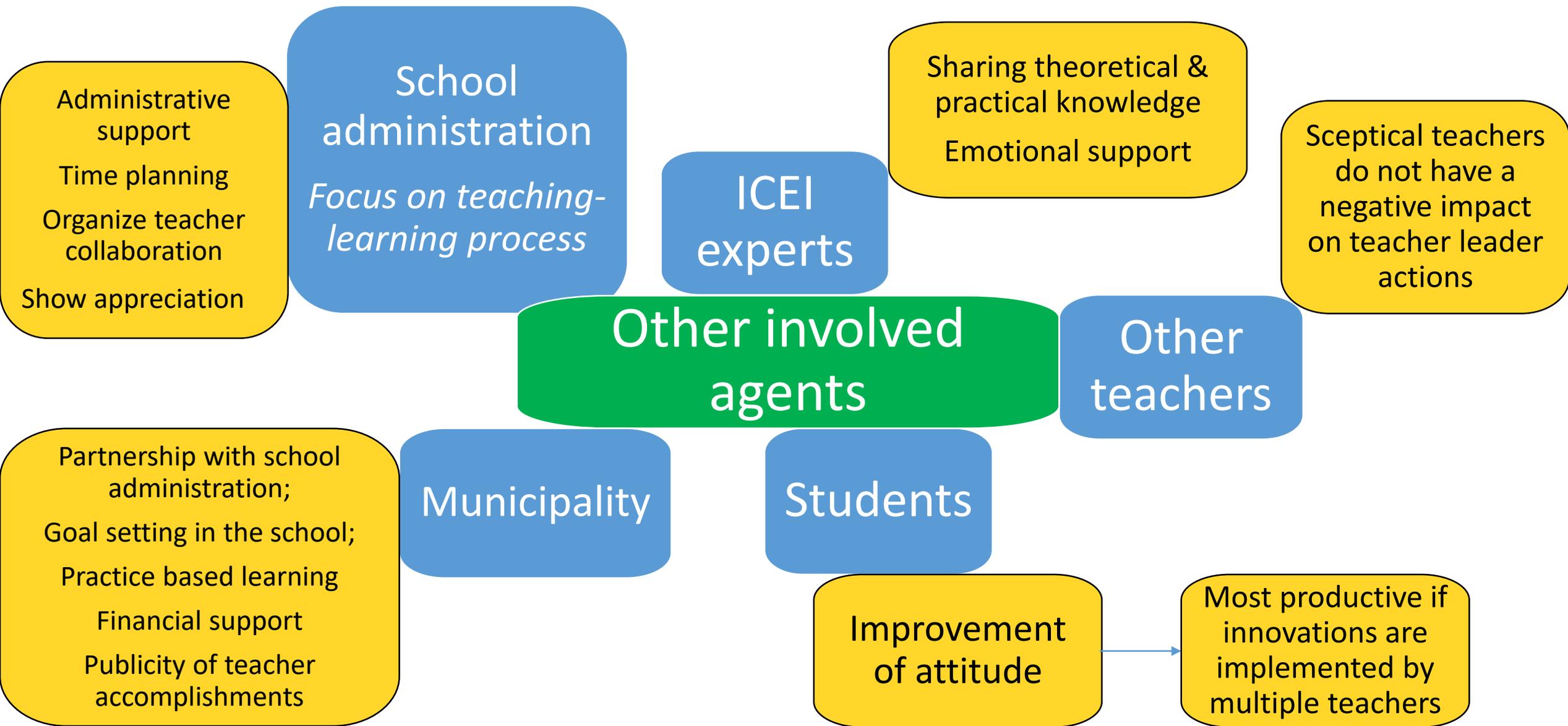
Rural and urban schools

RESULTS

How do teacher leaders affect the diffusion of innovations among other teachers?



What other agents are involved in this process and what is their influence?



What promotes and what inhibits teacher leaders to affect the process of innovation diffusion?

Bias towards lesson observation

Slow change of attitudes

Lack of time

No help from the school administration

Chance to learn collectively

Support from the school administration

Support from the municipality

A teacher leader can not be effective if working alone

To notice and support
Collectivity

CONCLUSIONS

- Teacher leaders gain experience through real-world experimentation, they are willing to share it with others;
- They create a safe space for teachers to experiment and share their practical experiences
- Innovations bring risk and uncertainty – collegiality and having a safe space helps to deal with it
- A single teacher leader cannot diffuse innovations as effectively
- Collegiality is needed not just among teachers but also among teachers and school administration

Recommendations

- school administration should take on duties that are related to teachers' *professional learning needs*
- following actions are advised:

discover and
support
teacher
leaders

attract
support from
municipality

get advice
from
educational
experts

intra-school
&
inter-school
collaboration

time
planning

financial
support

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