Collaboration as a Motivational Factor for Using Online Professional Development for Saudi Teachers and Supervisors

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Summary
The study uncovered the significance of collaboration in maximizing teachers' and supervisors' motivation to use professional development (PD) online. Adopting a quantitative approach and descriptive design, the study recruited a sample of 421 teachers and supervisors. Findings showed that collaboration motivated participants to such a large extent. Additionally, the differences among gender-related responses, teaching experience, level of education degree, and position were noticeably insignificant.

Keywords: *Motivational Factor, Saudi Teachers and Supervisors, professional development, Collaboration*

Introduction

The view that teachers are the backbone of the educational process remains tightly connected to teacher professional development (PD). For this reason, teachers have to stay updated and fresh because their professional development impacts their learners in terms of their behavior and academic achievement. Many education experts have regularly called for updating teachers' knowledge and pedagogical practice.

PD adds bells and whistles to in-service teachers. It continues to be "a dominant theme in the quest for improving education quality" (p. 5) Mukeredzi [1]. Hence, attending continuous training programs enables teachers to catch up with the latest teaching practices which, in turn, impact their classroom teaching. That is to say, they have to be concerned with their professional growth in order to teach effectively [2]. Educators should keep in mind the differences among teachers while drawing up plans for training programs. PD should meet the teachers' needs in order to achieve the desired objectives [3] because teachers might not participate in PD activities that do not meet their needs [4].

PD for teachers could affect student achievement. In other words, teachers who take advantage of continuing PD usually are cognizant of the modern methods that help students to master knowledge. Shannaq, Tairab, Dodeen, and Abdel-Fattah [5] carried out a comparative study between Saudi and Singaporean teachers and their students' achievement. The results show that Singaporean teachers were involved in more professional development activities than their Saudi counterparts. In addition, the level of the Singaporean students' achievement was higher than that of the Saudi students.

Besides, given the technological advances over the last two decades in numerous domains, including industry, military, and business, education is not far behind. Educators have tried to re-appropriate various technologies since the 1960s [6]. For instance, the world wide web is resourceful to the educational process in several capacities. Internet-based services spawn opportunities for interaction in academia. Both teachers are students tend to utilize the Internet for communication and many educational purposes. The email and Skype are working examples of such technology-based communication [7].

Avoiding PD programs might negatively affect teachers' performance over the years if they refrain from catching up with recent developments in their fields, including experts' innovations and teaching methods. Thus, online PD occasions opportunities for teachers to improve themselves and support traditional PD [8]. McNamara (2010) asserted that leaders should encourage teachers to participate in OPD. It could be a perfect choice for teachers who encounter difficulties regarding location or time [9-12]. It may also facilitate interaction and communication among teachers who have the same interests [13], and be an opportunity for teachers to share ideas and acquire skills [14].

The effectiveness of traditional collaborative learning and the development of technology has encouraged educators to investigate the implementation of online collaboration. As stated by Ku et al. [15], "online collaboration is the computer-mediated version of traditional in-class collaborative learning" (p. 922). Khe Foon [16] described online collaboration as a virtual space that enables learners to interact and exchange information. Alotaibi and Almutairy [17] added that online collaboration takes place

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among groups that utilize synchronous and asynchronous tools to reinforce learning goals.

According to Sun [18], online collaboration is the heart and soul of an online course. Studies over the years have demonstrated many advantages of online collaboration, one of which is that it allows people to share knowledge and gives them an opportunity to gain new information [19-21]. It may also help to diminish the differences among teachers in terms of their pedagogical practices [12, 19]. In addition, online collaboration facilitates the engagement of participants in meaningful and effective learning activities [22, 23]. Furthermore, it can motivate members to seek further knowledge [22, 24]. Online collaboration can promote achievement [25] and leads to better content retention and higher-quality critical thinking [26] . It could also help to overcome interaction problems that could arise in reality settings.

Online collaboration can motivate both students and teachers to learn and to acquire more knowledge [16, 21]. For example, students favor working collaboratively in an online environment in order to discuss various topics with their teachers as well as their peers around the world [26]. Ekong [27] conducted a study concerned with online counseling for graduate students. He stated that online collaboration enhances learning and supports social interactions among students in a way that creates an authentic community.

Online collaboration also affects teachers in many ways. For example, it helps teachers in rural communities communicate with other teachers in order to exchange ideas and experiences [20]. Through online collaboration, in-service teachers can be made aware of new information and pedagogical practices in their fields [16]. It can also strengthen social interaction, which is an essential component of effective learning [21]. Moreover, it assists pre-service teachers in understanding and shaping their professional identities [28].

Participants and Methods

The study utilized a quantitative method, and the design is descriptive. The participants are 421 teachers, 258 teachers are male, and the rest are female, and they have different experiences that could affect on them.

The instrument

A two-section instrument was prepared. The first part elicits background information about the participants, e.g., gender and experience. Each participant's experience was assessed in terms of the number of years he or she has spent teaching: 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and more than 15 years. The second section of the questionnaire consists of 10 statements. The author used Cronbach's alpha to gauge the validity of the content, criterion and construct, and the instrument's internal consistency.

Results

The analyses of the sample responses used to answer this question are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *To What Degree Would Collaboration with Others Motivate Saudi Teachers to Use OPD?*

		ST. agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	ST.Disagre	Mean	ST. Deviation
Because I like working collaboratively with my peers, I would use OPD.	F	13	19	6	23	4	4.03	0.88
	%	3.39	47.1	1.6	5.7	1.0		
Because I like problem-solving with my peers, I would use OPD in group projects.	F	15	21	4	1	2	4.20	0.76
	%	3.96	50.3	1.0	2.6	0.5		
Interacting with the other members motivates me to improve my skills and increase my knowledge.	F	18	19	2	10	1	4.31	0.72
	%	4.47	46.9	6.9	2.5	0.2		
By using OPD, I would benefit from my peers' feedback.	F	15	21	3	20	4	4.17	0.83
	%	3.96	50.4	7.1	4.8	1.0		

Table 1 (Continued)

Collaborative learning with my teammates entertains me.	F	12	21	6	18	1	4.04	0.80
	%	28.7	51.5	15.7	3.2	0.2		
I feel that online teamwork would promote creativity.	F	13	20	2	15	6	4.07	0.86

	%	3	4	1	3	1		
		2.	7.	4.	.	.		
		8	5	7	6	4		
Working with my colleagues results in projects of better quality than working as an individual.	F	1	2	4	9	2	4.	0.75
		5	0	4			2	
		8	8				1	
	%	3	4	1	2	0		
		7.	9.	0.	.	.		
		5	4	5	1	5		
Knowledge sharing during the teamwork would encourage me to use OPD.	F	1	2	3	7	2	4.	0.69
		4	3	1			2	
		2	9				2	
	%	3	5	7.	1	0		
		3.	6.	4	.	.		
		7	8		7	5		
Online teamwork promotes my collaboration skills .	F	1	2	4	1	3	4.	0.78
		3	2	2	5		1	
		5	6				3	
	%	3	5	1	3	0		
		2.	3.	0.	.	.		
		1	7	0	6	7		
Total grand mean							4.	0.57
							1	
							5	

The results in Table 1 demonstrate the respondents' perceptions regarding how collaboration would motivate Saudi teachers to use OPD. The overall grand mean value reached 4.15. It can be concluded that collaboration is a significant motivator for Saudi teachers to use OPD.

Table 1 shows the highest mean score of 4.31 for the statement "Interacting with the other members can increase motivation to develop my skills and knowledge." The majority of participants, about 90.5%, strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, but only 2.6% reported negative views, and 6.9% were neutral.

Conversely, the statement with the lowest mean score was "I would use OPD because I really like working in collaborative group with my peers" at 4.03 based on the respondents' views. Participants with opposing viewpoints or no clear decision made up 21.2% of the respondents. The remaining represent those who hold agreeable views. Although the mean score was high, participants had the least concern for it.

Based on their mean scores, the remaining collaboration statements will be explained in order.

Table 1 shows that "Sharing knowledge during the teamwork processes would encourage me to use OPD" received a high mean score of 4.22. It can be concluded that the majority of the participants were in agreement with the statement and 9.6% made no clear decision or had negative views.

The statements "Working with my colleagues results in projects of better quality than working as an individual" and "I would use OPD because I like solving problems with my peers in group projects" received mean scores of 4.21 and 4.20 respectively. As seen in Table 1, approximately 87% of the informants were agreeable with the statements. In comparison, 13% had either negative views or offered no clear opinion.

The majority of the participants, at 87%, agreed with the statement "By using OPD, I would benefit from my peers' feedback." Twenty-four of the participants, or 5.8%, had negative views, and 7.4% of the participants were undecided.

The last statement, "I gain online collaboration skills from the teamwork processes," received a mean score of 4.13. The participants who strongly agreed or agreed were 85.8% of the sample, whereas the remaining percentage were those who had negative opinions or were undecided.

The statement "I feel that online teamwork would promote creativity" received a mean score of 4.07. With respect to the percentages, 80.3% of the participants were in agreement with the statement, but the remainder were either undecided or had negative viewpoints.

The last statement, regarding collaboration was "I enjoy the experience of collaborative learning with my teammates." The mean score was 4.04. Data in Table 1 displays that about 80% of the participants generally agreed with the statement. The remaining respondents were undecided or had opposing opinions..

Research Question 2: To what degree does gender impact participant responses concerning online PD?

To answer this research question, t-test statistics were analyzed.

Table 2

T-test Result of the Impact of Gender Regarding the Effect of Collaboration on Online Professional Development.

Gender	Sample size	Mean	SD	T-test	Degrees of freedom	P-value
Male	258	4.14	0.57	-0.452	419	0.65
Female	163	4.17	0.57			

The t-test statistics displayed in Table 2 indicate that the P-values are greater than the significance level (0.05), which means no statistically significant differences between

males' and females' responses regarding collaboration that affects Saudi teachers to use OPD. Furthermore, this means gender is not a factor regarding collaboration the use of OPD.

Research Question 3: To what degree do years of teaching experience and level of degree impact participant responses regarding the use of OPD?

Both ANOVA and Kruskal –Wallis tests were performed to ascertain if there was a significant effect from years of experience or level of degree on participants' responses regarding the use of OPD.

Table 3 *Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) Test to Examine the Impact Years of Experience Has Regarding, Collaboration in Online Professional Development*

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F-statistics	P-value
Between groups	1.428	5	0.286	0.877	0.50
Within groups	135.219	415	0.326		
Total	136.648	420			

Regarding the impact of collaboration on OPD, the results show no significant differences between the sample's responses. This means that variations in experience span have no impact on collaboration variables on OPD.

Research Question 4: To what degree does the participants' professional position impact his or her responses regarding the use of OPD?

The T-test was conducted to examine the impact of participants' professional positions on OPD use.

Table 4 *Results of T-test on Whether Professional Position Impacts the Effect of Collaboration in Use of Online Professional Development.*

Position	Sample size	Mean	SD	T-test	Degrees of freedom	P-value
Supervisor	121	4.15	0.61	0.018	419	0.99
Teacher	300	4.15	0.55			

The t-test statistics displayed in Table 4 shows that the P-values are more significant than the significance level (0.05). This means that statistically significant differences were nonexistent between supervisors and teacher's responses regarding collaboration in the use of OPD.

Discussion

The mean scores for the collaboration-related statements are between 4.31 and 4.03, and the overall mean score for this dimension is 4.15. This means that collaboration is a key factor in encouraging Saudi teachers and supervisors to use OPD. This is consistent with Selvi's [29] conclusion. In other words, it indicates that communication and collaboration among program participants reinforces their desire to take online courses.

The respondents confirmed these results when responding to the open-ended question that was posed to explore other motivational factors. About 74 of the participants pointed to the impact of collaboration on teachers and supervisors to use OPD, as seen in comments they offered related to collaboration. The findings indicate that participants are aware of the importance of interaction with others through OPD in gaining new skills and knowledge, as well as the exchange of ideas. This is compatible to Alharbi and Kinchin's [20] findings, which concluded that discussion forums used in the programs helped some teachers to learn from one another. In Saudi Arabia, it is common to see novice teachers interact with veteran teachers or supervisors through training programs in order to improve their performance. Therefore, OPD will help to increase this interaction among and reduce the performance differences among them [19, 21, 26, 30, 31].

Another indicator, based on the participants' responses, to the role of collaboration in motivating Saudi teachers and supervisors to use OPD is feedback they might receive from their peers. Receiving feedback from others assists teachers and supervisors to develop areas of strength and to address their weaknesses [15, 32, 33]. Hungwei, Heng-Yu, Chien-Hsin, and Ling [34] stated that instructors working in online settings realize the important role of feedback, which is compatible with this study's results.

With the variable of gender in mind, the results indicate no significant difference among participants' responses. It means that both male and female Saudi teachers and

supervisors believed that convenience, collaboration, and technology largely motivated them to use OPD. This conclusion is consistent with the previous studies in the literature [35, 36, 37, 38].

The results indicate no significant differences among participants' responses concerning their years of teaching experience using OPD collaboration. This means that all participants, regardless of how long they have been teaching, believed that collaboration motivates Saudi teachers and supervisors to participate in ODP. This conclusion is consistent with other studies [36, 39, 40, 41,42].

In terms of collaboration, the results indicate nonexistent significant difference among the participants' responses based on their positions as teachers or supervisors. This means that both positions, teachers and supervisors, had no impact on participants' motivation toward using OPD. This result is consistent with Alsenani's [43] research. Thus, I believe that this conclusion is plausible since some studies were conducted on teachers and supervisors' attitudes toward OPD and concluded that they have positive attitudes toward OPD [36, 37].

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