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The Extent to which the Characteristics of Professional learning communities are found in cycle one Schools in Al – Ain from Teachers prospective

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THESIS TITLE

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFESSIONAL

LEARNING COMMUNITIES ARE FOUND IN CYCLE ONE SCHOOLS IN

AL-AIN FROM TEACHERS' PERSPCTIVE

By

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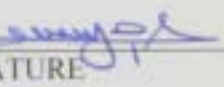
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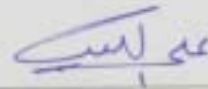
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the extent to which the characteristics of Professional Learning Communities were fou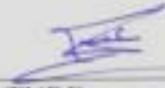nd in cycle one schools in Al-Ain from teachers' perspectives. The aim was also to investigate if there were differences of participants' responses based on demographic variables. Using the Professional Learning Communities Assessment (PLCA) developed by Oliver, Hipp, and Huffman (2003), the study answered the following specific questions: 1) To what extent do the characteristics of PLC exist in Al-Ain cycle one schools as perceived by teachers?; 2) Are there significant differences between teachers' perception in terms of age, years of experience and qualification to the extent to which PLC characteristics are found in Al-Ain cycle one schools?

Out of (1150) teachers in Al Ain cycle one schools (229) teachers were surveyed. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences program (SPSS), descriptive statistics were used to answer the first question and three way ANOVA test was used to answer the second question.

The main finding of the study was that PLC characteristics and all of its dimensions existed to a high extent in Al- Ain cycle one schools as perceived by teachers where the highest mean score (4.04) was for the dimension Supportive Conditions-Relationships and the lowest mean score (3.68) was for the dimension Supportive Conditions- Structures. Also it was found that the variables of age and years of experience had no significant relation on the teachers perception of the existence of PLC characteristics or on any of its dimensions in Al-Ain schools, while the variable teachers qualification had a significant relation related to Shared Values and Vision, Shared

Personal Practice and Supportive Conditions- Relationship, where the means was higher

for the teachers with BA qualification than their peers of higher qualification.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL FRAMEWORK

Educational reforms have become a necessity all over the world due to its

dominant impact on all fields of modern life. Thus, the best way to initiate and

commence the process of development and improvement has been the matter of

debate in different parts of the world.

Research had referred to the positive impact that PLCs has on both teachers

and students (Hord, 1997; Hughes & Kritsonis, 2007, Bolam, McMahon, Stoll,

Thomas, & Wallace, 2005; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008) and to the role it plays in

facilitating the changes education reform require and the school level improvements

(Harris & Jones, 2010; Edwards, 2012, Bolam et.al, 2005).

At the school level Harris & Jones (2010) argued that creating professional

learning communities at schools can lead to system level improvements. Edwards

(2012) & Bolam et.at (2005) referred to PLC as facilitators of school change

processes through building school capacity; which was aligned with the results of

Tenuto, Canfield-Davis, & Joki (2012) study who conducted a study that explored the

effects of giving teachers the opportunity to build capacity, lead and function within a

PLC in a culture that has a history of change resistance. The researchers concluded

from the results that although PLCs may not be the complete solution for school

reform, it actually can help to prepare schools for a sustainable systematic change;

when teachers are encouraged and empowered to lead, search constantly to improve

their practice and make the change and participate in the decision making process,

their level of change understanding would increase and team relationships and morale

would also develop.

Moreover, PLCs provide opportunities for teachers to work together; sharing experiences and knowledge enables the less experienced teachers to grow professionally through the help provided to them by more experienced colleagues, knowledge sharing along with joint planning helped the teachers in reviewing the curriculum and adapt it to suit their students' needs. Sharing success, challenges and failures built efficacy for all people involved in the PLC (Edwards, 2012).

PLC's also proved to have an effect on teachers' practices; when teachers collaborate and learn continuously through PLCs they become more student centered and more empowered which consequently affect students' learning positively (Vescio, Ross, Adams, 2008).

PLCs had been referred to as key factor when it came to reform efforts to raise students' achievement; meta-analysis of five studies proved that the existence of PLC's at the school could improve students' achievement (Lomos, Hoffman, & Bosker, 2011). And Results of a study conducted by Hughes & Kritsonis (2007) aimed to explore the effects of professional learning communities on students achievement had proved that schools functioning as PLCs with staff working collaboratively and learn collectively towards achieving students learning, increased the scores of their students in standardized tests in Mathematics and Reading/English Language Arts.

Al-Ain cycle one schools that form the focus of this research are under the supervision of Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC). It was established in 2005 to reform education in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Hence, according to Dr. Mugheer Al Khaili, ADEC General Director there have been initiatives in the UAE in general and the emirate of Abu Dhabi in particular; some of the schools have been affiliated with

the Public Partnership Project (PPP) of global educational providers to reform the education system and the educational leadership in the country (ADEC, 2010a).

In a period of economic development, Abu Dhabi has initiated a comprehensive plan for economic diversification. The education system is involved in this as it is one of the key pillars that would enable the Emirate to reach the standards of excellence it strives for in all fields. Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) has embarked on a complete transformation of the education system through a 10 year strategic plan from 2009-2018. The aim is to create quality education based on world-class standards and expertise (ADEC, 2010b).

This aim requires more focus on school leadership to enable students reach their full potential to compete in the global market (ADEC, 2010b). This statement makes it very clear why educational reforms have become very important to push the UAE education system forward.

In addition, ADEC's mission, according to the official website is to "produce world-class learners who embody a strong sense of culture and heritage and are prepared to meet global challenges". ADEC's vision is to be "Recognized as a world class education system that supports all learners in reaching their full potential to compete in the global market".

The council's vision and mission obviously reflects the significant need for creating professional learning communities in the UAE schools. So the council has

been striving to raise the standards of the local principal who can lead the process of change and improvements, leading the process of teaching and learning, the curriculum, the organization and the people in the school (ADEC, 2009). Moreover, the school time has been extended to provide the needed professional development for teachers at the end of the day. There are professional development programs for principals and vice principals; participation in that will enable them to lead the change and move the schools to achieve ADEC's vision.

However, the students' achievement has not reached the expected high standards despite all the efforts and funding for improvement. Hence, Abu-Dhabi Educational Council started to plan of creating school cultures and effective rich environment through the professional learning communities. Al Khaili (ADEC, 2010a) added that ADEC's 10-year strategic plan will provide Abu Dhabi schools and students with world-class facilities, and maintenance, in order to have student-centred learning environment. Now some schools are no longer traditional classrooms; where the teacher is the only source of knowledge. But rather they are professional learning communities where social, educational and sports activities are organized to benefit all the students, by all levels and their families, in addition to the wider community. In fact, the UAE has started attempts to change schools into professional learning communities.

However, there are still many attempts to move the UAE schools from the traditional undemocratic leadership that puts all the decisions and actions in the hand of the principal into a leadership shared by the school members. In the traditional schools many teachers prefer isolation rather than the engagement and the collaboration between them and their colleagues. Whereas, recent researches showed that the bureaucratic organization of schools can be transformed into a culture of collegial and collaborative work to sustain the structure of professional learning communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) and to have better educational outcomes.

Darling-Hammond argues that "Schools are now expected not only to offer education, but to ensure learning" (1996, p. 5). He continues to state that schools expect the high-quality learning at that. Several studies in the world showed that there is an increasing consensus that professional learning communities play a key role in building individuals' and school capacities for continuous and sustainable learning in a world that changes rapidly (Stoll and Louis, 2007). Sergiovanni (1996) clarified that the school must become a culture where teachers are involved in a community of learning, caring, and inquiring in order to achieve the school goals.

Purpose of the study

This study aimed to investigate the teachers' perspective of the characteristics of professional learning communities (PLC) that are found in cycle one

schools in the United Arab Emirates. The study concentrated on schools in Al Ain to represent the other educational zones in the UAE.

Significance of the Study

It has been noticed so far that little research has been carried out locally on teachers' perspective of the characteristics of the PLC. It is hoped that a study such as the current might reveal some facts associated with the school leadership programs implemented in UAE public secondary schools. All stakeholders including administrators, parents, students and teachers could receive benefit from the findings and recommendations of this study regarding various issues. For instance, decision makers might develop new criteria of evaluating and recruiting principals, or strategies used to improve education. Also, the findings could assist in designing professional development programs to meet the varied needs of principals and other stakeholders.

In addition, school principals might get clearer ideas about the characteristics of the PLC that are found in their schools and the other needed ones so as to emphasize on them. Also it's hoped that this study would benefit teachers and parents since it sheds the light on their strengths, identify and overcome their weaknesses. In addition, they could promote their advantages and strengths and overcome their weaknesses, by measuring the PLC characteristics in these schools. Finally, such

study would be of great importance that could be used to reform education system by using PLC which has been proved to be fruitful in the USA and other countries.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study can be summarized as follows; this study was implemented on a sample of participants in Al-Ain cycle one schools. In addition, it was carried out in the school years 2011-2012. Thus, the study is limited only to some schools in Al-Ain city in the UAE and in one academic year.

Statement of the problem

Evidence from educational research has shown the positive effect PLC has on both teaching and learning. When teachers are working as a learning community they don't feel isolated. Instead they share school's values and objectives, which create commitment towards achieving those objectives. And they in turn share the responsibility of students' learning and development by working in collaboration to reach to the best classroom teaching practices and enhance understanding of content and teachers' roles (Hord, 1997), which obviously leads to higher students achievement and progress in schools having an effective PLC (Bolam, et.al (2005); DuFour, 2011; Louis & Marks, 1998). Correspondingly PLCs have been referred to as a key factor when it comes to the challenges associated with educational reform that require a quick raise in students achievement (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004; Fullan, 2001).

Educational reform in Abu Dhabi started in 2005, the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) was established to develop education and raise students' achievement to international levels, in response to the assessment data in that year

which referred to fundamental problems in schools; most of the students were performing one or two years below their grade level. most graduates were not well prepared to enter higher education and 70% of the schools had low performing principals and teachers with limited English (ADEC, 2009); data also showed that there was deficiencies in the education system such as the curricula, ineffective teaching methods, inappropriate assessment methods, little use of ICT, poor libraries and learning support, ineffective school culture, poor facilities, low in professionalism, ineffective school system and inadequate budgets (Macpherson, Kachelhoffer,& El Nemr, 2007).

In 2008 ADEC continued the reform and introduced the New School Model as a key initiative in the Education Strategic Plan, this model calls for creating a collaborative environment between Arabic-medium and English-medium teachers to raise the students levels to international levels, and developing strong Arabic and English literacy and numeracy, critical thinking, problem solving and creativity, which puts more emphasis on the necessity of creating PLC inside the schools to be able to respond to the requirement of the educational reform and make the change and improvements possible (ADEC, 2011).

Evidence showed that principals are a crucial component for the formation of an environment that supports Professional Learning Communities (Louis and Kruse, 1995; Sackney and Walker, 2006; Sharpe and Voulalas, 2005), which is referred to in ADEC's School Leadership Handbook through giving school leaders the responsibility of ensuring the creation of an environment that supports collaboration, positive partnership between teachers, safe, encouraging environment in which students can learn and a continuous professional development for the staff (ADEC, 2011)

However there is little research in the UAE (Al-Taneiji, 2009) that shows the extent to which the schools are implementing the characteristics of PLC, and whether school principals are doing their role as facilitators and supporters in these PLCs.

Research Questions

The aim of this study is investigate the extent to which the characteristics of professional learning communities are found in primary schools in the UAE. This study tried to tackle two main research questions:

1. To what extent do the characteristics of PLC exist in Al-Ain cycle one schools as perceived by teachers?

2. Are there significant differences between teachers' perception in terms of age, years of experience and qualification to the extent to which PLC characteristics are found in Al-Ain cycle one schools?

Organization of the study

This research study is divided into five chapters; the first chapter discussed issues including the importance of PLCs, a brief background about the UAE education system and educational reforms, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study and limitation of the study and the definition of terms.

The second chapter talks about professional learning communities' definition, elements and dimensions of PLCs. It also displays related studies that support PLCs.

The third chapter is methodology and it included the research design,

instruments, validity and reliability, population and sample, procedures and the ethical

considerations.

The fourth chapter included a summary of the main points of the study, the

findings and the discussion. Finally, the fifth chapter provided the summary,

conclusion and the recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The main purpose of this chapter is to review PLC in theoretical perspective and the studies that tackle the educational issues related to professional learning communities. A study of the literature related to the impact of professional learning communities has been very beneficial to this research study and provides some useful insights which helped to illuminate the issues discussed in this study. Moreover, this chapter will talk about professional learning communities' definition, elements and dimensions.

Professional Learning Communities Definition

Professional learning communities (PLC) are defined as an ongoing process in which teachers and administrators learn and work collaboratively to enhance their professionalism to benefit students' learning (Hord, 1997).

Peter Senge (1990) defined learning organizations as the organizations where people continually expand their learning to create the results they really desire, where new ways of thinking are nurtured, and where collective aspiration is set free. So, this definition has some similarity with PLCs. Senge (1990) referred to it as a learning organization because all the members of the organization are continuing their learning and growing their capacity continuously to enhance their productivity and improve their performance. Hence, they aim to achieve one major goal that is improving students' learning.

Senge also added that such organizations exhibit five main characteristics; systems' thinking, personal mastery, mental models, a shared vision, and collective learning (Senge, 1990). PLC therefore, is an ongoing process to establish a culture that develops leadership in all the levels focusing on building and sustaining school

improvement efforts. Those levels include all the stakeholders: teachers, administrators, parents and support staff (Bolam et al., 2005; Huffman, 2000). Bryk, Camburn, and Louis (1999) stated that in professional learning communities the interaction among school members is frequent and their actions are governed by shared norms, ethics and values to improve students' learning.

DuFour, et.al (2006) indicated that a PLC is viewed as a group of educators committed to working collaboratively in an ongoing process of collective inquiry; they also conducted action researches in order to achieve better results for the students they serve. Therefore, PLC is operated under the assumption that the key to improve the learning of the students and the teachers is through a continuous and a collective learning of the all.

Astuto as cited in Leo and Cowan (2000) viewed PLC as the whole members seek and share learning to practice what they learnt; their goal is to enhance their effectiveness in order to improve students' outcomes. This community therefore, is called a community of continuous inquiry and improvement. There are a lot of research studies that advocate changing the schools into professional learning communities in order to enhance learning and achieve the students' progress.

Hord and Sommers (2008) said that "While there has been much talk about the importance of PLCs, little attention has been given to the research studies that have investigated what it is and what outcomes it can produce" (p. 8).

Effective Professional Learning Communities: Elements & Dimensions

PLC is a process where educators work continuously together and engage in collective inquiry collaboratively directed towards a common goal of better students' learning and outcomes (DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006); this definition indicates that

what teachers and colleagues do outside the classroom would affect their own learning and development in addition to what they do inside their classrooms and consequently their students learning (Stoll, 2010).

Based on the previous definition Dufour, et.al (2006) listed six main elements for the achievement of a PLC which where the following:

1- Focus on learning rather than teaching

2- Collaborate to achieve a common goal which is learning for all.

3- Employ collective inquiry to develop shared knowledge and new skills.

4- Transform vision into actions and believe in learning by doing.

5- Improves continuously through keep on searching for new and better methods to achieve goals.

6- Results directed and continuous measure of improvements.

Hipp & Huffman (2003) put PLC characteristics into five main dimensions that were the base of the PLC Assessment instrument used by many researchers after and in the current study and they were:

- Shared and Supportive Leadership: which included all the practices done mainly be the principal and deal with encouraging leadership among staff, sharing responsibility and authority, and involving staff in decision making.

- Shared Values and Vision: included the practices which show whether the school team has shared values, norms and vision that guide their teaching and learning, and focus on students.

- Collective Learning and Application: referred to the way teachers collaborate in solving problems, search for knowledge and share and apply learned knowledge

- Shared Personal Practice: which is achieved if the teachers at the school are provided with opportunities to observe each other, provide feedback and share and analyze work related to student learning.

- Supportive Conditions: this dimension includes two parts, collegial relationships and structure; collegial relationships include the existence of caring and trusting relationships that encourage the openness and risk taking, structure conditions include providing the facilities and resources needed for PLC.

Hence, professional learning communities can be achieved by integrating its dimensions "shared leadership, shared vision, collective learning, supportive conditions, and shared personal practices" into the school practices; Huffman (2003) thought that shared vision forms the base for the student success and the school improvement, as it is a key step in an effective leading of schools.

Results of Harris & Jones (2010) study in Wales highlighted the importance of empowering teachers and shared leadership in creating professional learning communities, they stated that "Distributed leadership provides the infrastructure that holds the community together, as it is the collective work of educators, at multiple levels who are leading innovative work that creates and sustains successful professional learning communities" (Harris & Jones, 2010, p. 174).

They also referred to some conditions that need to be effectively available in order to reach to successful PLCs at the schools; it included trusting and collegial relationships among staff, shared leadership and decision making, ownership of effective pedagogical skills and emphasis on students learning outcomes.

Schein (1996) identified elements of a learning culture to be achieved in an organization which included concern of all involved parties, belief that people can and

will learn, they also can take the initiative to change their environment, provide time for learning, commitment to having extensive communication and think in a systematic way and increasing interdependence to enhance team work.

Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine (1999) have concluded some conditions that influence the existence of PLCs at the schools through affecting its implementation in the SIP which were; principal leadership style and their actions that support or impede PLC at the schools, stories and past events that are passed and preserved overtime, the way resources like time, funding, and personnel are managed and allocated and the organization of teachers' work and time.

Research referred to the key role of the principal in creating and maintaining PLC at the schools; results of Kilbane (2009) collective case study of four schools that went through four year of school reform process, referred to the key role of principals in maintaining professional learning communities at schools due to the power of decision making they possess; they determine the way time and resources are used which directly affects the collaborative structures; also the leaders actions and the way they support the relationships and the positive environment at the school can strongly contribute to building and sustaining professional learning communities.

Principals also affect the PLCs at the schools as they are responsible of assigning time for teachers to interact, meet, and arranging collaboration and professional development opportunities for them (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Effective PLCs require a leader who engages the staff in the decision making process and shares leadership, shared vision among staff, collective learning and application, opportunities for peers to observe and give feedback to each other and supportive physical and relational conditions (Hord, 1997).

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The school principal is one of the most important pillars in the school. The role is viewed as the facilitator, the leader and the organizer of the PLC, who share the leadership with the school members. According to Sparks (2002) and Speck (1999) the school principals have to be leaders for students learning because they facilitate learning for the learners and they should set a role model as the best learner. In addition, they develop the mindset of the school members through distributing leadership.

Eaker, DuFour, and DuFour (2002) offered the following description of leadership in a PLC by stating, "Administrators hold important leadership positions, but in a professional learning community the view of leadership is extended to include

teachers" (p. 23). Speck (1999) viewed the principal as an educator, leader, manager and inner person. So, leadership is the key factor in transforming schools into PLCs (Sharpe and Voulalas, 2005). Therefore, the principal's role is crucial because the role works with all stakeholders to achieve the school vision and tries to remove all barriers that hinder students, staff and teachers from learning. In addition, the principal encourages innovation and evaluates the change continuously (Buckler, 1998).

Prestine (1993) clarified the principal's role in PLC as the willingness to share authority and the capacity to facilitate the work of the staff and teachers, in addition, to their ability to participate without dominating.

Sackney and Walker (2006) claimed that the principals in PLC had several tasks and many roles to play. They explained that principals share vision, mission, core values and purpose, create a culture based on learning and encouraging learning at all levels and are considered top learners who model the relevance and importance of learning.

Lucianne Carmichael (1982) the first resident principal at the Harvard University Principal Center and a principal who nurtured a PLC in her own school discussed the role of the principals in which the staff viewed themselves as all wise and all competent; and could admit that they benefited from the professional development to increase students' learning. In addition, they recognized the staff dynamic role in decision making and taking. Carmichael added that when the principal was dominant, it became difficult for the staff to exchange views and ideas about school issues.

Moreover, when principals keep investigating, asking questions, looking for better solutions, they are in continuous learning. They are able to develop a culture

which encourages collaboration, trust and shared responsibility. Furthermore, they support the culture with rich environment that enhances learning, by using resources like technology and different aids. Rosenholtz (1989) found that the teachers who felt supported by a principal in their learning, their teaching tended to be more committed, and effective in their work than those who did not receive confirmation and support. He added "support by means of teacher network, cooperation among colleagues and expanded professional roles increased teacher efficacy in meeting student' needs" (p.1). This of course reflected on students to become more likely to stay in the profession and be willing to adopt new classroom strategies.

Boyd (1992) Louis and Kruse (1995) claimed there is a need to avail all the physical and structural conditions including the school building, environment and facilities. Also highly qualified people need to be selected to ensure the effectiveness and productivity of PLC.

Louis and Kruse (1995) set the following structural factors that support PLC: time to meet and talk, small school size and physical proximity of the staff to one another, interdependent teaching roles, well-developed communication structures, school autonomy and teacher empowerment. On the other hand the principal gives the teachers and the staff the opportunity to create school teams based on the school objectives and goals.

Fullan (2001) added that school principals have certain features: they had moral purpose and know how to change and lead the change. Moreover, they were successful in relationships and in creating and sharing knowledge. All of this of course, needed coherent work which didn't happen randomly. Those principals encouraged learners, teachers and staff to exchange and look for knowledge. They as well provided the opportunity for teachers to communicate and exchange values,

beliefs, information, and assumptions by ongoing dialogue and continuous communication formally and informally; to explore and generate ideas together and reflect about and on the best practices. The teacher could also work collaboratively in the light of shared beliefs and new information; and to initiate actions that come out of these new mutual understandings. This cooperation ensured that learning is a journey (Aubrey and Cohen, 1995). In which they accompanied the students, the staff and the teachers in it and that was important for the human development and growth (Sackney and Walker, 2006). Leithwood as cited in Mohabir (2009) identified four different ways that principals see their roles: (a) manager; (b) interpersonal relations or climate focus; (c) program focus; and (d) student development focus.

On the other hand effective school leaders manage conflicts that arise within PLCs by some ways: (1) encouraging discussions to listen to different views and opinions, (2) reinforcing community values and effectiveness (Louis and Kruse, 1995).

Speck (1999) added that the principal should be aware of the school culture, the established values and norms; a culture that provided opportunities for collaboration supports risk-taking and respect was essential to create intellectual curiosity and growth. Supervisory policies should link professional development and improvement in curriculum and instruction. The principal should ensure that teachers share their practices and were rewarded for their distinguished efforts. Resources and ICT should be provided for training, practice, coaching feedback, and collaboration. A principal should review the budget periodically in order to find ways to provide resources.

Speck and Knipe (2001) mentioned that the principal should establish a collaborative culture in which there was professional networking where teachers

learned from each other and they should be learners themselves. In addition, they

include the parents in the learning. Whereas, Leithwood (1994) noticed three features

of successful leaders in PLC: (a) setting directions for stakeholders through setting the

vision, goals and norms, (b) understanding the school culture and working to improve

it, (c) developing the school members through providing support and being a good

model for them.

Studies Support Professional Learning Communities

Studies on professional learning communities have illustrated successful

results in affecting student learning (Belenardo, 2001; DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

In 2008 two high schools in USA decided to adopt the essential

characteristics of PLC in order to overcome the barriers that hinder the students from

reaching high standards. The two schools had increased students' performance and

achieved higher results. These schools applied three of the PLC characteristics. Which

were: (a) creating a collaborative teacher environment, (b) building the learning

capacity of the individuals in the school, (c) focusing on students' results. They also

exerted great efforts to implement some main characteristics of PLC as follows: there

were no more teachers' isolation since they believed that the more teachers interacted

and collaborated, the more they learned from each other. Hence these collaboration

and cooperation would impact on students' results and learning as well (Kanold,

Toncheff, & Douglas, 2008).

In other words, there is a shift from individualism that existed in traditional

schools into a collaborative, interactive culture. The teachers in this culture observed

each other and reflected on, for and in the action all the time. Moreover, they were

granted the chance to make a change under the supervision of the principal. In

addition, their focus in the school is on what is good for the learners, as the teachers would support learning for all students and not just for the students they are teaching.

Another point tackled there was school focus on building learning capacity. Therefore, students' learning would not improve unless teachers stay on continuous learning. Also, they would focus on the areas that great effects on improving the student' learning. In addition, more concentration has to be paid on students' results; which indicate the effectiveness of the instructions. By this teachers can adopt their teaching strategies.

Whitford, and Fisher (as cited in Vescio, Ross and Adams, 2006) in their study "Lucent Learning Communities" discussed collective case studies; one of these case studies is a story of 15 schools from different regions in USA that came up with some findings; the major factors of the success of PLC depended upon the skills of the staff and the teachers, and the principal played a central role in creating a culture of trust, collaboration and collective learning.

Vescio et. al (2006) conducted a three years study with a collaboration between a large urban school and a university to find out the effects of teachers professional development on fostering students' learning and enhancing their progress in urban schools and literacy acquisition. The sample included 300 students and 12 teachers. The researchers carried out a qualitative approach through interviews, field notes, conversations, students' achievements on Stanford test. This study opened the door for discussions that helped the teachers to understand the culture of the teaching context. It also emphasized that teacher's professional development lead to improve students' learning and there was strong correlation between the teacher's improvement and student's learning.

Bryk and Camburn (1999) implemented a research study in Elementary Schools in Chicago. The study focus was on school members' behaviors, organizational factors and compositional factors. They came up with some findings; that teachers who spent a lot of time collaborating about students' issues had more positive reflection on PLC than the ones who did not. Moreover, the schools that have less than 350 students were more likely to achieve PLC than schools with large numbers. Other thing, trust or confidence was one of the strongest elements that facilitated achieving PLC.

Al-Taneiji (2009) carried out a study in the United Arab Emirates to find out whether the characteristics of PLC existed in UAE schools or not and the factors that impeded the development of PLC. Using a mixed method approach to collect the data 15 elementary and secondary schools were surveyed and eighteen teachers were interviewed. The researcher concluded that only two characteristics of PLC existed in the schools whereas the other four factors didn't. These two characteristics included supportive and shared leadership, and supportive conditions - structure. Al-Taneiji (2009) stated the non existed ones are shared values and vision, collective learning, shared personal practice and supportive relationships. In addition, teachers who were interviewed revealed that they didn't participate in setting the school vision because the schools didn't have clear programs or plans to implement PLC well. So, this study recommended that PLC needed to be developed in our schools through clear well prepared plans and strategies.

Other important leadership behaviors that were referred to as needed in PLC are giving supportive and collegial teams, sharing the vision and keeping it alive through different times. The findings indicated in Al-Taneiji (2009) that the respondents didn't have clear picture about PLC although they were implementing

some of PLC actions. Moreover, it identified that the leaders were the main factor to obtain PLC and reflect positive effective environment. Also identified that the schools lacked some elements of PLC, like time, support from the staff and parents, which was the main barrier to the implementation of PLC (Al-Taneiji, 2009).

In a study carried out by Sackney and Walker in 2006 entitled "Canadian Perspectives on Beginning Principals: Their Role in Building Capacity for Learning Communities". The researchers explored how principals started responding to capacity building so as to create effective PLC and what is needed from them. Making use of previous related studies on how new principals responded in such cultures. Then they came up with some conclusions that the district should hire principals who were mindful of the school culture and able to keep interaction with all stakeholders to build a culture of continuous and collective inquiry. In order to achieve this they have to focus first on building individual efficacy and then collective efficacy. In addition, they have to be aware of setting the school structures and strategies in place that the learners will be able to transform them into action which will help to create PLC.

Sharpe and Voulalas (2005) conducted a study that aimed to reveal the obstacles and processes of creating professional learning communities. They wanted to figure out the barriers of creating professional learning communities and how principals converted their schools into PLC to overcome these barriers. The researchers carried out an interview with some school principals in Australia. The respondents believed that the most important characteristic for the success of PLC is the ability of the leaders to maintain professional awareness and to be exemplary learners themselves.

In a study that lasted 34 months and included 393 schools from different levels and 16 case studies that aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of PLCs. Bolam et.al (2005) found that the presence of PLC characteristics schools have positive impact on students attendance, learning, and outcomes it also had a positive effect on teachers morale and collective learning.

Hord (1997) summarized the positive effects that PLCs have on both teachers and students; based on a comprehensive literature review he found that PLCs resulted in reducing teachers feelings of isolation, raising attendance level, morale, content understanding, satisfaction and commitment to achieve school goals, sharing responsibility of student learning, and acceptance and willingness to undertake changes and adaptation to teaching. He also found that PLCs increased students' academic achievements and attendance levels, decreased dropout rates.

Summary of Research findings

Fullan (1993) found out that the ability of the organization to change depends on many reasons like the training of the teachers and how decision makers deal with the education. DuFour and Eaker (1998) suggest that ability to deal with the education system as a learning organization rather than as an industrial model determines the effectiveness of our schools. The schools that have passion for learning and enthusiasm for learning are effective organizations (Covey, 1996). Senge (1990) identifies the successful organization as the one that fosters collegial learning and collaborative work. Hence, this is a big challenge for the educators to create a PLC that melds itself into a learning organization.

According to (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Senge, 1990) both a learning organization and a professional learning community have similar characteristics.

Learning communities are rich educational environments where everyone learns (Barth, 2001; Speck, 1999). The studies showed that PLC concept provides a viable process for improving schools and student achievement (Mohabir, 2009). Leadership practices that promote organizational learning in schools are related to student outcomes; contributes to organizational learning which influence teaching and learning (Mulford & Silins ,2003).

In PLC the principal distribute leadership and share decisions and have an effective role in the school community. They move from the bureaucratic leadership into distributing leadership to include all stakeholders in decision making. Those leadership create a culture according to Collins, 2001 of "Simultaneous loose and tight leadership" in which they encourage creativity and at the same time with priorities that have to be honored. They can create a culture of discipline and ethnic relationships.

To sum up ideas discussed in this chapter, the characteristics of PLC in general can be stated as follows;

- Shared beliefs, values and vision.

- Shared and supportive leadership.

- Collective learning and its applications

- Supportive conditions including recourses and school building

- Shared personal practices.

- Positive relationships based on mutual regard, respect and caring.

- Interaction in PLCs is done in an open and porous way.

- Moving from culture of isolation to culture of collegiality.

- Initiating and believing in change and working for that is still there.

- Focusing on continuous improvement, examining goals and keeping updated with the new changes at all levels confirm the roots of PLCs culture.

- Maintaining focus keeps everyone in PLC moving in the right direction.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which the characteristics of

professional learning are found in cycle one schools in Al-Ain; this chapter sheds the

light on the main research framework. First, it includes brief clarification of the

research strategy and the conducted approach. Then, it describes the study design,

population and sample selection, instrument used including validity, creditability

finally research procedures, data analysis and ethical consideration is discussed.

Settings

This study investigated the extent to which the characteristics of PLC are

found in cycle one schools in Al-Ain, a big city in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, in the

United Arab Emirates. The researcher decided to carry out the studies in Al-Ain, since

the area of the study is convenient to the researcher's residence. Moreover, the

researcher chose this cycle due to it pivotal impact on the learner's progress.

According to Al Ain Educational Zone which runs ADEC operations in Al Ain, the

total population is 1150 teachers working in 27 cycle one schools. Furthermore, there

are global education providers in the schools to enhance the quality of teaching and

learning and the quality of the schools leadership.

Research Design

The research design used in this research is a quantitative method that mainly depends on numerical data collection and descriptive analysis obtained from participants by a questionnaire. The questionnaire has proved to be a useful tool when collecting data, in order to test hypothesis or to explore people's opinion towards certain topic or issue (Gay and Airasian, 2003). The researcher analyzed the data statistically using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) which is commonly used in the educational research.

Research instrument

Professional Learning Communities Assessment (PLCA) developed by Oliver, Hipp, and Huffman (2003) was used to measure teachers' perception about the existence of Professional Learning Community characteristics in their schools, instrument used is shown in Appendix (A).

The instrument consisted mainly of two parts; the first part of the questionnaire included cover letter and personal information that mainly included the participants' years of experience, age and qualifications. It also included some information needed to answer the questionnaire.

The second part is the (PLCA) statements designed in a 5 Likert scale (Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never), consisted of (45) statements distributed into six main dimensions as follows:

1- Shared and supportive leadership (10 Questions)

2- Shared values and vision (8 Questions)

3- Collective learning and application (8 Questions)

4- Shared personal practice (6 Questions)

5- Supportive conditions – Relationship (4 Questions)

6- Supportive conditions – Structure (9 Questions)

Validity and reliability

Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993) clarified that the research is valued and approved by its validity and credibility. The credibility can make readers believe that the findings and the results are accurate. As for the reliability of the results, it is important to implement a reliability test on the used variables, as Cohen et al. (2007) indicated that reliability signifies to the consistency of a measure of a phenomenon or a concept.

Oliver, Hipp and Huffman (2003) tested the PLC assessment reliability using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, and it ranged from 0.83 to 0.93. The researcher also measured the Arabic language version of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient and it also had high levels of reliability coefficient that ranged from 0.86 to 0.94.

According to Cohen et el. (2007), a result above 0.7 is considered to be efficient and indicates an acceptable level of internal reliability. Also a panel of experts in the field of PLC contributed in ensuring the validity of the instrument. Permission for using the instrument for the current research was taken from the Authors, as shown in Appendix (C)

Population and Sample:

According to statistics of Al Ain Educational Zone which runs ADEC operations in Al Ain , the total population is 1150 teachers working in 27 cycle one schools. A convenience sampling technique was used, where 10 governmental elementary schools which were near the researcher living. 25 surveys were distributed by the researcher for each school, (235) surveys out of the (250) were returned. 6 of them were excluded as they were not answered completely, so the final sample consisted of (229) participant which is 20% of the total population; and table (1) shows demographic characteristics of the respondents according to the study variables. In addition, the researcher tried to find out the characteristics of the total population according to age, qualification and experience by reaching ADEC offices in Al-Ain but couldn't find any information.

Table (1):
Demographic Data

Variable	Response	Frequency	Percent
Age	younger than 35	106	46.3
	35-44	84	36.7
	45 and older	39	17
	Total	229	100
Years of Experience	less than or equal 6 years	72	31.4
	7-14 years	112	48.9
	15 years and more	45	19.7
	Total	229	100

Table (1) (Continued)

Variable	Response	Frequency	Percent
	BA	174	76
Qualification	Higher than BA	55	24
	Total	229	100

Procedures

The researcher followed the following procedures in conducting the research:

- Reviewed the related research; masters and doctoral dissertations as well as ADEC professional standards for teachers and principals.

- Sought permission of using PLC assessment instrument from the Authors, as shown in Appendix (C).

- Sought permission from UAE University to facilitate the researcher's task in collecting the data, as shown in Appendix (D).

- Translated the instrument into Arabic and retranslate it into English to check if the meaning was maintained, then the Arabic version was distributed to be reviewed by 5 professional members in the society, and 9 members of the teaching staff in the college of education at UAE University in order to ensure participants' full understanding of its contents for accurate responses, translated instrument is shown in Appendix (B).

- Received a letter of consent from ADEC to conduct the study at Al-Ain schools as the research department usually reviews any questionnaire or research instrument to ensure that such things would not cause any inappropriate impact on students or the field, and an official letter shown in Appendix (E) was sent to all schools by ADEC to facilitate the researcher task.

- Distributed a sample of the questionnaire as part of a pilot to the school administrators and teachers to make sure it is clear and understandable.

- Distributed the survey among the sample schools, and collected it back in two days.

- Entered and analysed the collected data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences SPSS

Data Analysis

The data obtained from teachers questionnaires were analyzed throughout descriptive statistics and the data were entered to (SPSS 19.00) Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The maximum mean score for each area was 5 (Always) and the minimum 1(never).

To answer the first question mean ranges were used as follows:

Mean range between (3.67-5): PLC characteristic existed to a high extent.

Mean range between (2.33-3.66): PLC characteristic existed to a medium extent.

Mean range between (1-2.33): PLC characteristic existed to a low extent.

The second question of the study was answered using the three way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine whether there are any significant differences between the means of the participants' answers.

Ethical Consideration:

The use of anonymity to ensure confidentiality and to prevent any kind of privacy invasion was adopted by the researcher. Thus, participants' names were

optional and they were given numbers to use in the study so as not to make their

performance public to prevent any kind of harmful feelings some of them might feel.

In addition, all participants were asked to join this study willingly and voluntarily

without any kind of force to prevent any kind of abuse. The participants were told by

the researchers that they had the right to withdraw from completing the questionnaire

at any time they wish.

Summary

In summary a quantitative method was adopted to achieve the objectives of

this research study. The research focused on the questionnaire method to collect

quantitative data, the next chapter will discuss the analysis and findings of data

collected to be supported by the reviewed literature in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research focuses on investigating the teachers' perspective regarding the characteristics of PLC in the public schools sphere in the United Arab Emirates. The study is implemented in the female elementary schools in Al Ain as a sample that reflects the population of other educational zones in the UAE. Two questions are the focus of the research; first, it finds out the teachers' perceptions of the main characteristics of PLC; second, it measures the significant differences between teachers perceptions affected by their age, experience and qualification. This chapter presents the results gathered from the research instrument mentioned in the previous chapter. This chapter is organized based upon findings that address the two research questions in the study.

Analysis of Research Questions:

The first research question: To what extent do the characteristics of PLC exist in Al- Ain cycle one schools as perceived by teachers?

To answer the question, the researcher first used descriptive statistics on all of the PLC characteristics identified in the instrument for all dimensions together and ranked them according to their mean scores as shown in table (2), then the means where shown for each of the dimension separately as shown in the tables (3),(4),(5),(6),(7) and (8).

Table (2):
Means and standard deviations of teachers' responses about the extent to which PLC characteristics exist in their schools in descending order

No	Statement	Dimension*	Mean	SD	Extent
	Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect.	E	4.31	0.796	High
	Opportunities exist for staff to observe peers and offer encouragement.	D	4.17	0.823	High
	School staff is committed to programs that enhance learning.	C	4.12	0.842	High
	The staff informally shares ideas and suggestions for improving student learning.	D	4.10	0.829	High
	The staff plans and works together to search for solutions to address diverse student needs.	C	4.10	0.834	High
	A culture of trust and respect exists for taking risks.	E	4.09	0.881	High
	The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed.	A	4.07	0.991	High
	Collegial relationships exist among staff that reflect commitment to school improvement efforts.	C	4.07	0.861	High
	Decisions are made in alignment with the school's values and vision.	B	4.06	0.779	High
	The staff works together to seek knowledge, skills, and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.	C	4.05	0.807	High
	Policies and programs are aligned to the school's vision.	B	4.04	0.821	High
2	Outstanding achievement is recognized and celebrated regularly in our school.	E	4.02	0.962	High
3	The staff have accessibility to key information	A	4.00	0.939	High
4	The staff shares vision for school improvements that have an undeviating focus on student learning.	B	3.98	0.827	High
5	The staff provides feedback to peers related to instructional practices.	D	3.98	0.861	High
6	Professional development focuses on teaching and learning.	C	3.95	0.940	High
7	A collaborative process exists for developing a shared vision among staff.	B	3.94	0.849	High
8	The staff engages in dialogue that reflects a respect for diverse ideas that lead to continued inquiry.	C	3.93	0.833	High
	A variety of opportunities and structures exist for collective learning through open dialogue.	C	3.93	0.819	High
	Individuals and teams have the opportunity to apply learning and share the results of their practices.	D	3.93	0.835	High
	The school facility is clean, attractive, and inviting.	F	3.93	0.945	High
2	Leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff.	A	3.92	0.956	High
3	School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and grades.	B	3.90	0.932	High

The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.	A	3.88	1.006	High
Shared values support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning.	B	3.87	0.869	High
The staff collaboratively reviews student work to share and improve instructional practices.	D	3.85	0.873	High
Opportunities are provided for staff to initiate change.	A	3.84	0.985	High
Communication systems promote a flow of information among staff.	F	3.84	0.948	High
A collaborative process exists for developing a shared sense of values among staff.	B	3.83	0.814	High
The proximity of grade level and department personnel allows for ease in collaborating with colleagues.	F	3.79	0.981	High
Time is provided to facilitate collaborative work.	F	3.79	0.973	High
The principal incorporates advice from staff to make decisions.	A	3.78	0.986	High
The staff is consistently involved in discussion and making decisions about most school issues.	A	3.78	0.954	High
The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority.	A	3.77	0.970	High
Decision making takes place through committees and communication across grade and subject areas.	A	3.77	0.915	High
School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed change into the culture of the school.	E	3.76	0.983	High
Communication systems promote a flow of information across the entire school community, including central office personnel, parents, and community members.	F	3.73	0.971	High
Appropriate technology and instructional materials are available to staff.	F	3.66	1.090	Medium
Resource people provide expertise and support for continuous learning.	F	3.62	0.960	Medium
Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to increase student achievement.	B	3.58	0.955	Medium
School staff and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems.	C	3.53	0.944	Medium
The school schedule promotes collective learning and shared practice.	F	3.45	1.140	Medium
Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.	A	3.43	1.043	Medium
Fiscal resources are available for professional development.	F	3.34	1.063	Medium
Overall		3.87	0.634	High

*A:Shared and supportive leadership B: Shared values and vision C: Collective learning and application
 D:Shared personal practice E:Supportive conditions-Relationships F:Supportive conditions-Structures

Statement	Dimension*	Mean	SD	Extent
The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.	A	3.88	1.006	High
Shared values support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning.	B	3.87	0.869	High
The staff collaboratively reviews student work to share and improve instructional practices.	D	3.85	0.873	High
Opportunities are provided for staff to initiate change.	A	3.84	0.985	High
Communication systems promote a flow of information among staff.	F	3.84	0.948	High
A collaborative process exists for developing a shared sense of values among staff.	B	3.83	0.814	High
The proximity of grade level and department personnel allows for ease in collaborating with colleagues.	F	3.79	0.981	High
Time is provided to facilitate collaborative work.	F	3.79	0.973	High
The principal incorporates advice from staff to make decisions.	A	3.78	0.986	High
The staff is consistently involved in discussion and making decisions about most school issues.	A	3.78	0.954	High
The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority.	A	3.77	0.970	High
Decision making takes place through committees and communication across grade and subject areas.	A	3.77	0.915	High
School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed change into the culture of the school.	E	3.76	0.983	High
Communication systems promote a flow of information across the entire school community, including central office personnel, parents, and community members.	F	3.73	0.971	High
Appropriate technology and instructional materials are available to staff.	F	3.66	1.090	Medium
Resource people provide expertise and support for continuous learning.	F	3.62	0.960	Medium
Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to increase student achievement.	B	3.58	0.955	Medium
School staff and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems.	C	3.53	0.944	Medium
The school schedule promotes collective learning and shared practice.	F	3.45	1.140	Medium
Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.	A	3.43	1.043	Medium
Fiscal resources are available for professional development.	F	3.34	1.063	Medium
Overall		3.87	0.634	High

*A:Shared and supportive leadershipB: Shared values and vision C: Collective learning and application
  D:Shared personal practiceE:Supportive conditions-RelationshipsF:Supportive conditions-Structures

Table (2) shows that teachers in general thought characteristics of PLC exist to high extent in Al Ain cycle one schools with a mean score of (3.87) and a standard deviation of (0.634); the means of the characteristics of PLC ranged between (3.34) and (4.3) with standard deviations (1.063) and (0.796) respectively. Most of the characteristics exist to a high extent and (7) characteristics exist to a medium extent, teachers did not think that any of the PLC characteristics exist to a low extent.

The characteristic that exist the most as identified by the teachers was "Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect" to a high extent with mean score of (4.31) and a standard deviation of (0.796), the second most existing characteristic as perceived by teachers was "Opportunities exist for staff to observe peers and offer encouragement" to a high extent and a mean score of (4.17) and a standard deviation of (0.823).

The characteristic with the lowest mean was "Fiscal resources are available for professional development" available to a medium extent with mean score of (3.34) and a standard deviation of (1.063), the second lowest characteristics was "Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority available to a medium extent with mean score of (3.43) and a standard deviation of (1.043).

It is also noticed from the table that three of the characteristics that exist to a medium extent are ones that deals with the involvement of stakeholders in the school.

The PLC dimension "Shared and Supportive Leadership" was perceived by teachers as existing to a high extent with a mean score of (3.82) and a standard deviation (0.777) as shown in table(3), the characteristic "The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed" had the highest mean score (4.07) and

the characteristic "Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority" had the lowest mean score (3.43).

Table(3):
Means and standard deviations of teachers' response about the extent to which Shared and Supportive Leadership characteristics exist in their schools in descending order

No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Extent
4	The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed.	4.07	0.991	High
3	The staff have accessibility to key information	4.00	0.939	High
8	Leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff.	3.92	0.956	High
6	The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.	3.88	1.006	High
5	Opportunities are provided for staff to initiate change.	3.84	0.985	High
2	The principal incorporates advice from staff to make decisions.	3.78	0.986	High
1	The staff is consistently involved in discussion and making decisions about most school issues.	3.78	0.954	High
7	The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority.	3.77	0.970	High
9	Decision making takes place through committees and communication across grade and subject areas.	3.77	0.915	High
10	Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.	3.43	1.043	Medium
	Overall Shared and Supportive Leadership	3.82	0.777	High

As shown in table (4), the PLC dimension "Shared values and vision" also was found to exist to high extent as perceived by teachers with a mean score of (3.9) and a standard deviation (0.669), the characteristic "Decisions are made in alignment with the school's values and vision." had the highest mean score (4.06) and existed to a high extent while the characteristic "Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to increase student achievement" had the lowest mean score (3.58) and existed to a medium extent.

Table(4):

Means and standard deviations of teachers' response about the extent to which Shared values and Vision characteristics exist in their schools in descending order.

No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Extent
14	Decisions are made in alignment with the school's values and vision.	4.06	0.779	High
17	Policies and programs are aligned to the school's vision.	4.04	0.821	High
13	The staff shares vision for school improvements that have an undeviating focus on student learning.	3.98	0.827	High
15	A collaborative process exists for developing a shared vision among staff.	3.94	0.849	High
16	School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and grades.	3.90	0.932	High
12	Shared values support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning.	3.87	0.869	High
11	A collaborative process exists for developing a shared sense of values among staff.	3.83	0.814	High
18	Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to increase student achievement.	3.58	0.955	Medium
	Overall Shared Values and Vision	3.90	0.669	High

Table (5) shows that the PLC dimension "Collective Learning and Application" was perceived by teachers as existing to a high extent with a mean score of (3.96) and a standard deviation (0.666), the highest mean score (4.12) was for the characteristic "School staff is committed to programs that enhance learning." with a standard deviation of (0.842), while the characteristic "School staff and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems" was perceived as existing to a medium extent and had the lowest mean score of (3.58) and a standard deviation of (0.944).

Table(5):
Means and standard deviations of teachers' response about the extent to which Collective Learning and Application characteristics exist in their schools in descending order

No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Extent
26	School staff is committed to programs that enhance learning.	4.12	0.842	High
21	The staff plans and works together to search for solutions to address diverse student needs.	4.10	0.834	High
20	Collegial relationships exist among staff that reflects commitment to school improvement efforts.	4.07	0.861	High
19	The staff works together to seek knowledge, skills, and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.	4.05	0.807	High
24	Professional development focuses on teaching and learning.	3.95	0.940	High
23	The staff engages in dialogue that reflects a respect for diverse ideas that lead to continued inquiry.	3.93	0.833	High
22	A variety of opportunities and structures exist for collective learning through open dialogue.	3.93	0.819	High
25	School staff and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems.	3.53	0.944	Medium
	Overall Collective Learning and Application	3.96	0.666	High

All of the characteristics of the PLC dimension "Shared Personal Practice" were all found to be existing to a high extent as perceived by teachers as shown in table (6) with an overall mean score of (3.99) and a standard deviation of (0.688), the highest mean score was (4.17) for the characteristic "Opportunities exist for staff to observe peers and offer encouragement" with a standard deviation of (0.823), the lowest mean score was (3.85) for the characteristic "The staff collaboratively reviews student work to share and improve instructional practices" with a standard deviation of (0.873).

Table (6):
Means and standard deviations of teachers' response about the extent to which Shared Personal Practice characteristics exist in their schools in descending order.

No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Extent
27	Opportunities exist for staff to observe peers and offer encouragement.	4.17	0.823	High
29	The staff informally shares ideas and suggestions for improving student learning.	4.10	0.829	High
28	The staff provides feedback to peers related to instructional practices.	3.98	0.861	High
32	Individuals and teams have the opportunity to apply learning and share the results of their practices.	3.93	0.835	High
31	Opportunities exist for coaching and mentoring.	3.89	0.983	High
30	The staff collaboratively reviews student work to share and improve instructional practices.	3.85	0.873	High
	Overall Shared Personal Practice	3.99	0.688	High

Similarly the characteristics of the PLC dimension "Supportive Conditions-Relationships" were all found to be existing to a high extent as perceived by teachers as shown in table (7) with an overall mean score of (4.04) and a standard deviation of (0.774), the mean scores ranged between (3.76) and (4.31) with standard deviations (0.983) and (0.796) respectively. The highest mean score was found for the characteristic "Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect" while the lowest was for "School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed change into the culture of the school".

Table (7):
Means and standard deviations of teachers' response about the extent to which Supportive Conditions-Relationships characteristics exist in their schools in descending order.

No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Extent
33	Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect.	4.31	0.796	High
34	A culture of trust and respect exists for taking risks.	4.09	0.881	High
35	Outstanding achievement is recognized and celebrated regularly in our school.	4.02	0.962	High
36	School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed change into the culture of the school.	3.76	0.983	High

Table (7) (Continued)

No	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Extent
	Overall Supportive Conditions- Relationships	4.04	0.774	High

Table (8):
Means and standard deviations of teachers' perceptions about the extent to which Supportive Conditions- Structures characteristics exist in their schools in descending order.

No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Extent
42	The school facility is clean, attractive, and inviting.	3.93	0.945	High
44	Communication systems promote a flow of information among staff.	3.84	0.948	High
43	The proximity of grade level and department personnel allows for ease in collaborating with colleagues.	3.79	0.981	High
37	Time is provided to facilitate collaborative work.	3.79	0.973	High
45	Communication systems promote a flow of information across the entire school community, including central office personnel, parents, and community members.	3.73	0.971	High
40	Appropriate technology and instructional materials are available to staff.	3.66	1.090	Medium
41	Resource people provide expertise and support for continuous learning.	3.62	0.960	Medium
38	The school schedule promotes collective learning and shared practice.	3.45	1.140	Medium
39	Fiscal resources are available for professional development.	3.34	1.063	Medium
	Overall Supportive Conditions- Structures	3.68	0.729	High

In summary as shown in table (9) all the dimensions of PLC characteristics were found to be existing to a high extent where the highest mean score (4.04) was for the dimension Supportive Conditions- Relationships and the lowest mean score (3.68) was for the dimension Supportive Conditions- Structures; the mean scores of Shared Values

and Vision, Collective Learning and Application and Shared Personal Practice were so close to each other, (3.90), (3.96) and (3.99) respectively.

Table (9):
Summary of means and standard deviations of teachers' perceptions about the extent to which PLC characteristics exist in their schools for each dimension

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Extent
Shared and Supportive Leadership	3.82	0.777	High
Shared Values and Vision	3.90	0.669	High
Collective Learning and Application	3.96	0.666	High
Shared Personal Practice	3.99	0.688	High
Supportive Conditions- Relationships	4.04	0.774	High
Supportive Conditions- Structures	3.68	0.729	High

Research Question two: Is there significant differences between teachers' perception in terms of age, years of experiences and qualification to the extent to which PLC characteristics exist in Al-Ain cycle one schools? To answer this question, the researcher first used descriptive statistics where means and standard deviations were computed related to research independent variables.

Table (10) shows means and standard deviations for teachers' perceptions of the existing of PLC characteristics for different age groups, it is noticed from the table that participants aged 45 and more had higher means than their younger peers in PLC and each of its dimensions, which means that oldest teachers thought that PLC characteristics exist in Al-Ain schools more than their younger peers, however no pattern was noticed for the other age groups.

Table (10):
Means and standard deviations of teachers' perceptions according to age

Dimension	Responses	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Shared and Supportive Leadership	younger than 35	106	3.80	0.830
	35-44	84	3.78	0.722
	45 and more	39	3.98	0.739
Shared Values and Vision	younger than 35	106	3.87	0.695
	35-44	84	3.86	0.669
	45 and more	39	4.09	0.577
Collective Learning and Application	younger than 35	106	3.94	0.699
	35-44	84	3.91	0.635
	45 and more	39	4.12	0.633
Shared Personal Practice	younger than 35	106	3.95	0.749
	35-44	84	3.96	0.613
	45 and more	39	4.14	0.669
Supportive Conditions-Relationships	younger than 35	106	4.04	0.782
	35-44	84	3.98	0.757
	45 and more	39	4.19	0.786
Supportive Conditions-Structures	younger than 35	106	3.65	0.760
	35-44	84	3.68	0.680
	45 and more	39	3.79	0.754
PLC	younger than 35	106	3.85	0.678
	35-44	84	3.84	0.588
	45 and more	39	4.02	0.599

Table (11) shows that the mean scores for the teachers' responses about the existence of PLC and each of its dimension were the highest for the ones who had an experience of 15 years and more, which means that they thought that PLC characteristics exists in Al-Ain schools more than teachers who has less experience thought , also teachers with the least experience of 6 years or less thought that PLC

characteristics exist more than their peers who had medium experience from 7-14

years, as the mean scores of teachers responses who had 6 years of experience or less

about PLC and each of its dimension were less than the mean scores for the teachers

who had 7-14 years of experience

Table(11):
Means and standard deviations according to years of experience

Dimension	Responses	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Shared and Supportive Leadership	less than or equal 6 years	72	3.86	0.796
	7-14	112	3.72	0.770
	15 and more	45	4.02	0.737
Shared Values and Vision	less than or equal 6 years	72	3.98	0.644
	7-14	112	3.80	0.678
	15 and more	45	4.03	0.663
Collective Learning and Application	less than or equal 6 years	72	3.98	0.703
	7-14	112	3.88	0.648
	15 and more	45	4.13	0.628
Shared Personal Practice	less than or equal 6 years	72	4.08	0.725
	7-14	112	3.86	0.672
	15 and more	45	4.15	0.622
Supportive Conditions-Relationships	less than or equal 6 years	72	4.16	0.779
	7-14	112	3.91	0.763
	15 and more	45	4.19	0.752
Supportive Conditions-Structures	less than or equal 6 years	72	3.78	0.775
	7-14	112	3.57	0.727
	15 and more	45	3.81	0.626
PLC	less than or equal 6 years	72	3.94	0.671
	7-14	112	3.77	0.621
	15 and more	45	4.03	0.569

Table (12) shows means and standard deviations for teachers of different

qualification perceptions of the existing of PLC characteristics, it is noticed from the

table that teachers with less qualification (BA) had higher means than teachers who

had higher degrees than BA.

Table(12).
Means and standard deviations according to qualification

Dimension	Responses	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Shared and Supportive Leadership	BA	174	3.88	0.783
	Higher than BA	55	3.65	0.737
Shared Values and Vision	BA	174	3.96	0.671
	Higher than BA	55	3.70	0.631
Collective Learning and Application	BA	174	4.04	0.659
	Higher than BA	55	3.70	0.625
Shared Personal Practice	BA	174	4.06	0.650
	Higher than BA	55	3.75	0.753
Supportive Conditions-Relationships	BA	174	4.12	0.772
	Higher than BA	55	3.80	0.735
Supportive Conditions-Structures	BA	174	3.74	0.724
	Higher than BA	55	3.52	0.729
PLC	BA	174	3.94	0.622
	Higher than BA	55	3.67	0.633

To determine if the previous mentioned differences in means of teachers' perceptions for

different ages, years of experiences and qualification were significant the researcher

conducted three way analysis of variance "ANOVA" test using Statistical Package of Social

Science SPSS.

Results of three way ANOVA shown in table (13) shows that that the variables age and

years of experience had no significant relation on the teachers perception of the existence of

PLC characteristics or on any of its dimensions in Al-Ain schools, as the value of significance

was higher than 0.05 in all of them. On the other hand the table shows that qualification

variable had a significant relation on three of the PLC dimensions which were Shared Values

and Vision, Shared Personal Practice and Supportive Conditions- Relationship as the level of

significance was less than 0.05, hence from the mean scores shown in table (12) we can

conclude that teachers with BA qualification thought that PLC characteristics related to

Shared Values and Vision, Shared Personal Practice and Supportive Conditions- Relationship

exist more than their peers of higher qualification thought. However the variable qualification

had no significant relation on PLC in general or on the rest dimensions (Shared and

Supportive Leadership, Collective Learning and Application, and Supportive Conditions-

Structures).

Table(13):
Results of three way ANOVA analysis for the relations of age, years of experience and qualification on teachers' perception about PLC characteristics existence.

Source	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	*Sig.
Age	Shared and Supportive Leadership	0.094	2	0.047	0.08	0.924
	Shared Values and Vision	0.22	2	0.11	0.26	0.771
	Collective Learning and Application	0.443	2	0.221	0.545	0.581
	Shared Personal Practice	0.216	2	0.108	0.25	0.779
	Supportive Conditions- Relationships	0.572	2	0.286	0.518	0.596
	Supportive Conditions- Structures	0.224	2	0.112	0.22	0.803
	PLC	0.216	2	0.108	0.292	0.747
Years of Experience	Shared and Supportive Leadership	1.841	2	0.92	1.553	0.214
	Shared Values and Vision	0.998	2	0.499	1.183	0.308
	Collective Learning and Application	1.72	2	0.86	2.115	0.123
	Shared Personal Practice	2.58	2	1.29	2.992	0.052
	Supportive Conditions- Relationships	2.056	2	1.028	1.862	0.158
	Supportive Conditions- Structures	1.142	2	0.571	1.124	0.327
	PLC	1.543	2	0.772	2.079	0.128

Table 13 (continued)

Source	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	*Sig.
Qualifications	Shared and Supportive Leadership	0.706	1	0.706	1.192	0.276
	Shared Values and Vision	1.715	1	1.715	4.067	*0.045
	Collective Learning and Application	1.446	1	1.446	3.556	0.061
	Shared Personal Practice	1.727	1	1.727	4.006	*0.047
	Supportive Conditions- Relationships	2.156	1	2.156	3.905	*0.049
	Supportive Conditions- Structures	1.065	1	1.065	2.097	0.149
	PLC	1.312	1	1.312	3.535	0.061

*Significant at $\alpha=0.05$

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter five includes a summary of the main findings of the research study, discussion of the findings where answers of the research questions are highlighted, interpreted and compared with some of the concepts and findings in the literature review, recommendations are also presented

Summary

The Emirate of Abu Dhabi is undergoing rapid change in the educational field. Educational reform has been an important focus of the ADEC's 10-year strategic plan; the main goal is to raise students' achievement to reach international standards after many previous practices have been identified as needing to be improved.

PLCs have been referred to as a key factor when it comes to facing the challenges associated with educational reform that require a quick raise in students achievement (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004; Fullan, 2001), hence Abu-Dhabi Educational Council started to plan of creating school cultures and effective rich environment through the professional learning communities; this is where the significant of this study comes from as it aimed to investigate the extent to which the characteristics of professional learning communities PLC are found in Al-Ain cycle one schools as perceived by female teachers. The study also attempted to discover the relationship between demographic variables on teachers' perceptions and it was organized around the following two main research questions:

1- To what extent do the characteristics of PLC exist in Al-Ain cycle one schools as perceived by teachers?

2- Are there significant differences between teachers' perception in terms of age, years of experience and qualification to the extent to which PLC characteristics are found in Al-Ain cycle one schools?

A quantitative method was used to answer the research questions, participants completed a Professional Learning Community Assessment Questionnaire developed by Huffman and Hipp (2003), data was analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS).

The main finding of the study was that PLC characteristics and all of its dimensions was found to exist to a high extent in Al-Ain cycle one schools as perceived by teachers where the highest mean score (4.04) was for the dimension Supportive Conditions- Relationships and the lowest mean score (3.68) was for the dimension Supportive Conditions- Structures.

Also it was found that the variables age and years of experience had no significant relation on the teachers perception of the existence of PLC characteristics or on any of its dimensions in Al-Ain schools, while the variable teachers qualification had a significant relation related to Shared Values and Vision, Shared Personal Practice and Supportive Conditions- Relationship, where the means were higher for the teachers with BA qualification than their peers of higher qualification, which means that teachers with BA qualification thought that PLC characteristics related to Shared Values and Vision, Shared Personal Practice and Supportive Conditions- Relationship existed in their schools more than their peers of higher qualification thought.

Discussion

Discussion of the findings is presented for each of the research questions:

Discussion of question one results: To what extent do the characteristics of PLC exist in Al-Ain cycle one schools as perceived by teachers?

Results of this question showed that teachers found that the characteristics of PLC exist to high extent in Al Ain cycle one Schools with a mean score of (3.87) and a standard deviation of (0.634); Most of the characteristics existed to a high extent, (7) characteristics existed to a medium extent, and teachers did not think that any of the PLC characteristics exist to a low extent.

It was also noticed that all the dimensions of PLC characteristics were found to be existing to a high extent where the highest mean score (4.04) was for the dimension Supportive Conditions - Relationships and the lowest mean score (3.68) was for the dimension Supportive Conditions - Structures; the mean scores of Shared Values and Vision, Collective Learning and Application and Shared Personal Practice were so close to each other, (3.90), (3.96) and (3.99) respectively; this result actually is different from the findings of Al-Taneiji (2009) who found that only two dimensions of PLC existed in the schools, which were supportive and shared leadership, and supportive structure, whereas the other four factors didn't, whereas, in this study all professional learning communities dimensions exist to a high extent, and this can be because of the attention that Abu-Dhabi Educational Council is putting on reforming the education in Abu-Dhabi and Al-Ain, which made the PLC characteristics part of the daily practices of the staff and teachers in the schools. And when Al-Taneiji study was conducted, that was considered the beginning of the educational reforms.

The characteristic that existed the most as identified by the teachers in the current study was "Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect" and "Opportunities exist for staff to observe peers and offer encouragement", and the lowest were "Fiscal resources are available for professional development" and "Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority" both existed to a medium extent.

It can be concluded from the results that schools' environment encourages positive relationships among teachers, and they also offer opportunities for them to learn from each other and this is exactly what ADEC calls for in the New School Model, a collaborative environment between Arabic-medium and English-medium teachers (ADEC, 2011);when teachers trust and respect each other it surely affect PLCs in schools positively, good relationships among teachers can form a base for their collaboration and experience sharing to achieve their common goal which is do the best for their students.

However results showed that teachers don't think there is enough resources for professional development, the reason behind that may lie behind the major need of professional development for teachers in light of the demand of rapid changes from the traditional way of teaching into an outcome based teaching that requires the teachers to be able to meet different needs of students and raise achievement. So teachers thought they needed more fiscal resources as professional development is considered as a basic need. As Louis et.al (1995) pointed, "Unless teachers are provided with more supporting and engaging work environments, they cannot be expected to concentrate on increasing their abilities to reach and teach today's students more effectively" (p.4).

We can also conclude from the results that teachers think that the involvement of stakeholders in the school needs to be improved; it seems that there is a need to involve parents and community to be part of the school PLC; three of the characteristics that address the stakeholders engagement existed to a medium extent from the point of view of teachers and they were "Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority", "Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to increase student achievement" and "School staff and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems". Stakeholders like parents and community involvement in the students' learning and in the decision-making process can support the school made decisions (Yukl, 1989).

Discussion of question two results: Is there significant differences between teachers' perspectives in terms of age, years of experiences and qualification to the extent to which PLC characteristics exist in Al-Ain cycle one schools?

Results of three way ANOVA test showed that age and years of experience had no significant relation on the teachers' perspectives of the existence of PLC characteristics or on any of its dimensions in Al-Ain schools. On the other hand, qualification of teachers effected only three of the PLC dimensions significantly which were Shared Values and Vision, Shared Personal Practice and Supportive Conditions- Relationship, we can conclude that teachers with BA qualification thought that PLC characteristics related to Shared Values and Vision, Shared Personal Practice and Supportive Conditions- Relationship exists more than their peers of higher qualification thought, while their qualification had no significant relation on PLC in general or on the rest dimensions (Shared and Supportive Leadership, Collective Learning and Application, and Supportive Conditions - Structures).

The more qualified teachers are the more they may put emphasis on the importance of the existence of all the dimensions of PLC, and the more requirements they perceive as needed, this may be the reason why the means of their responses of the existence of the PLC characteristics were less than their peers of BA qualification, and the results showed that it significantly affected their perception in the Shared Values and Vision, Shared Personal Practice and Supportive Conditions- Relationship dimensions.

Conclusion

Results of the current research revealed that PLC characteristics were available in a high level at Al Ain cycle one schools involved in the study. Relationships that are based on caring, trust and respect exist among staff and students, also opportunities are provided for staff to learn from peers experience and offer encouragement which affects PLCs in schools positively; on the other hand participants in this study indicated that more fiscal resources need to be provided for teachers' professional development and more attention needs to be given for involving parents and community, which gives an alert for policy makers to focus on those two components if they want to achieve and maintain PLCs inside schools, as involving parents and community in the schools and continuous learning for educators are considered as vital components of PLCs.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and discussions presented earlier, recommendations for policymakers, principals and teachers as well as future research can be suggested as follows:

- We need to make sure that all principals are encouraging PLC environment in their schools through cooperation, collaboration and sharing experience among teachers regardless of their age or experience.

- ADEC should provide more professional development for teachers to ease the challenges they face as a result of changes that the New School Model demands and they also need to allocate more fiscal resources for the teachers' professional development so as they can develop their skills according to their needs.

- A special emphasis needs to be placed on parents and community involvement in schools from both schools and policy makers as they are a vital part of the school learning community and their involvement is considered a great support for schools and students. Schools need to develop comprehensive plans for involving parents and community effectively and include it as part of their improvement plan to be revisited regularly. Policymakers need to ensure that parent and community involvement policies are in place at schools and ready for implementation, also professional development can be given for school staff on how to communicate with parents and encourage them to be part of the decision making and part of the school professional learning community.

- Future research can be conducted in the following topics:
  - Conduct further studies about the effect of PLC on different educational variables, such as its effects on students' learning or on teachers' attitude toward education or any other variable.
  - Conduct study that investigates the effect of having Arabic medium teachers and English medium teachers at schools and the role of the

principal in supporting or obstructing the development of professional

learning communities in schools.

- Replicate the current study in different areas and different cycles and

compare results, also male teachers can be included to find out gender

effect on teachers perceptions

- Conduct similar study using qualitative or mixed method approach to

investigate in greater depth characteristics and practices of PLCs at

schools.

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Appendix A

English Survey

College of Education
Foundation of Education Department
MED in Leadership Program

Dear Teachers,

The researcher is carrying out a research study aims to explore the extent to which the characteristics of professional learning communities are found in primary schools in Al-Ain. It is also submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Educational leadership in the UAE University.

Professional learning community (PLC) is the establishment that can underpin through it entity and organizational culture, an ongoing and renewable capability for adaptation, change, growth and development. The PLC's values, ethics, structure, policies and systems promote and accelerate learning for all the staff. This learning results in continuous improvement in a lot of fields like operations, products, services, relations, administrative practices and the establishment's environment. This leads to success of the establishment and distinction in its performance.

This survey consists of 45 statements that takes 15 minutes to be completed. You are kindly requested to read the statement carefully and choose the answer that matches your point of view by putting a mark in front of the statement. Your accurate and objective answer will help in determining the characteristics that are available in school and the ones that need to enhanced by the principal

Many thanks for your cooperation and make sure that the collected data will be confidential and used for scientific research only.

<div align="right">

The researcher
Fatima Al Dhaheri
hayaalbadi@gmail.com

</div>

First: General information

Please, indicate your answer by ticking the box

Age	Younger than 35	35-44	45 and more	
Years of experience	1-6	7-14	15 and more	
Qualification	BA		Higher than BA	

Second: Professional learning Community Assessment

Please tick (✓) the response that mostly indicate the degree to which each of the following characteristics present in your school.

	Statement	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	hared and Supportive Leadership	5	4	3	2	1
1	The staff are consistently involved in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.					
2	The principal incorporates advice from staff to make decisions.					
3	The staff have accessibility to key information.					
4	The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed.					
5	Opportunities are provided for staff to initiate change.					
6	The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.					
7	The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority.					
8	Leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff.					
9	Decision making takes place through committees and communication across grade and subject areas					
10	Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.					
	hared Values and Vision	5	4	3	2	1
11	A collaborative process exists for developing a shared sense of values among staff.					
12	Shared values support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and					

Statement	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
learning.					
13 The staff share visions for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning					
14 . Decisions are made in alignment with school's values and vision.					
15 A collaborative process exists for developing shared vision among staff.					
16 School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and grades.					
17 Policies and programs are aligned to the school's vision.					
18 Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to increase student achievement.					
Collective Learning and Application	5	4	3	2	1
19 The staff work together to seek knowledge, skills, and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.					
20 Collegial relationships exist among staff that reflect commitment to school improvement efforts.					
21 The staff plan and work together to search for solutions to address diverse student needs.					
22 A variety of opportunities and structures exist for collective learning through open dialogue					
23 The staff engages in dialogue that reflects a respect for diverse ideas that lead to continued inquiry.					
24 Professional development focuses on teaching and learning.					
25 School staff and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems.					
26 School staff is committed to programs that enhance learning.					
Shared Personal Practice	5	4	3	2	1
27 Opportunities exist for staff to observe peers and offer encouragement.					
28 The staff provide feedback to peers related to instructional practices.					
29 The staff informally share ideas and suggestions for improving student learning.					
30 The staff collaboratively review student work to share and improve instructional practices.					
31 Opportunities exist for coaching and mentoring.					
32 Individuals and teams have the opportunity to apply learning and share the results of their practices.					
Supportive Conditions – Relationship	5	4	3	2	1
33 Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect.					
34 A culture of trust and respect exist for taking risks.					

Statement	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
35 Outstanding achievement is recognized and celebrated regularly in our school.					
36 School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed change into the culture of the school.					
Supportive Conditions – Structure	5	4	3	2	1
37 Time is provided to facilitate collaborative work.					
38 The school schedule promotes collective learning and shared practice.					
39 Fiscal resources are available for professional development.					
40 Appropriate technology and instructional materials are available to staff.					
41 Resource people provide expertise and support for continuous learning.					
42 The school facility is clean, attractive, and inviting.					
43 The proximity of grade level and department personnel allows for ease in collaborating with colleagues.					
44 Communication systems promote a flow of information among staff.					
45 Communication systems promote a flow of information across the entire school community including: central office personnel, parents, and community members.					

Professional Learning Community Assessment Questionnaire from: Huffman, J.B., & and Hipp, K. K., (2003). "Reculturing schools as professional learning communities" (pp. 70-73). Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Education.

Appendix B

Professional Learning Communities Assessment

Arabic Version

كلية التربية

قسم أصول التربية

برنامج الماجستير في القيادة التربوية

تقوم الباحثة بدراسة ميدانية تهدف إلى معرفة مدى توفر خصائص مجتمعات التعلم المهنية في مدارس العين التأسيسية، وذلك استكمالا لمتطلبات درجة الماجستير في القيادة التربوية من جامعة الإمارات.

ومجتمعات التعلم المهنية هي المؤسسات التي تتوفر فيها الممارسات التي تساعد جميع العاملين فيها على تعلم ما يساعدهم في تحقيق أهداف ورؤى المدرسة، من خلال تبادل التجارب والخبرات والمسؤوليات.

وتتكون الاستبانة من 45 عبارة وتستغرق حوالي 15 دقيقة لإنهائها، أرجو منكن التكرم بقراءة كل عبارة بعناية ووضع إشارة في الخانة التي تتفق مع وجهة نظرك، إن تحديد إجابتك بدقة وموضوعية يساعد في الحصول على نتائج دقيقة.

أرجو منكن التعاون، وأود أن أؤكد أن المعلومات التي سيتم تقديمها سوف تحاط بسرية تامة ولن تستخدم إلا لإغراض البحث العلمي فقط ، وعليه لا داعي لكتابة الاسم أو أي معلومات تدل على شخصكم الكريم.

شاكرين لكم جهدكم ووقتكم

الباحثة فاطمة الظاهري

Hayaalbadi@gmail.com

استبانة تقييم مدى تحقق خصائص مجتمعات التعلم المهنية

أولا: المعلومات العامة

45وأكثر	35-44	أقل من 35	العمر
15وأكثر	7-14	1-6	سنوات الخبرة
أعلى من البكالوريوس		بكالوريوس	الدرجة العلمية

ثانيا: تقييم مدى تحقق خصائص مجتمعات التعلم المهنية

ضع إشارة (✔) عند الاستجابة المناسبة لدرجة موافقتك للعبارات التالية :

أبدا	نادرا	أحيانا	غالبا	دائما	العبارة	
1	2	3	4	5	أولا: القيادة الداعمة والمشتركة	
					يتم إشراك المعلمين في المناقشات وصنع القرارات المتعلقة بالقضايا المدرسية بالنظام	1
					يأخذ مدير المدرسة آراء المعلمين بعين الاعتبار عند صنع القرار	2
					يمكن للمعلمين الوصول للمعلومات الأساسية المتعلقة بالمدرسة	3
					يبادر المدير بتقديم الدعم حيث الحاجة	4
					تتاح الفرصة للمعلمين للمبادرة بإحداث التغيير	5
					يوزع المدير المسؤوليات ويكافئ على الأعمال المبتكرة	6
					يتم تقسيم السلطة والصلاحيات ديمقراطيا بمشاركة المعلمين والمدير	7
					يشجع المدير الروح القيادية بين المعلمين	8
					تتم عملية صنع القرار من خلال اللجان والتواصل عبر أقسام الصفوف والمواد المختلفة	9
					يأخذ أولياء الأمور على عاتقهم المسؤولية في تعليم أبناءهم دون فرض ذلك عليهم	10
1	2	3	4	5	ثانيا: القيم والرؤى المشتركة	
					توجد منهجية تعاونية لتنمية القيم المشتركة بين المعلمين	11
					تنبثق السلوكيات التي توجه القرارات المتعلقة بالتعليم والتعلم من قيم مشتركة	12
					يمتلك المعلمون رؤية مشتركة لتحسين الأداء المدرسي التي تركز بشكل أساسي على تعلم الطلبة	13
					يتم اتخاذ القرارات التي توائم القيم والرؤى المدرسية	14
					يتم إتباع منهجية تعاونية لتطوير رؤية مشتركة بين المعلمين	15
					تركز أهداف المدرسة على تعلم الطلاب وتجاوز الاعتماد على نتائج الاختبارات فقط	16
					تتماشى السياسات والبرامج مع الرؤى المدرسية	17
					يشارك أولياء الأمور بشكل فعال في أنشطة لخلق توقعات عالية تعمل على	18

م	العبارة	1	2	3	4	5
	ثالثاً: النشاط الثقافي والرياضي					
19	يحرص القائمون على النشاط الثقافي والرياضي في تنمية مهاراتي					
20	تتيح لي الجامعة المشاركة في الأنشطة الرياضية والثقافية					
21	تشجع الجامعة الطلاب على المشاركة في الأنشطة الرياضية والثقافية					
22	تساهم الأنشطة في تكوين علاقات اجتماعية مع زملائي					
23	تنمي الأنشطة الرياضية والثقافية روح المنافسة الشريفة					
24	تساعدني الأنشطة على اكتشاف مواهبي وقدراتي					
25	تساهم الأنشطة الثقافية والرياضية في بناء شخصيتي					
	أولاً: الرعاية الاجتماعية					
26	يقدم لي قسم الرعاية الاجتماعية المساعدات المالية عند الحاجة					
27	يهتم قسم الرعاية الاجتماعية بحل المشكلات الاجتماعية للطلاب					
28	يوفر القسم الرعاية اللازمة للطلاب ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة					
29	يوفر القسم الإرشاد والتوجيه للطلاب الجدد					
30	يساعد القسم الطلاب على التكيف مع الحياة الجامعية					
31	يتابع القسم الحالات الاجتماعية للطلاب	1	2	3	4	5
	ثانياً: الرعاية النفسية					
32	يوفر القسم الإرشاد النفسي للطلاب					
33	يساعد القسم الطلاب على مواجهة الضغوط النفسية					
34	يقدم القسم الدعم النفسي للطلاب المتعثرين دراسياً					
35	يسهم القسم في تنمية الثقة بالنفس لدى الطلاب					
36	يساعد القسم الطلاب على التخلص من القلق والتوتر	1	2	3	4	5
	ثالثاً: الرعاية الصحية					
37	توفر الجامعة الخدمات الصحية للطلاب	1	2	3	4	5
38	يتوفر بالجامعة عيادة طبية مجهزة					
39	تقدم العيادة الطبية العلاج المجاني للطلاب					
40	يتوفر بالعيادة الطبية الأدوية اللازمة					
41	تهتم الجامعة بالتوعية الصحية للطلاب					
42	توفر الجامعة الإسعافات الأولية عند الحاجة					
43	يتوفر بالجامعة كادر طبي متخصص					
44	تهتم الجامعة بنظافة المرافق الصحية					
45	توفر الجامعة بيئة صحية مناسبة للطلاب					

Appendix C

Permission from the Authors of the survey

February 29, 2012

Dear Fatma Al-Dhaheri:

This correspondence is to grant permission to utilize the *Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised* (PLCA-R) as your instrument for data collection for your doctoral study through United Arab Emirates University. The PLCA-R measure will *enhance* your *study on the characteristics of professional learning communities in elementary schools in the United Arab Emirates.* I believe your research will contribute to the PLC research on a global perspective. I am pleased that you are interested in using the PLCA-R measure in your research.

This permission letter allows use of the PLCA-R through a paper/pencil administration. In order to receive permission for the PLCA-R online version, it is necessary to secure the services through our online host, SEDL in Austin, TX. Additional information for online administration can be found at www.sedl.org.

Upon completion of your study, I would be interested in learning about your results and your entire study. I would welcome the opportunity to receive an electronic version of your completed dissertation research.

Thank you for your interest in our research and measure for assessing professional learning community attributes within schools. Should you require any additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dianne F. Olivier, Ph. D.   Assistant Professor

Joan D. and Alexander S. Haig/BORSF Professor

Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership

College of Education

University of Louisiana at Lafayette

P.O. Box 43091

Lafayette, LA   70504-3091

(337) 482-6408 (Office)   dolivier@louisiana.edu

Appendix D

Permission from UAE University

2012/03/14

الأستاذ الفاضل/ مدير منطقة العين التعليمية　　　المحترم

تحية طيبة، وبعد...

بداية يطيب لنا أن نتقدم لكم بأطيب تحياتنا متمنين لكم ولمنطقة العين التعليمية كل التوفيق والنجاح

في الارتقاء بالعملية التعليمية التعلمية، هذا وفي إطار التعاون بين منطقة العين التعليمية وكلية

التربية بجامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، نود إفادتكم علماً بأن الطالبة/ فاطمة محمد مانع

الظاهري، مسجلة في برنامج الماجستير تخصص "القيادة التربوية"، وتقوم بإعداد بحث بعنوان:

"مدى تحقق خصائص مجتمعات التعلم في مدارس العين"

من ضمن متطلبات الماجستير. لذا نرجو التكرم بالموافقة على تسهيل مهمتها البحثية.

شاكرين ومقدرين حسن تعاونكم.

هذا وتفضلوا بقبول فائق التحية والتقدير.

منسق برنامج الماجستير

أ.د. محمد أحمد عبد الدايم

Appendix E

Consent Letter

مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
التعليم أولاً Education first

التاريخ: 2012/4/4

السادة/ مدراء المدارس الحكومية في العين   الأفاضل

<u>الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة باحثين</u>

يطيب لنا أن نهديكم أطيب التحيات.

ونود إعلامكم بموافقة مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم على موضوع الدراسة التي ستجريها الطالبة الباحثة/ فاطمة محمد مانع الظاهري من جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، بعنوان "مدى تحقق خصائص مجتمعات التعلم في مدارس العين".

لذلك يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة ومساعدتها على إجراء الدراسة.

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم

محمد سالم محمد الظاهري

المدير التنفيذي لقطاع العمليات المدرسية

1

ملخص الدراسة

مدى تحقق خصائص مجتمعات التعلم المهنية في مدارس العين – حلقة أولى من منظور
المعلمين

هدفت هذه الدراسة الى التحقق من مدى توافر خصائص مجتمعات التعلم المهني في مدارس العين ـ حلقة أولى،
من وجهة نظر المعلمين، كما هدفت الى تقصي امكانية وجود فروقات في استجابات المشاركين؛ بناء على بعض
الخصائص الديموغرافية.

ولتحقيق هدف الدراسة تم استخدام أداة تقييم خصائص مجتمعات التعلم المهنية (Professional Learning
Communities Assessment) (Oliver, Hipp, and Huffman, 2003).

وقد اجابت الدراسة عن سؤالين: أولهما، إلى أي مدى تتوافر خصائص مجتمعات التعلم المهنية في مدارس الحلقة
الأولى في العين، من وجهة نظر المعلمين؟

وثانيهما، هل هناك فروقات ذات دلالة احصائية في تصورات المشاركين حول مدى توافر خصائص مجتمعات التعلم
المهنية في مدارس الحلقة الأولى في العين، تعزى إلى متغيرات العمر، وسنوات الخبرة، والمؤهل العلمي؟

وتكونت عينة الدراسة من 229 معلما من أصل 1150 معلما، وتم تحليل البيانات باستخدام الحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم
الاجتماعية برنامج SPSS اذ استخدمت الباحثة الإحصاء الوصفي للاجابة عن السؤال الأول، واختار تحليل التباين
الثلاثي Three way ANOVA للاجابة عن السؤال الثاني.

واهم ما توصلت اليها الدراسة أن خصائص مجتمع التعلم المهني بجميع مجالاتها قد توافرت ـ الى حد عال ـ في
مدارس الحلقة الأولى في العين وذلك من وجهة نظر المعلمين، اذ بلغ أعلى متوسط حسابي 4.04 بالنسبة لمجال
الظروف المساندة – العلاقات، وأقل متوسط حسابي 3.68 كان لمجال الظروف المساندة – التنظيم. كذلك أشارت
النتائج إلى أن متغيرات العمر، وسنوات الخبرة، ليس لهما أي علاقة ذي دلالة احصائية على تصورات المعلمين
حول توافر خصائص مجتمعات التعلم المهني، أو اي من مجالاتها في مدارس العين، بينما كان لمتغير المؤهل
العلمي علاقة ذو دلالة احصائية في مجالات القيم والرؤى المشتركة، ومشاركة الممارسات الشخصية، والظروف
المساندة- العلاقات، اذ كانت المتوسطات عند المعلمين الحاصلين على درجة "البكالوريوس" أعلى من زملائهم
الحاصلين على مؤهلات أعلى.

1

جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

كلية التربية

قسم أصول التربية

برنامج الماجستير في القيادة التربوية

مدى تحقق خصائص مجتمعات التعلم المهنية في مدارس العين- حلقة أولى من منظور المعلمين

فاطمة محمد مانع محمد الظاهري

لجنة المناقشة

د. عبدالرحمن سالم النعيمي   مشرفا ورئيسا   _____

أ.د. محمد أحمد عبدالدايم   عضوا   _____

د. علي سعيد الكعبي   عضوا   _____

جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

كلية التربية

قسم أصول التربية

برنامج الماجستير في التربية

مدى تحقق خصائص مجتمعات التعلم المهنية في مدارس العين- حلقة أولى من منظور المعلمين

رسالة مقدمة من الطالبة

فاطمة محمد مانع محمد الظاهري

إلى

جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

استكمالا لمتطلبات الحصول على درجة الماجستير في التربية

القيادة التربوية

يناير – 2013