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# The essence of professional development experience from the perspective of English teachers in private schools in the UAE

Rabab Ali Atwi

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جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة  
United Arab Emirates University

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College of Education

Department of Curriculum and Methods of Instruction

THE ESSENCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
EXPERIENCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ENGLISH  
TEACHERS IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN THE UAE

Rabab Ali Atwi

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education (Curriculum and Instruction)

Under the Supervision of Dr. Negmeldin Alsheikh

May 2016

### **Declaration of Original Work**

I, Rabab Ali Atwi, the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the author of the thesis entitled “*The Essence of Professional Development Experience from the perspective of English Teachers in Private Schools in the UAE*” hereby, solemnly declare that this thesis is my own original research work that has been done and prepared by me under the supervision of Dr. Negmeldin Alsheikh in the College of Education at UAEU. This work has not previously been presented or published, or formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma or a similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished) and relied upon or included in my thesis have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation and/or publication of this thesis.

Student’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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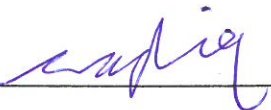
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## Abstract

This study aimed at exploring the essence of professional development experience from the perspective of English teachers in private schools in the UAE. To achieve the goal of the study an explanatory mixed method design was used. In the first phase of the study, English teachers (n=200) responded to Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET). The second phase of the study featured a qualitative method by interviewing a few participants (n=10) from the initial pool sample in the first phase of the study. The study also looked at the English teachers' ranking of professional development models in terms of their actual availability, preference and motivation. The results gleaned from qualitative data helped in explaining the quantitative data. In general the participants perceived professional development experience positively as the Efficacy Category (M= 3.78) ranked first among all professional development categories. The results gleaned from the survey gleaned that teachers seek out PD opportunities to enhance their instructional abilities (37.5%), equip themselves with the latest in the field (30%), and enhance their students' learning (28%). However, a small percentage of teachers (3%) disclosed that they seek professional development to impress their principals (1.5%). This reflects that English teachers in private schools are intrinsically motivated to pursue professional development. Moreover, the study revealed most English teachers (42%) employed in private schools preferred workshops to other professional development models. The study highlighted key issues pertinent to English teachers' professional development and it gives some recommendation for professional development implementation practices and some venues for future research.

**Keywords:** Professional Development, Perceptions, Professional Development Models, Mixed Method, English teachers, Professional Development Experiences, UAE Private School teachers, Professional Development Models.



## Title and Abstract (in Arabic)

### استكشاف جوهر تجارب التطوير المهني من وجهة نظر مدرسي اللغة الانجليزية في المدارس الخاصة لدولة الامارات العربية المتحدة

#### الملخص

قامت هذه الدراسة بتسليط الضوء على جوهر تطبيق تجارب التطوير المهني من وجهة نظر مدرسي اللغة الانجليزية في المدارس الخاصة لدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة . وقد هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف ماهية هذه التجارب وتطبيقها من قبل مدرسي اللغة الانجليزية في المدارس الخاصة وكيفية مساهمة هذه المدارس في التخطيط وخلق الاجواء المناسبة لتطبيق هذه التجارب و انشطتها . و بناءً على ما تقدم نشير الى انه قد تم استخدام جداول توضيحية من اجل تسهيل عملية المقارنة والبحث من جهة و الوصول الى الغاية المنشودة لهذه الدراسة من جهة اخرى وقد استعمل طريقة (Mixed Method Design) لكلا المرحلتين التي شملتهما الدراسة. وقد شملت الدراسة في المرحلة الاولى استبياننا (PDQET) لعينة من مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية وقد شارك فيها 200 مدرس (n = 200). ومن ثم عمدت الباحثة الى استعمال اسلوبا نوعيا في المرحلة الثانية من الدراسة وذلك من خلال إجراء مقابلات مع عشرة مدرسين (n = 10). وبناء عليه سلطت هذه الدراسة الضوء على ترتيب نماذج التنمية المهنية لمدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية من حيث التوافر الفعلي والتفضيل والتحفيز، و اسهمت النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من البيانات النوعية على تفسير البيانات الكمية. وبشكل عام ينظر المدرسون بشكل ايجابي لتجربة التنمية المهنية، حيث احتلت الفاعلية (M = 3.78) المرتبة الأولى من بين جميع فئات التطوير المهني. اما العوامل الثانوية، مثل السعي للحصول على ترقية أو نيل إعجاب مدير المدرسة فانها لا تلعب الا دورا هامشيا في تحفيز المعلمين. وعلاوة على ذلك، كشفت الدراسة أن معظم معلمي اللغة الانكليزية في المدارس الخاصة (42%) يفضلون ورش العمل على نماذج التنمية المهنية الأخرى، حيث اضاءت الدراسة على القضايا الرئيسية ذات الصلة والهادفة الى التطوير المهني لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الخاصة والمناشدة للعمل على رفع التوصيات للبدء بتنفيذ التطوير المهني والتركيز عليه في الابحاث مستقبلا.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التنمية المهنية، تصورات، نماذج التنمية المهنية، الطريقة المختلطة، معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية، خبرات التنمية المهنية، المدرسون في المدارس الخاصة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، نماذج التنمية المهنية.

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## **Dedication**

My beloved parents and dear husband

My children: Hani, Yehya, and Bushra

My family and friends

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This study investigates the essence of professional development experience from the perspectives of English teachers in the UAE. Chapter one serves as an introduction to the study. It begins with an overview that briefly outlines how the United Arab Emirates has joined the international calls for educational reform that has brought the topic of professional development to the forefront of the reform in education. The researcher then outlines the purpose of the study, defines the problem and discusses the four research questions that guided the study. Finally, the researcher describes how the study is organized.

### **1.2 Overview**

Over the past two decades, political leaders, policymakers, and economists have called for changes in the teacher practice in order to help students develop essential 21st century competencies such as critical thinking, problem solving, information technology, and communication skills to enable students to find a place in an increasingly competitive, globalized market. Another important issue that has intensified pressure on teachers and schools is the current focus on standardized tests as the primary indicator of the quality of teaching (Payne & Knowles, 2009). As a result of the international focus on these high-stake tests, the general public's attention has become focused on the quality of teaching that students receive in schools. The public has even questioned the quality of teacher preparation programs and whether they adequately equip teachers with the content and pedagogical skills that enable them to provide quality education to their students.



A great deal of emphasis has been placed on enhancing the quality of teaching to increase student performance. This is reflected in the emerging body of literature (Cohen & Hill, 1998; Guskey, 2000; Haycock, 1998; Reeves, 2010) that has emphasized the importance of professional development of teachers and the vital role it plays in improving teaching and learning. For example, Darling-Hammond (2010) pointed out that “there is consensus among education policymakers, practitioners, and the general public today that improving teacher quality is one of the most direct and promising strategies for improving public education outcomes” (p.1). This emphasis on teacher quality has led schools around the globe to engage their teachers in professional development activities to foster their professional growth and enhance their teaching abilities, hoping that these activities would yield positive outcomes on students’ performance.

A reform movement to enhance teacher quality has caused an upheaval all around the world and the United Arab Emirates is no exception. For example, in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) has been guiding this reform movement. According to ADEC official website, the Council was established in 2005 in accordance with Law No. 24 that was issued by Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed, the UAE President. ADEC seeks to improve the educational system in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi through the implementation of innovative educational policies and plans that aim at supporting educational institutions and teachers to provide students with the education that is in line with the highest international standards. To accomplish that mission, ADEC initiated the Irtiqaa inspection program in 2012 to evaluate the performance of schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and help improve the quality of teaching and learning these schools offer

(ADEC, 2016). Furthermore, ADEC has reiterated the importance of initiating professional development programs that are “focused sharply on teachers’ learning needs, identified through effective performance management arrangements to help teachers keep up to date and share their ideas productively” (Irtiqaa, 2013, p.36). Consequently, private and public schools in Abu Dhabi have initiated professional development programs to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

This study sheds light on the components of professional development that facilitate or impede English teachers’ participation in professional development activities. Furthermore, the study focuses exclusively on the perspectives and experiences of English teachers in the United Arab Emirates and explores how those teachers perceive their professional development experiences.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The educational system in the United Arab Emirates is currently in the midst of a major reform that aims at improving students’ learning experiences and equipping them with necessary skills to cope with 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. As was mentioned earlier, ADEC launched the Irtiqaa inspection program in 2012 to ensure that all students in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi have access to quality education as well as meaningful learning experiences. One of the six performance standards used by Irtiqaa inspectors is related to the quality teaching. According to Irtiqaa (2012-2013) private school report, “Only 15 percent of the teaching is good or better and none is outstanding, a further 21% is of satisfactory quality, but almost two-thirds of the teaching falls below that minimum level of acceptability” (p.23).

In an effort to improve students' performance in international exams, government officials and policymakers have reiterated the importance of providing teachers with professional development to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills. While ADEC finances the professional development of public school teachers, most private schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi have to hire professional development trainers to enhance the performances of their teachers. Therefore, the availability of high-quality professional development opportunities often depends on whether private schools can afford hiring educational consultants or inviting qualified professional development leaders to lead and supervise professional development initiatives.

In the UAE several studies were conducted on teachers' perceptions towards professional development. One of these studies was conducted by AlNeaimi (2007) in the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah. AlNeaimi (2007) explored the attitudes of 78 English teachers who taught different grade levels towards the effectiveness of professional development programs available to them and highlighted the challenges these teachers faced such as lack of professional development opportunities and resources. In the same vein, AlHassani (2012) conducted a mixed method study to explore the perceptions of English teachers in 17 Public Primary Partnership (PPP) schools in Al-Ain towards their professional development. AlHassani's (2012) study revealed that the neglect of English teachers' needs and the lack of qualified presenters led many teachers to feel dissatisfied with the professional development they participate in. Furthermore, Hefnawi (2012) conducted a small-scale mixed-method study in a public school in the emirate of Abu Dhabi to explore the perceptions of 12 teachers towards their professional development experiences. The study revealed that teachers generally valued the professional development activities

that they participated in. In addition, the results from the data retrieved from the feedback sheets and interviews highlighted the importance of leadership support, differentiation of instructional strategies for teachers, and evaluation of teacher performance as key factors that would improve the quality of professional development for teachers. Moreover, Hefnawi (2012) highlighted the lack of applicability of some professional development activities as one of the challenges that teachers faced.

The studies conducted by AlNaeimi (2007), AlHassani (2012) and Hefnawi (2012) were all conducted in public schools in the UAE. To the researcher's best knowledge, no study has explored the perceptions of private school teachers towards their professional development. Hence, the current study was the first study that investigated the essence of professional development from the perspectives of English teachers in a private school context.

#### **1.4 The Purpose of the Study**

The study aims at exploring the essence of professional development experience from the perspectives of English teachers in the private schools in the UAE. Furthermore, the study focuses on capturing the components of professional development that shape teachers' perceptions towards their professional development experiences. Moreover, the study explores the professional development models available to teachers, investigates which of these models teachers preferred, and sheds light on teachers' motives to seek those models. Finally, the study aims at broadening the scope of literature regarding the perceptions of teachers in the UAE towards the professional development opportunities available to them.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The study explored the essence of professional development experience from the perspectives of English teachers in private schools in the UAE and the components of professional development that shape teachers' perceptions and the models they prefer. The four research questions which guided the study are as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of English teachers in private schools in the UAE towards their professional development?
2. What are the perceptions of English teachers in private schools in the UAE regarding PD models?
  - a. What professional development models are available to English teachers in private schools in the UAE?
  - b. What professional development models do English teachers in private schools in the UAE prefer?
  - c. What motivates teachers in private schools in the UAE to participate in PD models?
3. How do English teachers in private schools in the UAE view their professional development experience?
4. Is there any variation among the UAE English Teachers' self-report and their views regarding their professional development?

## **1.6 The Significance of the Study**

The study is significant for a number of reasons. While a plethora of literature can be found on the professional development experiences of teachers in many other countries, few studies have been conducted on this issue in the UAE. To fill this gap,

several researchers (AlNaeimi, 2007; Hefnawi, 2012; AlHassani, 2012) explored professional development in the UAE from the perspectives of teachers in public schools in the UAE. This study explored whether the main problems highlighted by these three researchers such as a lack of effective professional development and a lack of incentives still persist. Thus, this study is significant because it is the first study that deals with the perceptions of English teachers in private schools in the UAE and how those private school teachers perceive their professional development experiences. The researcher hopes that this study will add to the existing literature by highlighting the challenges teachers face in seeking professional development opportunities, shedding light on the characteristics of professional development models that meet teachers' needs, and pinpointing the types of school support that might help teachers overcome the challenges they face on their path to become professionals. This pertinent information may help policymakers and school administrators refine the quality of professional development opportunities they offer their teachers.

A final potential contribution of the study is to improve students' learning experiences by highlighting the components of effective professional development programs that can improve teachers' subject knowledge and instructional practices which, in turn, can attest to increased student achievement.

### **1.7 Limitations**

The current study is limited by the sample size, context, and time. First, this study was limited to English teachers working in private schools in one of the major education zones in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi during the academic year 2015-2016. Consequently, the findings may not be generalized to include public schools in other regions of the UAE. Other limitations relate to the questionnaire as a self-report instrument. The majority of the Professional Development Questionnaires of English Teachers (PDQET) were distributed and completed just before Term 1 final exams were administered, and many of the participants were busy preparing for these exams. Therefore, these participants might not have taken the full time ideally required to respond to those questionnaires. The researcher tried to resolve this potential problem by giving teachers extra time to respond to the questionnaires when they requested more time to complete their questionnaires.

Moreover, some of the questionnaires were distributed at the beginning of Term 2 of the academic year 2015-2016. This was immediately after teachers attended a whole week of professional development at their schools. Instead of enjoying a three-week winter break, teachers received two weeks as they were expected to take part in PD during the third week. Hence, the participants' answers to the questionnaire might conceivably have been affected by their immediate circumstances and perspectives generated during that week. The researcher tried to reduce the respondents' potential bias by interviewing some of those teachers in order to explore their perceptions towards their professional development experiences in more depth.

## 1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

Below are some of the technical terms that need to be clarified for a clearer understanding of the study.

**Professional Development:** Guskey (2000) defined professional development as “those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and perceptions of educators so that they might, in return, improve the learning of students” (p.16). In this study, the researcher will sometimes use the acronym (PD) to refer to professional development.

**Job-Embedded Professional Learning:** Wood and Killian (1998) defined job-embedded learning as “learning that occurs as teachers and administrators engage in their daily work activities” (p.52). Likewise, Sparks and Hirsh (1997) pointed out that “the most powerful learning is that which occurs in response to challenges currently being faced by the learner and that allows for immediate application, experimentation, and adaptation on the job” (p.52). In this study, mentoring, peer coaching, and study groups are all considered as job-embedded professional development activities as they take place within the school context.

**English as a Foreign Language:** Snow (1986) contended that English as a foreign language refers to “The teaching of English to speakers of other languages in which English is taught as a subject in school and exposure to the language is typically confined to the instructional setting” (p.3). In the United Arab Emirates, although English is widely used, most students learn English as a foreign language.



**Peer Coaching:** Robbins (1991) contended that peer coaching is “a confidential process through which two or more colleagues work together to reflect on current practices, expand, refine, and build new skills, share ideas, teach one another, conduct classroom research, or solve problems in the workplace” (p.1).

**Mentoring:** Donaldson, Ensher, and Grant-Vallone (2000) defined mentoring as a relationship where the mentor is the “more experienced employee who advises, counsels, or otherwise enhances the personal development of a less experienced employee” (p.238).

**Study Groups:** Clair (1998) stated that teacher study groups are “sustained opportunities for teachers to explore together issues and challenges that have a direct impact on their lives and the lives of their students” (p. 496).

### **1.9 Organization of the Study**

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter has given a brief introduction to the purpose of the study, argued its significance, identified the problem, and introduced the research questions. Chapter two will provide a review of the literature on teacher professional development. It will focus on the social learning theory and Maslow’s theory of motivation. Chapter three will deal with the research methodology, introduce the participants, present the instrumentation, describe the data collection methods, discuss the data analysis procedures, and highlight the ethical considerations. Chapter four will discuss the final results in relationship to the

four research questions that guided the study and present the major themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews. Chapter five will include a discussion of the results, present the recommendations that emerged from the study, and offered implications for future research on the topic of professional development of teachers.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the essence of professional development in the UAE from the perspectives of English teachers. This chapter looks at the meaning of professional development for teachers and discusses its significance to the teaching profession and its impact on teachers' practices. The major theories that will be explored are social learning theory and Maslow's theory of motivation. Moreover, the chapter explores the common models of professional development and the components of effective professional development. The chapter concludes with a brief summary that links the literature review to the study.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This section explores the main theories that drive this research. The theories that I used are social learning theory and motivation theory. I used those theories for their interrelatedness to explain the essence of my study which is pertinent to teachers' perceptions towards their profession as well as their motivations to pursue professional development opportunities.

#### **2.2.1 Social Learning Theory**

One of the important principles of social learning theory as professional development models such as training sessions, peer-coaching, mentoring, and study groups all occur in social setting. Albert Bandura (1977) asserted that humans learn by observing others, modeling good practices, and later adopting the behavior. Bandura (1977) also pointed out that, "Most human behavior is learned

observationally through modeling; from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action” (p.22). In other words, the core of social learning theory is that learning occurs in a social setting through an interaction with the environment. One of the core concepts of Bandura’s social learning theory is observational learning. Lortie (2002) suggested that learning through observation has been found to be an important mechanism in teacher development. For example, when a teacher observes her colleague applying a certain instructional strategy successfully, she will feel more confident that, if she adopts this strategy in her own class, she could be more successful in teaching her students. Moreover, new teachers tend to observe and model the practices of expert teachers and, later, implement the strategies they find effective in their own classrooms (Lortie, 2002). Hence, learning by observation can be one of the important methods for teachers to enhance their practices.

Social learning theory has other implications for teacher development. For example, Brookfield (1986) affirmed the importance of applying the principles of cooperative learning in adult education and suggests that when adults teach and learn together, they find themselves engaged in challenging activities. Similarly, Zepeda (2012) pointed out that “Although adults can learn on their own, learning in the company of others is a more powerful design for professional development” (p.48). Hence, learning in a social context provides teachers with the opportunity to work and learn together.

One of the important theories that emerged from social learning theory is Albert Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy. Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as "people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action

required to attain designated types of performances” (p.391). Bandura (1986) also pointed out that self-efficacy is not necessarily concerned with a person’s skills but rather with “judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses” (p. 391). In other words, Bandura draws a difference between possessing knowledge and skills and being able to translate those skills and knowledge to complete a task proficiently.

Bandura (1994) suggested four sources of self-efficacy. The first source is the mastery experiences. According to Bandura, positive and negative experiences can influence the ability of an individual to perform a given task. If an individual has performed well at a previous task, he or she is more likely to feel competent and perform well at a similar task (Bandura, 1977). Hence, mastery experiences can be an effective way to strengthen a person’s sense of self-efficacy because when individuals master a certain task, they will have positive expectations regarding future events. On the other hand, unsuccessful experiences can erode people’s sense of efficacy. The second source is social modeling or vicarious experiences. Bandura (1994) noted that people might develop a low or high self-efficacy vicariously through the interpretations they make through observing others. He proposed that when individuals see people who they can relate to succeeding, they would be encouraged to imitate the successful behavior in the future. For example, when a teacher observes a peer successfully completing a task, he or she will feel that they can be successful.

The third source is social persuasion. Bandura (1994) contended that providing people with verbal encouragement could play an important role in shaping their self-beliefs. In this view, it is suggested that constructive feedback enhances an

individuals' self-efficacy and motivates them to put their best effort to succeed while a negative feedback can weaken their self-beliefs and even lead them to doubt themselves. Finally, the fourth source is the emotional state. Affective states such as anxiety, agitation, and stress may lead people to doubt their abilities. These negative emotions could have a negative impact on their sense of self-efficacy. A low sense of efficacy may, in turn, lead to inadequate performance. One way to raise people's self-efficacy beliefs is to improve their physical and emotional well-being and reduce negative emotional states. Because individuals have the capability to alter their own thinking, enhanced self-efficacy beliefs can positively impact their physiological states.

### **2.2.1.1 The Implications of Bandura's Theory**

Drawing on Bandura's theory, an emerging body of research (Bangs & Frost, 2012; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Jerald, 2007; Pajares, 1992; Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990) investigated the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their performance. These studies revealed that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy tended to persevere when faced with problems because these teachers considered obstacles as challenges and not as threats. Moreover, these teachers were willing to learn new strategies in order to improve the learning opportunities for their students.

Numerous studies were conducted to investigate whether teachers' professional development for teachers can impact their sense of self-efficacy. For example, Kuskovski (2008) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between professional development and teacher self-efficacy among secondary school teachers who taught in the international schools in Switzerland. This quantitative study

revealed that there was no significant difference in the levels of self-efficacy beliefs between teachers who recently received professional development and those who did not participate in professional development activities. Hence, Kuskovski (2008) concluded that receiving professional development has no impact on teachers' sense of self-efficacy. On the other hand, other studies revealed contrary findings. For example, the findings of a study conducted by Tschannen, Moran, and McMaster (2009) contradicted the earlier findings reported by Kuskovski (2008). This study investigated the impact of four professional development models on the self-efficacy of 93 primary and resource teachers in the United States. The study revealed that the professional development models that supported teachers' mastery experience by providing teachers with follow-up, coaching, and continuous feedback had the most significant impact on teachers' self-efficacy. Similarly, a recent study was conducted by Karimi (2011) to explore the impact of an in-service professional development program for 30 junior high teachers who taught English as a foreign Language on their sense of self-efficacy. The results of the study revealed that in-service professional development activities such as peer observation, study groups and mentoring can have a significant influence in enhancing teachers' self-efficacy beliefs.

As we can see, there is growing evidence that well-designed professional development programs can have a positive impact on teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Professional development models that can potentially enhance teachers' sense of self-efficacy are those that give teachers the opportunity to interact with one another and provide them with continuous feedback.

### **2.2.2 Maslow's Human Motivation Theory**

The second theory that informs this study is Abraham Maslow's human motivation theory. Maslow (1943) proposed a 5-level hierarchy that ranges from the lowest to the highest to represent humans' fundamental needs or motivators. The first level in Maslow's model includes physiological needs that are essential for survival such as food, water, and shelter. The second level includes the safety needs, such as the need to feel safe in one's environment. The third level includes love and belonging needs such as the need to be accepted by others. These three needs (physiological, safety, and love) represent what Maslow calls 'deficiency need'. Maslow contended that the people in a person's environment could play a role in helping him/ her meet those needs. The fourth level includes the esteem needs such the need for public recognition. The fifth and the highest level in Maslow's need model is self-actualization which Maslow believed is the driving force that motivates people to become everything that they are capable of becoming. Maslow believed that the need for self-actualization is a growth need as it enhances people's development and even enables them to reach their full potentials.

It is worth mentioning that numerous criticisms have been directed at Maslow's motivational theory. These criticisms have typically centered on the research methods Maslow used and the lack of experimentally generated data (Schultz & Schultz, 2013). Defending his theory, Maslow (1970) contended that although he was not able to test his theory through research, his theory of human motivation "has fitted very well with the personal experience of most people, and has often given them a structured theory that has helped them to make better sense of



their inner lives” (p.xii).

### **2.2.2.1 The Implications of Maslow’s Theory**

Drawing on Maslow’s theory, several researchers (Inman & Marlow, 2004; Scott, 1999) explored the factors that contribute to teachers’ feelings of self-esteem, self-value, and job satisfaction. The findings of these studies revealed that providing teachers with professional development opportunities might help enhance their sense of self-worth and self-esteem. For example, Inman and Marlow (2004) contended that establishing a support system within the school context could contribute to the improvement of the beginning teachers’ feeling of self-worth and enhance the conditions of their classroom environments. Furthermore, a study conducted by Scott (1999) revealed that some professional development models like mentoring can enhance the mentor’s sense of self-value as they contributed to the professional growth of their colleagues.

The social learning theory and the theory of motivation provided the theoretical framework that informed the current study. These theories offered a helpful approach to the understanding of the key factors that influence teachers’ levels of motivation and sense of self-efficacy.

### **2.2.3 Professional Development Models**

This section explores four of the most common models of professional development and how they impact teachers’ personal and professional growth. The first model involves workshops or training sessions. The second model is peer-coaching which often involves two or more colleagues who work collaboratively to

provide each other with professional feedback that aims at refining their teaching skills. The third model is mentoring where an experienced teacher typically assumes the role of a mentor to provide a beginning teacher with the help that he/she needs. The fourth professional development model is the study group which brings together a group of educators to gain a better understanding of key issues related to teaching and learning.

### **2.2.3.1 Training Model**

Training is the most common model of professional development in schools. Guskey (2000) argued that many teachers believe that “training is synonymous with professional development” (p.22). Training activities typically involve a presenter who shares ideas and expertise through a variety of group-based activities. Large group presentations, workshops, discussions, and seminars are different types of training (Guskey, 2000). For training to be effective, several issues have to be addressed. Pointing out some of the key issues associated with training, Guskey (2003) suggested that training sessions have to be based on clear objectives, appropriately paced, and supplemented by follow-up sessions to provide teachers with the necessary coaching to ensure successful implementation. Furthermore, Guskey (2003) emphasized that sporadic workshops that do not provide teachers with ample time to apply the new strategies nor with the necessary feedback might have little impact on teachers’ classroom practices.

Another key issue is related to the differentiation of learning for teachers. Diaz-Maggioli (2004) stated that although schools expect teachers to implement differentiated instruction in their classrooms, undifferentiated approaches usually

prevail during teacher development sessions. Therefore, Diaz-Maggioli (2004) asserted that effective professional development programs take the teachers' unique characteristics as adult learners into account.

An emerging body of research (Cheung, 2013; Giraldo, 2014; Guskey, 2003) was conducted to examine the impact of professional development workshops in expanding teachers' content knowledge and enhancing their pedagogical practices. These studies revealed that well-designed professional developments can enhance teachers' knowledge and skills provided that these teachers are given the opportunity to interact with colleagues, receive appropriate feedback, and practice the new learning. These studies also revealed that only well-designed professional development experiences could enhance teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical practices. Furthermore, the studies highlighted that sporadic workshops that are not followed by follow-up sessions might have little impact on teachers' classroom practices. Along similar lines, O'Sullivan (2002) emphasized the importance of providing teachers with support during the implementation stage and suggested that this support might take the form of follow-up sessions where the trainer demonstrates the strategies and observes the teachers in order to provide them with feedback about their implementation of the strategies they learnt during the training sessions.

To conclude, for teacher training to yield positive outcomes, professional development trainers have to take teachers' needs and learning styles into consideration and ensure that teachers are given adequate time to implement the strategies and receive feedback.

### **2.2.3.2 Peer Coaching**

One of the most common approaches to coaching involves peer coaching. Discussing the advantages of peer coaching, Acheson and Gall (2003) suggested that the process can be linked to teachers' personal growth as the observing teacher can record data that teachers who are delivering the lesson would not be able to record on their own. Based on the data that the observing teachers collect, teachers can make decisions that may improve their practice in the future. Moreover, peer coaching provides the framework for professional dialogue especially during the post-observation phase so that the teachers can provide and receive feedback related to the observed lesson. This professional dialogue would also encourage teachers to generate solutions to the problems they face in the classrooms (Galbraith & Anstrom, 1995) which may enhance those teachers' self-efficacy. The benefits of peer coaching can extend to include the observing teacher. A plethora of research (Dantonio, 2001; Joyce & Showers, 2002) has shed light on the benefits of peer coaching on the observing teachers and how observing colleagues' classrooms may help teachers reflect on their teaching practices, analyze their own behaviors, and learn new teaching strategies.

There is a rapidly growing literature (Gottesman, 2009; Lu, 2007; Richards & Lockhart, 1996) on the factors that can be detrimental to any coaching program. One of the major points that emerged from these studies was the importance of avoiding personal and supervisory comments between the coach and the coachee. This is because teachers can be reluctant to take part in peer coaching activities if these activities are carried out as part of their evaluation (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). In the same vein, Lu (2007) suggested that many teachers have negative

perceptions towards peer coaching because some of their colleagues tend to become critical and evaluative.

Peer coaching can be a substantial mechanism for teacher development. This structured, ongoing process can hone the skills of teachers by giving them the opportunity to receive and provide professional support that would help improve their instructional abilities and enhance the learning experiences for their pupils. Moreover, peer coaching can help teachers overcome the isolation that prevails in many schools by giving teachers the opportunity to engage in a professional dialogue to discuss the best practices that teachers can use in their classrooms.

### **2.2.3.3 Mentoring Model**

The mentoring model traditionally involved pairing an experienced teacher or a master educator with a less experienced mentee until the mentee is capable of independently carrying out their professional responsibilities. The rationale behind using school-based mentoring is that new teachers need to be supported at the beginning of their careers in order to adapt to the working practices of their schools and develop a mindset that would enable them to see the advantages of ongoing professional learning (Rhodes, 2002).

The current literature (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012; Hansford, Tennent, & Ehrich, 2003; Kariv, 2011) is abound with examples of characteristics that would make a mentoring school program successful. For example, Kariv (2011) suggested that a good mentoring program involves building trust between the mentor and the mentee, determining the pace of modeling based on the mentee's abilities, developing a system for addressing the mentee's points of weaknesses, identifying

the goals of the mentoring venture, and making the best of the meetings between the mentor by preparing notes related to experiences or events that took place since the last meeting. Furthermore, a careful selection between the mentor and mentee is crucial for the success of the mentoring process. According to Fletcher and Mullen (2012), for mentoring to foster the learning of teachers, careful matching between the mentor and the mentee should take place. These two authors' argument is shared by Hansford et al. (2003) who suggested that the mentors and mentees should be given the opportunity to select their partners in the mentoring process.

A well-designed mentoring program may yield several positive outcomes for the mentor, mentee and the organization as a whole. A group of scholars (Hansford et al., 2003; Portner, 2001; Villani, 2009) discussed the benefits of mentoring. These scholars contended that mentoring could increase teachers' effectiveness and self-confidence by orienting them to the school routine and curriculum, providing them with opportunities to share ideas and engage in discussions, and receiving emotional and professional support. In the long term, mentoring can help teachers commit to their profession. As for the benefits for mentors, mentoring can provide these mentors with personal satisfaction, can improve their practices, and can give them a challenge in their work. In the long run, a well-established mentoring program can help reduce the turnover rate of teachers by providing them with the support they need to grow and develop. As highlighted above, mentoring can be a potent model for professional development when implemented properly.

#### **2.2.3.4 Study Group Model**

The study group model is relatively new. This model provides an authentic way for educators to bring together a group of committed teachers to “think through their own beliefs, share ideas, challenge current instructional practices, blend theory and practice, identify professional and personal needs as well as develop literacy innovations for their classrooms” (Matlin & Short, 1991, p. 68). Hence, unlike traditional models of professional development that fostered teacher isolation and rarely took teachers’ needs into consideration, the study group model reinforces the idea that schools are learning communities not just for students but for their teachers as well (Guskey, 2003).

An emerging body of research (Birchak et al., 1998; Brody & Davidson, 1998; Donahoo & Hunter, 2007; Guskey, 2003; Murphy & Lick, 2001; Maloney, Moore, & Taylor, 2011; Murphy 1999) has investigated the advantages of the study group model. These studies revealed that study groups can provide the context that immerses teachers in the learning process as they collectively investigate issues related to teaching and learning and shared their findings to improve their students’ learning and even support the school improvement plans. Other advantages of study groups include enhancing teacher collegiality, personalizing teacher professional development, providing teachers with emotional support, and fostering teachers’ personal growth, supporting teacher leadership, and creating a positive school culture.

An emerging body of research (Birchak et al., 1998; Donahoo & Hunter, 2007; Murphy & Lick, 2005; Speck & Knipe, 2005) has highlighted the challenges might face schools when employing the study group model. These challenges include

ensuring equal participation, limiting side conversations, checking aggressive personalities, and making sure that publically praising study group members does not result in division. These authors also emphasized that for study groups to yield positive results, teachers' participation should be strictly voluntary as teachers are less responsive to professional development activities that are imposed on them. In conclusion, teachers in study groups can be catalysts for change as these teachers are "never content with the status quo but rather always looking for a better way" (Larner, 2004, p. 32).

The study group model can be an effective strategy for teacher development that places teachers at the center of their own learning as they engage in collective inquiry to research the topics they deem interesting, find solutions for challenges they face in their classrooms, discuss new instructional strategies, and engage in reflective practices. To ensure the successful implementation of the study group model, school leaders should closely monitor the behaviors of study group members to ensure that the opinions of these members are respected.

#### **2.2.4.5 Summary of Professional Development Models**

Each of the professional development models explored in the previous section has its own advantages and limitations. To enhance the professional development experience for teachers and students, Zepeda (2012) suggested that a training program can be followed by peer coaching or mentoring sessions which, in turn, can be followed by a study group or action research. This combination of the different professional models may help create a learning culture where professional development is viewed as an ongoing process that is embedded in teachers' everyday practices.



## **2.2.4 Components of Effective Professional Development**

This section explores the components of effective professional development programs. There is an emerging consensus among researchers (Guskey, 2010; Reeves, 2010; Speck & Knipe, 2005) that effective professional development takes several key components into consideration. One of these components is related to the efficacy of professional development in enhancing teachers' skills and students' achievements. The other components include the context in which professional development activities take place, the content that is delivered during professional development activities, the time those activities are scheduled, and the support that teachers receive from their school leaders to seek professional development opportunities. These components will be discussed in details in the following sections.

### **2.2.4.1 Efficacy**

When discussing the efficacy of professional development activities, two main issues have to be addressed. The first issue is the efficacy of professional development activities with regards to enhancing teachers' knowledge, fostering teachers' skills, and boosting students' achievement. The other key issue that has to be addressed is related to the perceptions of teachers and whether these teachers believe that the professional development activities they take part in are actually enhancing their skills and knowledge and improving their students' achievements.

#### **2.2.4.1.1 The Effectiveness of Teacher PD Programs**

Providing effective professional development opportunities for teachers is a strategy that school administrators use to ensure that their teachers continue to strengthen their content knowledge and pedagogical skills throughout their teaching careers in order to stay updated with current practices and meet their students' needs.

Effective professional development programs are directly linked to student learning. There is growing consensus among researchers (Cohen & Hill, 1998; Guskey, 2000; Reeves, 2010; Rosemary & Feldman, 2009) that effective professional development can improve students' achievements. Discussing the features of effective professional development, Speck and Knipe (2005) suggested that effective professional development programs should involve an analysis of student achievement data to look for areas of strength and suggest future improvements to address the areas of weaknesses. In other words, effective professional programs use the data collected on student achievement to plan professional development activities that would help teachers improve their student learning. Furthermore, effective professional development can also enhance teachers' effectiveness. Several researchers (Johnson, 2011; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; Robinson, 2013) investigated the effectiveness of professional development in enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills. The synthesis reviews of these studies revealed that effective professional development could improve teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical practices and even enhance their perceptions towards the subjects they teach.

#### **2.2.4.1.2 Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of their PD**

Changing teachers' perceptions is a key variable in any reform movement. Guskey (2000) noted that the implicit and explicit goal of many professional development programs is to change teachers' perceptions. Hence, professional development is most effective when it does not merely focus on the implementation of a new program but also on the transformation of teachers' beliefs (Hunzicker, 2004). However, changing teachers' perceptions through professional development is not an easy process due to the pre-existing perceptions and ideas held by teachers. Many teachers resent new program because they create competition with their pre-existing beliefs as well as teaching and learning experiences (Karavas-Doukas, 1996). Therefore, ignoring teachers' prior experiences might act as a barrier that hinders the assimilation of the newly acquired ideas and practices that teachers are encouraged to adopt in their classrooms.

The emerging consensus view among researchers (AlNeaimi, 2007; AlHassani 2012; Giraldo, 2014) seems to be that English teachers are aware of the efficacy of professional development programs in enhancing the quality of their teaching as well as the learning experiences of their pupils. Furthermore, the studies revealed that certain factors such as the leadership support, the availability of incentives, and the planning of follow-up sessions play a substantial role in sustaining the impact of professional development and facilitating the transformation of the new ideas to the classrooms.

To summarize, effective professional development activities can enhance the quality of teaching. To attain these positive outcomes of professional development,

professional development developers have to focus on enhancing teachers' subject matter knowledge besides fostering their pedagogical skills.

#### **2.2.4.2 Content**

Content is another key component of professional development that can enhance the teaching quality and improve student achievements. Enhancing teachers' knowledge of their subject knowledge, refining their pedagogical skills and fostering their knowledge of practices that enhance or impede their students' learning are all key features that have to be considered when outlining the content of a professional development activity.

Enhancing teachers' content knowledge is one of the characteristics of effective professional development programs. The review of emerging literature has shown a consensus among researchers (Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 2003; Van Driel & Berry, 2012) that effective professional development focuses on providing teachers with an in-depth understanding of the subjects they teach and the ways students learn that subject. Notably, enhancing teachers' content knowledge of the subject matter has a complex nature. Discussing the teacher content knowledge, Shulman (1986) proposed that teacher education programs should combine three types of content knowledge. The first category is the *content knowledge* and it includes knowledge of the subject the teacher is teaching. The second category is the *curricular knowledge*. This category includes the knowledge of the program designed to teach a particular group at a particular level and the instructional materials needed for that program. The third category is the *pedagogical content knowledge*. Shulman (1986) suggested that "pedagogical content knowledge also includes of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult [and] the

preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning of those most frequently taught topics and lessons” (p.9). Hence, the pedagogical content knowledge entails understanding the purpose of teaching a subject matter, knowledge of the curricula, knowledge of instructional strategies and knowledge of how to use those strategies in a specific context.

Another facet of the content element of professional development involves the consideration of teachers’ learning styles. An emerging body of research (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2009; Hefnawi, 2012; Jensen, 2008) emphasized the importance of drawing on the teachers’ learning styles to help them process, understand and, later on, implement new practices. For example, Diaz-Maggioli (2004) contended that many professional development activities operate under the assumption that “one size fits all” without acknowledging that teachers have unique learning needs that must be met. Attesting to the previous findings, Hefnawi (2012) suggested that unless teachers’ needs are taken into consideration, these teachers would face difficulties in transferring their newly-acquired knowledge into concrete teaching practices. Hence, understanding the learning styles of teachers and diversifying the learning strategies may help them internalize the content of the professional development and would motivate them to apply the acquired skills in their classrooms. Hence, effective professional development focuses on developing teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge and draws on teachers’ learning styles to help those teachers process the content presented during professional development activities.

Besides focusing on the content, effective professional development programs occur in a context that facilitates and nurtures learning. A professional

learning context entails ensuring teachers' physical comfort, supporting teacher collaboration, and building a professional learning community.

#### **2.2.4.3 Context**

A well-designed professional development context supports the continuous learning of teachers and places the improvement of student performance at the center of professional development. Several elements are associated with the creation of a professional development context such as ensuring the participants' comfort, embedding the professional development activities in teachers' daily practices, and establishing a professional development community. Furthermore, designing a professional development context is an essential component of any professional development initiative. Highlighting the importance of context, Murray (2013) emphasized that, "A supportive context, or school culture for teacher professional learning, will not happen by accident. It must be created intentionally to allow learning activities to flourish" (p.19).

A wealth of literature (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Guskey, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 2002) has noted the key role that the context of professional development plays in making professional development initiatives more successful. The findings that were gleaned from these studies suggested that the factors associated with context may range from ensuring that the basic needs of the teachers are met to creating a collaborative learning environment that nurtures teachers' abilities and accommodates their needs. The following section will focus on the following aspects of context: the teachers' comfort, teacher collaboration, and professional learning communities.

One of the important factors associated with context is ensuring teachers' comfort. This is because a comfortable professional development context may help teachers learn in a more effective fashion. Other important context-related issues include basic needs such as comfortable chairs, refreshments, and proper room temperature. Whitaker, Whitaker, and Lumpa (2013) provided a guideline for school leaders to ensure the comfort of teachers during the professional development events. The authors contended that professional development should take place in a quiet location that is furnished with comfortable chairs, and equipped with appropriate lighting. The authors asserted that offering teachers food and coffee during the breaks would help these teachers nourish themselves, give them the opportunity to interact, and help them feel comfortable. The authors also suggested offering teachers door prizes to create a feeling of excitement (Whitaker, Whitaker & Lumpa, 2013).

Besides ensuring the comfort of the participants, a well-designed professional development context promotes and supports teacher collaboration. Several scholars (Fullan, 1995; Guskey, 2003; Murray, 2013; Speck & Knipe, 2005; Zepeda, 2012) outlined the merits of changing teacher professional development from a sporadic activity that takes place in the teacher staffroom or school theater to a job-embedded activity that is inherently embedded in teachers' practices. Highlighting the importance of job-embedded learning, Speck and Knipe (2005) argued that job-embedded professional development facilitates the translation of the knowledge that teachers acquire to concrete classroom strategies which, in turn, can lead to improvement in students' results. The authors contended that embedding professional development within the school's context can make teachers recognize

that their professional growth is an ongoing process that can happen inside their classrooms as they are engaged in their daily activities with their students (Speck & Knipe, 2005).

Most of the job-embedded professional development models (e.g. coaching, mentoring, study groups) involve collaboration among teachers, coaches, and administrators. This collaboration entails that a professional learning community should be established within the school context. Du Four, Du Four and Eaker (2008) defined a professional learning community “as educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (p.14). Hence, the establishment of a well-designed professional learning community within the school context facilitates the exchange of best practices among teachers through a professional dialogue.

As we can see, the context of professional development is an integral component of a well-designed professional development. A convenient setting fosters collegial collaboration by encouraging teachers to work collaboratively and productively together to enhance their instruction and reflect on current and desired practices.

#### **2.2.4.4 Time**

Professional development of teachers occurs over time. Several researchers (AlNeami, 2007; Black, 2003; Sandholtz, 2002; Speck & Knipe, 2005; Sparks, 1999) investigated the relationship between teachers’ professional development uptake and the provision of time available for teachers to participate in professional development activities. For example, Sandholtz (2002) argued that teachers often find it difficult to attend professional development activities because of their busy



schedules. Furthermore, Speck and Knipe (2005) reported that finding adequate time for professional development is teachers' primary concern. The authors contended that the demanding teaching responsibilities such as preparing lesson plans and correcting homework consume teachers' normal days and hamper their pursuit of professional development.

Several scholars (Black, 2003; Mitzell, 2007; Sparks, 1999) suggested several strategies to extend the time allotted for teacher professional development. In the quest to find time for teacher professional learning, Sparks (1999) suggested adjusting the school schedule to release students early one day per week or engaging those students in extracurricular activities one morning every week in order to give their teachers time to engage in professional development. Sparks (1999) also suggested hiring substitute teachers to free the teachers for their professional development activities. A further suggestion to solve the time challenge was offered by Black (2003) who suggested merging students into special classes such as physical education, art, and music to create time for their teachers to plan together.

It is worth mentioning that numerous scholars have voiced their reservations regarding the aforementioned strategies for finding time for teacher professional development. For example, Abdal-Haqq (1996) suggested that professional development programs that are scheduled during the summer or outside school hours can encroach with teachers' personal lives or take away from their preparation time which can lead those teachers to experience burn-out. Likewise, Cook and Fine (1997) argued that hiring substitute teachers might have a negative impact on student learning. The two scholars even challenged the notion that scheduling professional development activities during summer or when students are released early would

yield positive results because professional development is an ongoing process that should take place during the day as teachers are engaged with their students (Cook & Fine, 1997).

There is a growing consensus among educators (Cohen & Hill, 1998; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Murray, 2013; Black, 2003; Cook & Fine, 1997) that teacher professional development is a developmental process that takes time. Hammond and Richardson (2009) noted that professional development that lasts for 14 or hours or less will have no effect on student learning and that the most significant impacts were attributed to programs “offering between 30 and 100 hours spread out over 6-12 months” (p.49). Along similar lines, Black (2003) argued that teachers need time “to reflect, learn from mistakes, and work with colleagues as they acquire good judgment and tact knowledge about classroom teaching and learning” (p.47). Black (2003) compared teachers to surgeons who need more than “course lectures” and “a few practice rounds” before they operate. Hence, providing teachers with ample time to hone their skills is a substantial factor in the success of any professional development initiative.

Evidently, time constraints represent one of the major challenges that impedes teachers’ pursuit and implementation of professional development. Effective professional development allows enough time for teachers to digest the new knowledge related to the content of the subject they are teaching and practice the new instructional strategies they learn.

The following section explores the key role that school leadership plays in selecting the appropriate time for conducting professional development activities and optimizing the time for teachers to practice the new strategies in their classrooms in

order to ensure a successful implementation of the professional development programs.

#### **2.2.4.5 School Support**

Effective principals play a substantial role in supporting their teachers' emotional and professional growth. Such principals are aware that taking the needs of their teachers into consideration, creating a learning environment within the school context, and providing ongoing support and incentives are essential elements that would not merely sustain the effects of professional development but also motivate teachers to seek professional development opportunities.

Effective school principals involve teachers in their own learning journey. Such principals pay special attention to their teachers' needs through seeking their input regarding professional development offerings. Several researchers (Speck & Knipe, 2005; Huang & Cho, 2010; Bredeson, 2000) emphasized that effective school leaders involve teachers in the decision-making process by inviting them to suggest topics that meet their professional needs and enhance their subject-matter knowledge. This involvement of teachers in their own learning would make them feel that school leaders acknowledge their opinions and would also motivate them to participate in professional development activities because the topics that would be covered during these activities are based on their needs.

Effective school principals create and sustain a healthy learning environment in their schools by creating a vibrant professional learning community where they, along with their teachers, commit themselves to continuous learning. Those principals are aware that if they want their teachers to actively participate in professional development activities, then they have to "walk-the-talk". Talking about

the importance of principals' support for professional development, Bredeson (2000) stated,

Principals who warmly welcome teachers to a staff development day and then quickly excuse themselves to do more important administrator work undercut teacher development and the learning culture of their school in several ways [...] such cavalier administrator behavior suggests that other tasks in school are more important than the learning that will occur in this session (p.392).

Effective school leaders invest in their own people to sustain the effects of professional development and enhance student achievements. In the support of that point, Bickford (2012) examined the impact of an expert teacher-led program on teacher enhancing collaboration. Teachers who participated in the program were given the opportunity to identify topics they deemed interesting. Expert teachers from the school district were invited to research these topics and present them to their colleagues. The findings of the study revealed that teachers found the professional development program engaging and relevant to their classroom practices. Moreover, the benefits of this professional development program extended to include the teacher presenters who contended that the experience enhanced their leadership skills.

Another aspect of the principal's support involves providing intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Providing teachers with intrinsic rewards can have long-term benefits including increasing teacher retention rates (Mitchell & Peters, 1988; Vegas & Umansky, 2005). Hence, engaging teachers in professional development provides them with intrinsic rewards such as developing their sense of self-worth and accomplishment and that might help teachers develop positive perceptions towards these professional development opportunities.

School principals know that while some teachers are intrinsically motivated to grow professionally, most teachers would appreciate incentives or recognitions offered by their school leaders as recognition for the effort they make to enhance their practices and improve their students' achievements. Discussing some of the incentives that school leaders can provide their teachers, Speck and Knipe (2005) suggested publicly announcing teachers' efforts or providing release time for teachers to work with others. These two authors also contended that providing teachers with these rewards would boost their morale and motivate them to pursue learning opportunities. In the same vein, Vegas and Umansky (2005) disclosed that providing teachers with incentives can be an effective strategy to retain qualified teachers and suggested offering teachers salary differentials based on training and performance.

Another key role assigned to school principals is to provide ongoing support for teachers to become more proficient. Guskey and Yoon (2009) argued that "educators at all levels need just-in-time, job-embedded assistance as they struggle to adapt new curricula and new instructional practices to their unique classroom contexts" (p. 498). To support their teachers, effective leaders build on the potentials of their own staff by expanding their roles to include providing coaching to their colleagues. Highlighting the important role that in-house trainers can play, Sparks (1983) contended that colleagues who are trusted and respected by their peers can provide coaching as effectively as outside experts provided that these teachers demonstrate that they are skillful in collecting data and providing feedback. This in-house approach to teacher training can help teachers develop a common vision about

instruction and create an interactive and dynamic school climate that fosters collaboration and collective decision-making.

To conclude, effective school principals play a significant role in nurturing their teachers' professional development by creating a learning environment that supports the individual needs of teachers, encouraging collaborative inquiry to professional learning, and providing sufficient resources which may include providing adequate time for professional development, training in-service coaches, and hiring substitute teachers. By fulfilling these roles, the school principals will create and foster a positive school climate that values learning and strives to achieve high quality of teaching and learning.

### **2.3 Summary**

In this chapter the researcher reviewed some of the literature relevant to this study. The researcher began by discussing the theoretical framework that is based on Bandura's social learning theory as well as Maslow's theory of motivation. Bandura's theories had their implications on teacher education as these theories emphasized that learning occurs in a social context and that providing teachers with mastery experiences could enhance their self-efficacy beliefs. In addition, Maslow's theory of motivation also has its implications on teacher professional development. The highest need in Maslow's hierarchy is the need of self-actualization which involves people's need to grow and develop. The common goal of all professional development initiatives is to help teachers develop their knowledge and skills and grow professionally. Furthermore, the researcher discussed four models of professional development and the challenges associated with the implementation of these models. Moreover, the researcher discussed the major roles that the Efficacy,

Context, Content, Time, and Support play in providing teachers with effective professional development that can keep these teachers abreast of new ideas and practices that can enhance their skills and improve their students' achievements.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The study explored the essence of the professional development experience from the perspectives of English teachers in the UAE. The four research questions that guided the study were the following:

1. What are the perceptions of English teachers in private schools in the UAE towards their professional development?
2. What are the perceptions of English teachers in private schools in the UAE regarding PD models?
  - a. What professional development models are available to English teachers in private schools in the UAE?
  - b. What professional development models do English teachers in private schools in the UAE prefer?
  - c. What motivates English teachers in private schools in the UAE to participate in PD models?
3. How do English teachers in private schools in the UAE view their professional development experience?
4. Is there any variation among the UAE English Teachers' self-report and their views regarding their professional development?

This chapter discusses the methodological procedures used to find answers to the research questions that guided the study. This includes the research design, a description of the participants, instrumentation, data collection methods, validity and reliability of the instruments, data analysis techniques, and the ethical considerations.



The researcher concludes with a brief summary of the key ideas discussed in this chapter.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The researcher employed a mixed method research design to collect primary data. Highlighting the advantages of mixed method research design, Creswell and Clark (2011) suggested that the combination of quantitative and qualitative results would help provide a thorough understanding of the research problem. Furthermore, these two authors argued that using mixed methods is practical because it allows the researcher to use numbers and words and employ skills in observing and recording human behavior. Moreover, the authors recommended the combination of quantitative and qualitative data to avoid the weaknesses that are associated with using either a quantitative or a qualitative approach (Creswell & Clark 2011).

The mixed method design employed in the study is the explanatory sequential design. Discussing the framework of explanatory sequential design, Creswell and Clark (2011) pointed out that this framework involves two phases. These two authors argued that the first phase involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data while the second phase involves gathering qualitative data to explain the quantitative results (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

During the first phase of this study, the researcher distributed the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation and the Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET). During the second phase of the study, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 participants. The data obtained from these interviews enabled the researcher to

explain and understand the quantitative data that were collected during the first phase. In addition, the qualitative data were pertinent to answer the third research question, as this question could not be tackled quantitatively.

### **3.3 The Participants**

To answer the first two research questions, a convenient sample of thirty private schools in one of the major education zones in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi was selected. Aiken (1997) suggested that convenience samples are usually purposive, which means that, besides the relative ease of accessibility, participants also have to possess certain key characteristics that are linked to the purpose of the investigation. The researcher selected 30 private schools that follow different curricula. These schools are located in different geographical areas of one of the major education zones in the UAE.

Due to the nature of the study, the selection of the sample involved two phases. In the first phase, 200 English teachers employed at private schools were selected using convenience sampling to answer the Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET), and the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation. During the second phase of the study, 10 participants were conveniently selected from the pool of 200 participants ( $N=200$ ). The individual interviews with the 10 participants were pertinent to find answers to the third research question. To answer the fourth research question, the researcher used both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the above-mentioned instruments.

### 3.3.1 Description of the Participants

For this research, the population sample consisted of 145 females and 55 males. All participants were English teachers employed at private schools in one of the major education zones in the UAE. The majority of the participants, 62.5%, were relatively new to the teaching field with 1-5 years of experience, 8.5% had 6-10 years of experience, 27% had 11-15 years of experience, and 2% had 16-20 years of teaching experience. As for the participants' qualifications, 42% had bachelor's degrees, 32.5% had diplomas, 17% had master's degrees, and 9% had other types of certifications. The teachers came from different countries such as Pakistan, Syria, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Tunisia, Iraq, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The schools chosen for the study were located in different geographical areas of one of the main education zones in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Furthermore, those schools followed different curricula such as the American, British, Indian, and the UAE Ministry of Education. Based on ADEC's most recent cycle of inspection, five of those schools were banded 'A' which means their performance ranged from good to outstanding, six were banded 'B' which means that their performance was satisfactory, and 19 were band 'C' which means that their performance was weak or very weak (ADEC, 2016).

Information about the participants was organized into tables. Table 1 below presents the participants' gender, Table 2 presents the participants' ages, Table 3 indicates the participants' teaching experience, Table 4 describes the participants' qualifications, and Table 5 distinguishes the grade levels that the participants' teach.

As it can be seen from Table 1 below, the female participants (72.5%) outnumbered the males (27.5 %).

Table 1: Participants' Gender

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	55	27.5 %
Female	145	72.5%
Total	200	100.0%

As indicated in Table 2 below, the age of 31.0 % of the participants ranged between 20 and 29, 46.5 % ranged between 30 and 39, 16.5% ranged between 40-45, (5.5% ranged between 45 and 60, and 5% ranged between 51-60.

Table 2: Participants' Age Information

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-29	62	31.0 %
30-39	93	46.5 %
40-45	33	16.5 %
45-60	11	5.5 %
51-60	1	5%
Total	200	100 %

As Table 3 below reveals, 62.5%, of the participants were relatively new to the teaching field with 1-5 years of experience, 8.5% had 6-10 years of experience, 27% had 11-15 years of experience, and 2% had 16-20 years of experience.

Table 3: Participants' Experience

Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percent
1-5	125	62.5 %
6-10	17	8.5 %
11-15	54	27.0%
16-20	4	2.0%
Total	200	100.0 %

As can be seen from Table 4 below, 42% of the participants held bachelor's degrees, 32 % held diplomas, 17 % hold master's degrees, and 9% possessed other types of degrees or certifications.

Table 4: Participants' Qualifications

Degree	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor	84	42 %
Diploma	64	32 %
Masters	34	17.0 %
Other	18	9.0 %
Total	200	100.0 %

Table 5 below lists the grade levels that participants teach. As can be seen from Table 5, 32 % of the participants taught elementary school, 33.5 % taught middle school, and 34.5 % taught high school.

Table 5: Grade Levels Participants Teach

Degree	Frequency	Percent
Elementary	64	32%
Middle	67	33.5%
High	69	34.5%
Total	200	100.0%

From the pool of participants described above, a group of 10 teachers was conveniently selected to conduct the interviews. Four of those teachers were females and six were males. The participants came from different countries such as Palestine, USA, UK, Pakistan, and Egypt. Below is a description of those participants' profiles.

### 3.3.2 Descriptive Profiles of the Interview Participants

Below is a descriptive profile of the ten participants who took part in the interviews. These participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

1. *Fadi*. Fadi is 39 years old. He is a middle school English teacher with 18 years of teaching experience. He has a bachelor's degree and a graduate certificate. He currently teaches middle school. He is also the head of the English department at a private school that follows the UK curriculum.
2. *Khalid*. Khalid is 40 years old. He has a bachelor's degree. He is a middle school English teacher with 15 years of teaching experience. He is employed at a private school that follows an American curriculum.
3. *Sara*. Sara is 40 years old. She has a bachelor's degree. She is a middle school English teacher with 21 years of teaching experience. She is also the head of

English Department at a private school which follows the Ministry of Education curriculum.

4. *Mona*. Mona is 40 years old. She has a bachelor's degree. She is a high school English teacher with 9 years of teaching experience. She is employed at a private school that follows a Pakistani curriculum.
5. *Saeed*. Saeed is 56 years old. He has a bachelor's degree. He is a middle school English teacher with 25 years of teaching experience. He is employed at a private school that follows an American curriculum.
6. *John*. John is 30 years old. He has a master's degree. He is an elementary school English teacher with 4 years of teaching experience. He is employed at a private school that follows an American curriculum.
7. *Zahra*. Zahra is 38 years old. She has a master's degree. She is a high school English teacher with 12 years of teaching experience. She is the head of the English Department at a private school that follows an American curriculum.
8. *Mariam*. Mariam is 35 years old. She is a high school English teacher with 7 years of teaching experience. She is employed at a private school that follows an American curriculum.
9. *Ali*. Ali is 37 years old. He is a middle English school teacher with 6 years of teaching experience. He has a bachelor degree. He is employed at a private school that follows the Ministry of Education curriculum.
10. *Emad*. Emad is 35 years old. He is a high school English teacher with 4 years of teaching experience. He has a bachelor degree. He is employed at a private school that follows the Ministry of Education Curriculum.

### 3.4 Instrumentation

Due to the nature of the study, the researcher utilized three instruments to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. These instruments included the following: A) Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET), B) Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation, and C) Interviews.

#### A) Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET)

The first part of the questionnaire included Background Information Survey (see Appendix A) which was designed to elicit information from the participants concerning their gender, age, teaching experience, and educational background.

The second part of the questionnaire included the questionnaire (see Appendix B). This questionnaire, which included 29 close-ended items, aimed at gathering quantitative data to answer the first research question about teachers' perceptions towards their professional development. Highlighting the advantages of close-ended questionnaire items, Dörnyei (2003) contended that close-ended items could be easily coded and entered into the computer database. Furthermore, Dörnyei (2003) argued in favor of Likert-type scale because it is "simple, versatile and reliable" (p. 36). Following the suggestions offered by Dörnyei (2003), the researcher designed a Likert-type which included the following scheme: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4= Agree; 5=Strongly Agree. The participants who completed the questionnaires had to express their perceptions towards the following four components of professional development: Efficacy (7 items), Support (6 items), Content (5 items), Context (5 items), and Time (6 items).



To construct the questionnaire items for these categories, the researcher followed the guidelines suggested by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) who contended that in designing items for their questionnaires, researchers should avoid complex questions, leading questions, questions that include double negatives, ambiguous questions, and threatening questions. The authors also emphasized the importance of including specific instructions that explain to the participants what they are expected to do, assuring the participants that their answers are confidential, and familiarizing the participants with the purpose of the research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

#### B) Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation

The second instrument was the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation (see Appendix C) which was used to gather data to answer the second research question regarding the professional development models available for teachers, the professional development models teachers prefer, and teachers' motivations to seek these models. Two of the survey questions required the participants to rank items related to their professional development experiences. Discussing the advantages of ranking questions, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) stated that these types of questions enable the participants to identify priorities and that would help the researcher chart out their preferences. However, these three authors cautioned against including too many items in the ranking question as that might overwhelm the participants. The researchers suggest including 5 items in ranking questions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

The first section of the survey included a list of professional development models and the participants had to rank these models based on their own preferences. The

second section included a list of four professional development models and the participants were invited to check the models that are available in their schools. The third question invited the participants to rank their motives for seeking professional development.

### C) Interview

The third research instrument was the individual interview (Appendix D). The interview questions used in the current study sought to elicit the participants' perceptions regarding the efficacy, content, context, time of professional development, the factors that impeded their participation in professional development, and the types of support that schools provide to encourage these teachers to attend professional development activities. Moreover, the fourth and fifth interview questions gave the participants the opportunity to share whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the professional development opportunities their schools offered and invited them to offer recommendations to improve the quality of these activities. Discussing the advantages of interviews, Cohen et al. (2007) observed that choosing interviews as a research instrument would help the researchers gather data to answer their research questions. The interviews helped the researcher to gather qualitative data to answer the third research question which focused on teachers' views regarding their professional development experience.

The researcher followed the framework suggested by Kvale (2007) for planning and conducting the interviews. The author described seven steps for conducting interview. The first step for conducting interviews involves 'thematizing an interview study'. Kvale (2007) suggested that this stage, which takes place before the actual

interview, involves the formulation of questions and clarifications of the themes that will be explored during the actual interview. Kvale (2007) suggested that this stage also involves the clarification of the purpose of the study as this factor would influence the structure of the interview. To pose questions for the interviews, Kvale (2007) advised that the researcher should be familiar with the content of investigation, not only through going over the literature and related studies but also by immersing himself or herself in the environment where the interviews would be conducted.

The second stage in the model that Kvale (2007) outlined involves ‘designing the interview study’ where the interviewer familiarizes himself or herself with interview techniques and decides which technique to use in order to obtain the intended information. At this stage, the interviewer also decides the number of participants needed to obtain the needed information. Kvale (2007) argued that the number of participants needed depends on the nature of the study. The author added that if the purpose of the interview is to explore attitudes of participants, then the interviewer might conduct interviews until they reach “a point of saturation, where further interviews yield little knowledge” (p.44).

The third stage as highlighted by Kvale (2007) involves conducting the interview. At this stage, the interviewer informs the participants about the purpose of the interview and the recording tools that would be used. At the end of the interview, the author suggested that the interviewer might mention some of the main points he or she learned from the interview. This stage also involves scripting the interview guide which may include a sequence of questions or merely some topics that will be covered during the interview. These questions should be simple and brief. While the

interviewee is responding to these questions, the interviewer should be actively listening and, later, ask for further clarifications to verify the answers given by the interviewee (Kvale, 2007).

The fourth stage involves transcribing the interviews. Kvale (2007) asserted the importance of transcribing the interviews by the interviewer because the social and emotional aspects of the interview would be reawakened during the transcription and that would help the interviewer start the analysis of the interviews during the transcription phase.

The fifth stage involves establishing the reliability and validity of the interviews. Kvale (2007) emphasized the important role that the researcher plays in establishing the validity of the interview by questioning and continually checking the interview findings. As for reliability, Kvale (2007) contended that it is determined by whether the interviewees would give the same answers during the interviews. The final stage involves reporting the interviews where the interviewer chooses the mode of presenting the interview findings.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

The data for this study were collected over a period of two semesters during the academic year 2015-2016. The data collection was done in two major phases. During the first phase, which took place in the Fall semester of the academic year 2015-2016, all participants completed the Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET), and the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation.

The second phase of the data collection was conducted during the spring semester. As suggested by Kvale (2007), the researcher reviewed the related

literature, familiarized herself with interviewing techniques, highlighted the general themes that would be explored, chose the structure of the interview (semi-structured) based on the purpose of the study, and visited the schools where the interviews would be conducted to familiarize herself with their environment.

During the interviews, the researcher complied with recommendations offered by Kvale (1996) which include defining the purpose of the interview, keeping the conversation moving forward, asking questions that would help the researcher gather the intended data, motivating the interviewee (through appropriate verbal and nonverbal feedback) to express their opinions, using active listening, allowing participants' time to express their opinions, and checking the reliability and validity of the responses by summarizing the participants' points .

The participants were interviewed individually depending on their availability. All 10 interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded for data purposes. Since the data collected from the interviews were pertinent to the research findings, the researcher tried to conduct the interviews in a systematic manner.

Following the recommendations suggested by Kvale (2007), the participants who took part in the current study were aware of the purpose of the study, and they were also assured that the information they provided would remain confidential. Furthermore, the researcher listened to the interviewees carefully, paraphrased and summarized what she heard in order to ensure that she carefully understood the information they provided. Later, the researcher shared a copy of the interview transcription with the participants (Araneta, 2010). The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed and coded for relevant themes

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Since the data for the study was gathered from quantitative (Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers and the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation), and qualitative (interviews) instruments, a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses were used to find answers to the four main questions that guided the study.

#### A. Analysis of the Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET)

The first part of the PDQET was analyzed using basic descriptive statistics. This data were analyzed in three tables. Table 1 indicated the participants' gender, Table 2 presented the participants' age information, and Table 3 presented the participants' years of teaching experience, Table 4 presented the participants' qualifications, and Table 5 distinguished the grade levels the participants taught. In addition, brief descriptive narratives were used to create a profile of the ten interviewees who participated in the second phase of the study. These profiles included information about the interviewees' ages, grade levels they teach, qualifications, and the type of curriculum their schools followed.

The data retrieved from PDQET was analyzed using descriptive data. The Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) was used to perform the descriptive statistics. The mean of each of the professional development categories as well as standard deviation were calculated to assess the results. The minimum score of each of the questionnaire items was 1 (Strongly Disagree) and the maximum score was 5 (Strongly Agree). The data were summarized into ten tables. Table 7 included the means and standard deviations of all the questionnaire items while Table 8 presented

the means and standard deviations of all the questionnaire categories. Moreover, Table 9, Table 10, Table 11, Table 12, and Table 13 included the means and standard deviations of the Efficacy, Content, Context, Time and Support categories respectively.

#### B. Analysis of the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation

The descriptive statistics including the frequency, the rank and the percentages of the participants' responses were calculated and organized into tables. Table 14 and Table 15 presented the results related to the professional development models available in schools and the models preferred by teachers. Finally, Table 16 presented the data related to teachers' motives to seek professional development.

#### C. Analysis of the Interviews

To analyze the interviews, the researcher followed the guidelines offered by Kvale (2007) who suggested six steps for interview analysis. During the first step, the participants describe what they experience and feel in relation to the topic of the study. The second step is when the participants start to see meanings during the interview without the interviewer's intervention. In the third step, the interviewer "condenses" and "interprets" the meaning of what the interviewee says and gives the latter the opportunity to confirm or modify the researcher's interpretations.

In the fourth stage, the interviewer transcribes the interviews and analyzes the recorded interview. In the fifth stage, the interviewer gives the interpretations back to the interviewees who get a second chance to review the interpretations and even "elaborate on their own original statements as a form of membership validation" (Kvale, 2007 p.103). Kvale (2007) suggested a possible sixth step where the

interviewee gains new insights based on the new knowledge that was gleaned from the interviews.

In this study, the researcher followed the steps suggested by Kvale (2007) to analyze the interviews. First, the researcher gave the participants the opportunity to express their perceptions towards their professional development experiences. The types of questions that the researcher asked such as “In what ways does professional development impact your profession?” and “What are the factors that hinder your participation in PD?” enabled the interviewees to reflect on their professional development experiences and gain new insights. Throughout the interviews, the researcher made sure she summarized the participants’ points and gave them the opportunity to confirm or disconfirm the researchers’ interpretations of their perspectives. In the fourth stage, the researcher transcribed and analyzed the recorded interviews. The researcher invited a panel of experts to help find the emerging themes. The panel of four experts applied the meaning condensation method suggested by Kvale (2007) by going over the transcriptions to get a sense of the whole meaning of those interviews. Moreover, the researcher looked for key phrases that were recurrent in the interviews across all the participants. Some of the key phrases that were repeated were ‘excessive workload’, ‘no incentives’, ‘lack of time’, ‘update my knowledge skills’, and ‘financial reward’. Then the researcher thematized the statements. The essential themes were tied together into a descriptive statement (Kvale, 2007). In the fifth stage, the researcher emailed the interview transcriptions back to the interviewees and invited them to comment on the accuracy of the researchers’ interpretations of the responses they gave during the interviews.



The interviewees confirmed that the researchers' transcriptions and analyses were accurate.

### **3.7 Instrument Validity**

The researcher established the validity of research instruments used in the study. In this study, the researcher triangulated the data by employing the questionnaire and interview as research instruments in order to find answers to the research questions. Discussing the issue of validity, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010) contended that researchers can establish the validity of the results by employing the technique of triangulation validity to look for convergence in their research findings.

The validity of the instruments was established in this study. Discussing the content validity of an instrument, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) pointed out the researcher may ask a group of specialists in the area to review the instrument and approve it. Following these recommendations, the researcher established the validity of the questionnaire by presenting it to a panel of specialists at United Arab Emirates University. The panel comprised of five faculty members from the College of Education (Dr. Sadiq Abdulwahed Ismail, Dr. Mohamad Shaban, Dr. Adeeb Jarrah, Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Mekhlafi, and Dr. Ali Ibrahim ).

The feedback obtained from the panel was carefully examined in order to make the necessary modifications to the original questionnaire. The panel suggested the following modifications to the original questionnaire: changing the questionnaire's rating scale as the original one was too complicated, rewriting some of the items to make the sentence structure more simple, deleting some irrelevant items and replacing them with new ones that are more relevant to the purpose of the study, and merging some of the items together. The panel also made suggestions to

make the questionnaire more clear for the participants. For example, in the first version of the questionnaire, one of the items read as follows: "I am given ample time to master the new strategies I learned before moving to new ones." One of the panel members commented on this item by saying, "Do not take it for granted that because your sample includes English teachers that all of them know the meaning of the word *ample*." Hence, the researcher replaced the word 'ample' with 'enough' in order to avoid any confusion on the part of the participants.

A meeting between the researcher and her advisor was held to revise the questionnaire based on the feedback given by the reviewers. Later, the modified version was given to ten English teachers to double check the clarity of the language used to phrase the questionnaire items. Finally, the researcher read over the questionnaire to ensure the accuracy of the content and the language of the questionnaire items. Some minor changes were applied to make the questionnaire clear and user-friendly.

The validity of the interview questions was also established. A panel from the college of education (Dr. Ali Ibrahim, Dr. Negmeldin Alsheikh, and Dr. Mohammad Shaban) revised the interview questions. One of the areas for improvement that the panel suggested was to delete one of the questions as it overlapped with another. Another suggestion was to avoid including too many points in the same question. For example, one of the questions in the original interview read as follows: "In your opinion, what constitutes an exemplary professional development experience in terms of resources, time, content and context?" One of the faculty members advised the researcher to divide this question into sub-questions in order to make the question clear to the interviewees and , thus, avoid any possible misunderstanding.

Furthermore, Kvale (2007) pointed out that establishing the validity of the interviews involved the continuous checking of the responses. During the interviews, the researcher made sure she summarized the interviewee's points before proceeding to another point. This helped the researcher make sure that she did not misunderstand or exclude any of the ideas offered by the interviewees. This also helped the researcher establish the reliability of the interviews because the continuous checking of the accuracy of the responses offered by the participants implied that those interviewees would mostly likely going to give the same response if asked the interview questions again.

### **3.8 The Pilot Study**

Piloting the research instruments is a crucial step to ensure the validity of research instruments. The piloting process would help the researcher refine the research instruments (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). The researcher piloted both the interview questions as well as the questionnaire in order to make the necessary changes to those instruments.

To pilot the questionnaire, the researcher distributed 10 copies of the questionnaire to English teachers who work at private schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The participants completed the questionnaires and then informed the researcher whether they found the questionnaire items clear or confusing. Piloting the questionnaire yielded several advantages. Discussing the advantages of piloting, Dahlberg and McCaig (2010) reported that this process would help the researcher ensure that the questionnaire items are clearly worded. In addition, Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) suggested that piloting the study allows 'fresh eyes' to comment on its clarity. The researcher carefully read the suggestions provided by the

participants in order to check what adjustments were necessary to improve the questionnaire.

Besides piloting the questionnaire, the researcher conducted one pilot interview with a male teacher employed at a private school in the selected education zone. Through piloting the interview, the researcher aimed at making sure that the wording of the interview questions was clear. The researcher also wanted to observe her own performance during the interviews. After conducting and transcribing the interview, the researcher evaluated her own behavior in relation to the guide suggested by Magnusson and Marecek (2015) who emphasized that researchers should observe their style and manner, scrutinize their ways of prompting, observe their pace of asking, and noting whether they have a tendency to agree or sympathize with the participants. Piloting the interview turned out to be invaluable for the study.

During the post-review reflection phase, the researcher listened to recordings and transcribed key information. During this phase, the researcher noticed that, due to the time restrictions, she was sometimes cutting off the participant who took part in the pilot interview as he was making a critical point and that prevented him from fully articulating his ideas. The researcher also noticed that the participant was totally clear about the term 'context' as it related to the study. Therefore, the researcher decided to schedule one meeting at a time with the interviewees instead of squeezing all the interviews in one session in order to make sure that the participants had ample time to respond to the interview questions. In addition, the researcher made sure, during the interviews that took place later, that she allowed the participants ample time to fully express their ideas before she moved to the next question. The researcher also made sure she explained the meaning of the words that might be

unfamiliar to the participants before she gave them the chance to respond to those questions in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

The aim of the pilot study was to make sure the questionnaire items were clear. Moreover, piloting the interview with one participant highlighted some of the issues that might have affected the validity of the data retrieved from those interviews. Hence, piloting the questionnaire and the interviews helped increase the validity of those instruments and limited the chances of misunderstanding.

### **3.9 Instrument Reliability**

The issue of reliability was also addressed in the study. The researcher used SPSS to identify Cronbach's Alpha reliability degree of significance. This process was important to stand at the degree of the reliability of participants' responses to judge the consistency of their answers and rubrics. Dörnyei (2003) stated that internal consistency reliability is measured by the coefficient “between zero and +1” (p.112). The author added that the internal consistency of attitude scales should approach 0.80. Therefore, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients were calculated to measure the internal consistency reliability of this questionnaire. The results showed that the internal reliability of the questionnaire was .87 which indicated a high degree of reliability. The means of the categories ranged between .79 and .88 as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

Category	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Efficacy Category	.88	7
Support Category	.83	6
Content Category	.83	5
Context Category	.81	5
Time Category	.79	6
All items	.87	29

As for the interviews, the researcher tried to achieve their reliability in two ways. First, the researcher followed the guidelines offered by Conway, Jako, and Goodman (1995) who reported that researchers can minimize reliability problems through conducting one-to-one interviews and using structured questions. These three authors also suggested the reliability tends to be higher when the interviewer is trained in the interview process and learns how to avoid biases (Conway, Jako & Goodman, 1995). The researcher followed these guidelines during the interview process. First, the researcher conducted a pilot interview to reflect on her performance and whether she was expressing her personal opinion. Moreover, the researcher conducted individual interviews with the using semi-structured interview protocol. Finally, the techniques that were utilized during the interview such as paraphrasing the questions and summarizing the participants' main points ensured to a certain extent that participants would give similar answers in case they were asked the same questions again.

### **3.10 Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection procedures included two phases. During the first phase, that researcher obtained a formal request from the College of Education in order to initiate the data collection process. This request along with a brief description of the study, a copy of the questionnaire, and other official documents were sent to ADEC via their official website. Then, the researcher followed up with the research department at ADEC and provided them with all the documents they requested. It took the research department seven weeks to issue the approval letter.

After obtaining the ADEC approval letter (See Appendix H), the researcher prepared a letter to the targeted private schools in which she explained the purpose of the study. Soon after, the researcher visited a total number of 30 private schools in one of the major education zones in the UAE to administer the questionnaires. The researcher distributed 200 copies of Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers which also included the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation. To ensure confidentiality, the participants were provided with envelopes in order to seal their questionnaires upon their completion.

The first phase of the data collection procedure took about 2 months as several impediments delayed the researchers' collection of data. These problems included the lack of cooperation from some school administrators who often forgot to distribute the questionnaires, the misplacement of the questionnaires by the teachers, and even the refusal of some coordinators to distribute the questionnaires giving the pretext that the teachers are very busy or that they have not initiated real professional development programs yet.

During the data collection procedure, the researcher followed up with the authorized school personnel by phone to make sure teachers got ample time to respond to the questionnaires. After the 200 questionnaires were returned, the participants' responses were coded to fit the answers in the SPSS software.

The second phase of the study involved conducting the interviews. The interviews took place during the second term of the academic year 2015-2016. The researcher visited several private schools and asked the heads of department to contact English teachers who were willing to participate in the interviews. Before the interviews were carried out, the researcher clarified the aim of the study and invited the participants to sign a consent form. The researcher assured these participants that their responses would remain confidential. The researcher conducted the interviews by using an audio-recorder. Right after the interviews were conducted, the researcher transcribed the interviews and made sure she included the verbal pauses and reactions of the teachers to maintain the spirit of those interviews.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

The ethical principles were addressed in the study. The researcher complied with the principles of research ethics that were highlighted by scholars Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010). As suggested by these three scholars, the participants who completed the questionnaires for this study were aware that their participation in the study was voluntary. The opening statements of the questionnaires explained the purpose of the questionnaire and highlighted its importance to the study in general. Furthermore, Hesse-Biber and Leavy, (2010) maintained that the researcher should assure the participants that their names would remain confidential and that only the



researcher would have access to their data. Following these principles, the researcher made sure that the participants' personal information like their full name or where they were employed remained confidential. Moreover, the participants were provided with sealed envelopes along with the questionnaires in order to make sure that no one looks at their responses.

In addition, the researcher provided the participants who took part in the interviews with an informed consent letter to sign. Discussing the importance of the informed consent letter, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010) noted, "Informed consent is a question of basic human rights; it is intended to safeguard participants from any mental or physical harm that might befall them as a result of their participation" (p.64). For this research, the informed consent letter given to the participants explained the purpose of the research and assured the participants that their confidentiality would be respected. To further ensure confidentiality, each of the participants was given a pseudonym to conceal his/her true identity. No one other than the researcher had access to the data retrieved from the questionnaires or the interviews.

### **3.12 Summary**

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of English teachers in the UAE regarding their professional development experiences. To achieve the aim of the research, the researcher conveniently selected 200 participants who teach in various private schools in one of the major education zones in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. The study employed a mixed method approach to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were retrieved from the Questionnaire on

Teachers' Perceptions as well as the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation. The data retrieved from the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation and questionnaire were analyzed descriptively with the help of the SPSS software. To collect the qualitative data, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 participants who were also conveniently selected from the pool of participants that completed the questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaires and interview questions was established by consulting a panel of experts from the College of Education at United Arab Emirates University. The data retrieved from these interviews were analyzed thematically with the help of a panel of experts.

## Chapter 4: Results

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study which was conducted to explore the essence of the professional development in the UAE from the perspectives of English teachers in private schools. A mixed-method research design was employed to answer the following four research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of English teachers in the UAE towards their professional development?
2. What are the perceptions of English teachers in private schools in the UAE regarding PD models?
  - a. What professional development models are available to English teachers in private schools?
  - b. What professional development models do English teachers in private schools prefer?
  - c. What motivates teachers in private schools in the UAE to participate in models?
3. How do English teachers in private schools in the UAE view their professional development experience?
4. Is there any variation among the UAE English Teachers' self-report and their views regarding their professional development?

This chapter documents the quantitative and qualitative data collected through the questionnaire, survey, and the semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire were used to answer the first questions about the teachers' perceptions towards their professional development

experiences. The data retrieved from the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation were used to answer the second research questions regarding the professional development models schools offer, models teachers personally prefer, and the factors that would motivate them to participate in those models. These data were presented in the form of tables followed by a detailed description of the results.

The qualitative data, which was retrieved from interviews with 10 English teachers, were used to answer the third research question about how English teachers view their professional development experience. This qualitative data will be presented in themes and core ideas. The researcher used the data retrieved from both the questionnaires and the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation to answer the fourth research question which explored whether there was any variation among the UAE English Teachers' self-report and their views regarding their professional development.

## **4.2 Results**

A) Results of Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of English teachers in private schools in the UAE towards their professional development?

To answer this question, the means of all the questionnaire items were calculated, the means of all the questionnaire categories were calculated and ranked, and a detailed analysis of each of the professional development categories was conducted.

Table 7 below presents the descriptive analysis of all the items included in the Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers. As seen in Table 7

below, the mean of all the questionnaire categories is ( $M= 3.39$ ). The questionnaire five items with the highest scores are as follows: “I feel motivated to practice the new skills I learnt during the PD activities” ( $M=4.03$ ); “PD deepen my subject matter knowledge and enhance my classroom skills” ( $M=3.94$ ); “I prefer to attend PD activities that take place during the school day” ( $M=3.92$ ); “PD activities equip me with new practices” ( $M=3.88$ ), and “I feel that my students are more engaged after applying the skills I learnt during PD activities” ( $M=3.73$ ). It is obvious from Table 7 that 4 of the 5 items with the highest scores belong to the Efficacy category. The means of the first five items ranged from ( $M=4.03$ ) to ( $M= 3.73$ ).

The five items with the lowest scores are as follows: “My school offers incentives for attending PD”; “My school offers a teaching load reduction to teachers who are involved in coaching responsibilities”; “I am able to meet my family obligations even when PD takes place after school hours”; “My school gives me the opportunity to choose the best suitable time for PD” and “The PD presenters take my background and learning styles into account.” It is clear from Table 7 that 2 of the 5 items with the lowest scores belong to the Time category and two belong to the Support category while one belongs to the Content category. The means of these items ranged from ( $M= 2.42$ ) to ( $M=2.98$ ).

Table 7: Whole Questionnaire

Statement	M	SD
<b>1. I feel motivated to practice the new skills I learnt during the PD activities.</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>1.015</b>
<b>2. PD deepen my subject matter knowledge and enhance my classroom skills.</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>1.101</b>
<b>3. I prefer to attend during school day PD activities (e.g. coaching).</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>0.981</b>
<b>4. PD activities equip me with new practices.</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>1.002</b>
<b>5. I feel my students are more engaged after applying the skills I learnt during PD activities.</b>	<b>3.73</b>	<b>1.007</b>
6. The pedagogical and content knowledge of the PD are of great help to me.	3.73	0.965
7. Off-site PD activities make my learning experience more productive and memorable	3.72	1.003
8. The PD activities I attend have a positive impact on my students' achievements.	3.71	1.011
9. I feel more confident in my abilities as a teacher after participating in PD activities.	3.69	1.024
10. PD activities take place in well-equipped rooms (e.g air-conditioning technology).	3.65	1.12
11. PD activities are relevant to my daily teaching practices.	3.63	1.025
12. The setting where PD activities are conducted is convenient to me.	3.57	1.04
13. Onsite PD activities (i.e. coaching) are more effective than workshops.	3.52	1.08
14. The PD environment encourages interaction among teachers.	3.47	1.102
15. I can balance between my teaching responsibilities and PD participations.	3.45	1.06
16. The school supports me as a provider and initiator for PD activities.	3.4	1.098
17. I am given enough time to master the new strategies I learnt before moving to new ones.	3.3	1.059
18. I am offered refreshments, breakfast/lunch during long PD events.	3.28	1.292
19. My school creates a culture of collective learning to sustain PD activities.	3.26	1.037
20. The PD timing is convenient for me.	3.26	1.13
21. My school provides feedback/ coaching after each PD activity.	3.24	1.135
22. My school takes my suggestions for the PD topics into consideration.	3.21	1.127
23. My school provides a substitute teacher to cover my	3.16	1.335

classes during my PD sessions.		
24. I am asked to suggest topics for the PD activities that are planned.	3.13	1.217
<b>25. The PD presenters take my background and learning styles into account.</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>1.203</b>
<b>26. My school gives me the choice to select the suitable time for PD activities.</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>1.218</b>
<b>27. I am able to meet my family obligations even when PD takes place after school hours.</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>1.193</b>
<b>28. My school offers a teaching load reduction to teachers who become involved in coaching.</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>1.28</b>
<b>29. My school offers incentives (e.g. financial bonus) for attending PD.</b>	<b>2.42</b>	<b>1.331</b>
<b>Overall Mean Average</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>1.14</b>

Table 8 below presents the means and standard deviations of the professional development categories. As seen in Table 8, the Efficacy category came first with a mean ( $M=3.78$ ). The Context category came second ( $M=3.53$ ) followed by the Content category ( $M=3.33$ ). The Time category came fourth ( $M=3.29$ ) while the Support category came last ( $M=3.05$ ).

Table 8: Questionnaire Categories

Category	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Efficacy	3.78	1.05
Context	3.53	1.06
Content	3.33	1.05
Time	3.29	1.67
Support	3.05	.981
<b>Categories Average Mean</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>1.14</b>

Table 9 below indicates the means and standard deviations of the items related to teachers' perceptions towards the Efficacy of PD. The average mean of this category is ( $M= 3.78$ ). The means of the items in this category ranged between ( $M=4.03$ ) and ( $M=3.52$ ). The items of this category included the following: "I feel motivated to practice the new skills I learnt during the PD activities"; "PD opportunities deepen my subject matter knowledge and enhance my classroom skills"; "PD activities equip me with new practices"; "I feel that my students are more engaged after applying the skills I learnt during PD activities"; "The PD activities I attend have a positive impact on my students' achievements"; "I feel more confident about my abilities as a teacher after participating in PD activities"; "Onsite PD activities (e.g. coaching) are more effective than workshops."



Table 9: Efficacy of PD

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. I feel motivated to practice the new skills I learnt during the PD activities.	4.03	1.02
2. PD opportunities deepen my subject matter knowledge and enhance my classroom skills.	3.94	1.10
3. PD activities equip me with new practices.	3.88	1.00
4. I feel that my students are more engaged after applying the skills I learnt during PD activities.	3.73	1.01
5. The PD activities I attend have a positive impact on my students' achievements.	3.71	1.01
6. I feel more confident about my abilities as a teacher after participating in PD activities.	3.69	1.02
7. Onsite PD activities (e.g. coaching) are more effective than workshops.	3.52	1.08
<b>Efficacy Average Mean</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>1.05</b>

Table 10 below shows the mean of teachers' perceptions towards the context of professional development. As shown in Table 10, the Context category had the second highest average mean ( $M=3.53$ ) and came second after the category related to the Efficacy of PD. This category included the following items: "Attending off-site PD activities can make a learning experience more productive and memorable"; "PD activities take place in well-equipped schoolrooms (e.g. air conditioning, technology, chairs, light)"; "The setting where PD activities are conducted is convenient to me"; "The PD environment activities take place encourages interaction among teachers" and "I am offered refreshments, breakfast/lunch during long PD events."

Table 10: Context of PD

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Attending off-site PD activities can make a learning experience more productive and memorable.	3.72	1.00
2. PD activities take place in well-equipped schoolroom.	3.65	1.12
3. The setting where PD activities are conducted is convenient to me.	3.57	1.04
4. The PD environment encourages interaction among teachers.	3.47	1.10
5. I am offered refreshments, breakfast/lunch during long PD events.	3.28	1.29
<b>Context Average Mean</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>1.06</b>

Table 11 below indicates teachers' perceptions towards the content of the professional development. As seen in Table 11, the mean of this category was ( $M=3.33$ ) and the means of all the items ranged between ( $M=3.73$ ) and ( $M=2.98$ ). The items covered in this category were as follows: "The pedagogical and content knowledge of the PD activities are helpful"; "PD activities are relevant to my daily teaching practices"; "My school takes my suggestions for the PD topics into consideration"; "I am asked to suggest topics for the PD activities that are planned" and "The PD presenters take my background and learning styles into account."

Table 11: Content of PD

Statement	M	SD
1. The pedagogical and content knowledge of the PD activities are helpful.	3.73	.965
2. PD activities are relevant to my daily teaching practices.	3.63	1.03
3. My school takes my suggestions for the PD topics into consideration.	3.21	1.13
4. I am asked to suggest topics for the PD activities that are planned.	3.13	1.13
5. The PD presenters take my background and learning styles into account.	2.98	1.20
<b>Content Average Mean</b>	<b>3.33</b>	<b>1.05</b>

The fourth category is related to teachers' perceptions towards the time of the professional development. As seen in Table 12, the mean of teachers' perceptions towards the time of the professional development is ( $M=3.29$ ). The average means of the items ranged between ( $M=3.92$ ) and ( $M=2.87$ ). The item with the highest score is "Attending PD activities (e.g. coaching; peer observation) that take place during the school day" with a mean ( $M=3.92$ ). The item with the lowest mean in this category was the following: "I am able to meet my family obligations even when PD takes place after school hours."

Table 12: Time of PD

Statement	M	SD
1. I prefer to attend PD activities (e.g. coaching; peer observation) that take place during the school day.	3.92	.981
2. I can balance between my teaching responsibilities and PD participations .	3.45	1.06
3. I am given enough time to master the new strategies I learned before moving to new ones	3.30	1.06
4. The PD timing is a convenient time for me.	3.26	1.13
5. My school gives me the opportunity to choose the best suitable time for PD activities.	2.88	1.21
6. I am able to meet my family obligations even when PD takes place after school hours.	2.87	1.19
<b>Time Average Mean</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>1.67</b>

The fifth category is related to teachers' perceptions towards the support that their schools offer to motivate them to seek PD. Table 13 below shows that the average mean of the Support category was ( $M=3.05$ ) and the means of all the items ranged between ( $M=3.40$ ) and ( $M=2.42$ ). The items included in this category are the following: "The school supports me as a provider and initiator of PD activities"; "My school offers a teaching load reduction to teachers who are involved in coaching responsibilities"; "My school provides a substitute teacher to my classes during my PD sessions"; "My school provides feedback/coaching after each PD activity"; "My school has created a culture of collective learning to sustain the results of PD activities" and "My school offers incentives (e.g. financial bonus) for attending PD.

Table 13: School Support of PD

Statement	M	SD
1. The school supports me as a provider and initiator of PD activities.	3.40	1.10
2. My school has created a culture of collective learning to sustain the results of PD activities.	3.26	1.04
3. My school provides feedback/ coaching after each PD activity.	3.24	1.14
4. My school provides a substitute teacher to cover my classes when I attend professional activities.	3.16	1.34
5. My school offers a teaching load reduction to teachers who are involved in coaching responsibilities.	2.75	1.28
6. My school offers incentives (e.g. financial bonus) for attending PD.	2.42	1.33
<b>School Support Average Mean</b>	<b>3.05</b>	<b>.981</b>

To sum up, the results that answered the first research question about the English teachers' perceptions in the UAE towards their professional development experiences were presented in Table 8 through Table 14. The category with the highest mean was the Efficacy of PD ( $M=3.78$ ) followed by the Context of PD ( $M=3.53$ ) and then the Content of PD ( $M=3.33$ ) and the Time of PD ( $M=3.29$ ). The category with the lowest score was related to the school Support ( $M=3.05$ ). The item with the highest score was "I feel motivated to practice the new skills I learnt during the PD activities" with a mean ( $M=4.03$ ) while the item with the lowest response was "My school offers incentives (e.g. financial bonus) for attending PD" with a mean ( $M=2.42$ ).

B) Results of Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of English teachers in private schools in the UAE regarding PD models?

- a. What professional development models are available to English teachers in private schools in the UAE?
- b. What professional development models do English teachers in private schools in the UAE prefer?
- c. What motivates teachers in private schools in the UAE to participate in PD models?

The data collected to respond to part (a) of the second research question are shown in Table 14 below. As we can see, “Workshops/Training Activities” are the most prevalent models in schools (53.5%). The second most applied model (19.5%) is the “Peer Observation” model. The “Mentoring” model came third (16%) followed by the “Study groups” (11%).

Table 14: PD Models Most Applied

PD Model	Number	Percent
1. Workshops	107	53.5%
2. Peer Observation	39	19.5%
3. Mentoring	32	16%
4. Study Groups	22	11%
Total	200	100%

The data presented in Table (15) below provided the answer to part (b) of the second research question. As we can see from Table (16) below,

“Workshops/Training Activities” are the professional development models most preferred by teachers (42%) followed by “Peer Observation” (22%). “Study groups” came third (19%) followed by “Mentoring” (17%). The data presented in Table (16) below provided the answer to part (c) of the second research question which is related to teachers’ motivations to seek professional development opportunities. As we can see from Table (16) below, the main motive that motivates teachers to seek PD is to “enhance their instructional practices”, the second motive is to “equip themselves with the latest in the field”, and the third motive is to “enhance their students’ learning”. The fourth motive is to “receive a raise/promotion” followed by the fifth motive “to impress my principal.”

Table 15: PD Models Most Preferred

PD Model	Number	Percentage
1. Workshops/Training	84	42%
2. Peer Observation	44	22%
3. Study Groups	38	19%
4. Mentoring	34	17%
Total	200	100%

Table 16: Ranking of Teachers' Motives

Teachers' Motive	Frequency	Percentage
1. To enhance my instructional abilities	75	37.5%
2. To equip myself with the latest in the field	60	30%
3. To enhance my students' learning	56	28%
4. To receive a raise/ a promotion	6	3%
5. To impress my principal	3	1.5%
Total	200	100%

D) Results of Research Question 3: How do English teachers in private schools in the UAE view their professional development experience?

The third research question focused on teachers' perceptions towards professional development, the benefits of participating in PD, and the challenges that teachers faced when seeking professional development or implementing the strategies they learnt during professional development events. To gather data to answer this question, 10 interviews were carried out to explore the teachers' perceptions in depth. The interview questions included general and specific questions related to the teachers' perceptions towards professional development, the opportunities that were gleaned from participating in professional development activities, the impediments that teachers face when seeking PD.

Qualitative data were collected through interviewing 10 English teachers employed in different private schools in one of the major education zones in the UAE. The researcher contacted the school administrators in order to schedule



interviews with teachers who were willing to participate in the study. The administrators scheduled the interviews during teachers' breaks. A semi-structured interview protocol was employed to interview the 10 teachers. The researcher, along with a panel of English language teachers, looked for emerging themes.

Four major themes surfaced from the interviews and those themes provided a framework for reporting the perspectives of English teachers towards their professional development. The themes that emerged were as follows: Awareness of the Efficacy of professional development, importance of school support, the importance of the context of professional development, and the challenges for teachers' pursuit of professional development.

#### 1. Awareness of the Efficacy of Professional Development

An analysis of the transcriptions revealed that English teachers are aware of the crucial role that professional development plays in updating their skills and enhancing their knowledge. All 10 interviewees discussed the importance of professional development in keeping them up-to-date with new research on how their students learn, emerging educational technologies, strategies to make the classroom more vibrant, new approaches for classroom management, and new curriculum resources. Here are is an extract of how Sara perceived her professional development experiences:

Sara: Professional Development keeps me updated with the latest in the field. I have been teaching for twenty-one years. I feel that I need to acquire new skills that are essential to address my students' needs. For example, my students are high tech, so I need to develop my ICT skills to stay informed with what's going on in the world. Professional development also equips me with diverse strategies and this makes me feel more confident. After PD, I feel I can deal with any situation in the classroom and meet with each student's needs.

Despite these positive perceptions towards PD, three of the interviewed teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the professional development activities offered at their schools. Although the three teachers were aware of the pivotal role that professional development plays in their professional growth, they believed that the professional development at their schools does not meet their needs. Those teachers confided that the professional development activities they have taken part in so far are basically theoretical. They looked for professional development activities that can be applied in their classrooms.

The following comment offered by Fadi was typical of the sentiments expressed by three of the teachers during the interviews.

Fadi: I am not pleased with the professional development offered by my school. Some of the workshops conducted at my school take the form of a lecture. I prefer to learn by doing. I would also like to enhance my ICT skills but this does not always happen. In fact, my school sometimes uses PD sessions to get the staff to complete secretarial and clerical tasks. As a teacher, I think this is exploiting the value and potential of PD. This leads me as a teacher to feel demotivated despite the fact that I am motivated to seek PD opportunities.

To summarize the first theme, teachers acknowledged the importance of PD in fostering their skills and shared examples of effective PD opportunities they were involved in. Nevertheless, 3 interviewees expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of PD their schools offered. Some of the factors that contributed to teachers' dissatisfaction were as follow: the lack of qualified presenters who would help them

transfer the knowledge into concrete classroom practices, using PD time to complete secretarial work, and the lack of follow-up and coaching after PD.

## 2. Importance of School Support

An analysis of the interview transcriptions revealed that the school support is essential to encourage teachers to pursue PD. One important aspect of school support that teachers reported was the availability of financial rewards and verbal encouragement. Nine of the interviewees disclosed that they were not offered tangible incentives to pursue PD. The only interviewee who claimed that he received a financial bonus was Fadi who discussed how his school provides teachers who complete PD with financial rewards. The following excerpt provides Fadi's reflection on the important role that incentives play in raising his motivation levels as a teacher.

Fadi: When we complete a certain number of hours, our school offers us a financial bonus. This motivates me to seek professional development opportunities. It's not just about the money; it is the feeling that my school principal acknowledges my hard work.

On the other hand, the other nine teachers reported that they do not receive any financial rewards for attending PD. Those teachers were clearly frustrated at the current situation at their schools as they believed that it signifies that their administration does not appreciate their hard work. In the following two examples, two teachers express their bitterness at the current situation. Here is what Emad and

Saeed disclosed:

Emad: We need financial rewards and not just certificates or mugs. I have tons of certificates. Once the school administration wanted to reward some students, so they gave each one of them 500 dirhams. On the same day,

they rewarded the teachers by giving them mugs. I think I should deposit the mug in the bank (his tone changes from sarcasm to frustration). The administrators do not care about teachers. They can replace them at any time. As teachers we need real incentives such as a financial raise. This would definitely motivate us to attend PD.

Saeed: We receive nothing for attending PD. Money makes miracles. You can tell teachers that they should be intrinsically motivated to seek professional development and that they should love professional development. Yes, I love to grow as a teacher but this love cannot support my son, my daughter, my family. I have been saying that for more than fifteen years and no one has listened to me so far (shows signs of indifference).

In the following example, Mariam speaks enthusiastically about the pertinent role that incentives play in enhancing teacher motivation. Mariam compares teachers to students who need to be motivated regularly in order to perform at their best. Mariam also emphasizes the importance of verbal feedback in boosting teachers' motivation. Mariam had the following to say:

Mariam: Verbal encouragement gives us a sense of job satisfaction (shows signs of excitement). Think of students, if you have a student who does his best and there is no recognition for his work, he will feel disappointed and will stop putting his best effort. If you give a positive feedback, he will work harder. When you encourage students, they become more innovative. The same thing applies to teachers.

### 3. The Importance of the Context of Professional Development

An analysis of teachers' transcriptions revealed that all 10 interviewees believe that context of the professional development plays a key role in shaping their perceptions towards professional development. Teachers explored different aspects of context during the interviews. Some of these teachers talked about the key role that the presenters play while others discussed the importance of establishing a convenient context in facilitating teachers' absorption of the ideas.

In the following excerpt, Emad illustrates the important role that the context of professional development plays in facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills to teachers' classrooms.

Emad: I believe that several factors play a major role in professional development. One of these factors is that the environment where PD takes place should be convenient. I once attended a professional development training session but I couldn't understand anything because there was no air conditioning and the sound system was of poor quality. I was bored (shows signs of frustration) and ended up playing games on my phone. Another factor is the need for refreshments especially if the PD session is long. We are not offered any refreshments or food during professional development activities. Offering us a small piece of chocolate would make help us regain our energy. Another important factor is the charisma of the presenter who is leading the training session.

In the following excerpt, Mariam discusses how her school has created a professional learning community where colleagues exchange ideas and best practices through job-embedded professional development activities.

Mariam: Going to my colleagues' classrooms has helped me a lot. It has given me the opportunity to learn from my colleagues. I love to learn from my colleagues because the ideas they suggest and strategies they implement are relevant to my school context. I have one colleague who comes to my class on a weekly basis and we co-teach the lesson. I also plan my lessons with colleagues who teach the same grade level. We also share activities. My school leader demands and encourages this collegial collaboration. PD is embedded in our weekly schedules.

To summarize, the data retrieved from the interviews revealed that teachers are aware that professional development plays a critical role in developing their practices and updating their knowledge. The semi-structured interviews revealed that most teachers were generally satisfied with their professional development experiences despite the issues that had to be addressed to make these experiences

more meaningful such selecting the suitable time for professional development, hiring qualified presenters, planning coaching and follow-up sessions to help teachers implement the new strategies they learn in their classrooms, and offering teachers incentives to seek professional development opportunities.

#### 4. Challenges for Teachers' Pursuit of Professional Development

An analysis of participants' transcripts revealed that two major challenges often impede their pursuit of professional development which are lack of time and lack of qualified professional development leaders. As for the lack of time, all ten interviewees reported that lack of time was a major factor that impeded their pursuit of professional development. The participants discussed how their workload and school duties prevented them from visiting their peers' classes or conducting educational research. Teachers disclosed that their duties did not just include teaching but also extended to include covering their colleagues' classes when they were absent and supervising students during the break. Therefore, as one of the teachers put it, "I wait for the free period to rest." Four of the interviewees were teachers and heads of department who had to conduct administrative duties besides their teaching responsibilities. Those heads reported that they were struggling to find time to meet all their obligations, including seeking PD. Moreover, it was clear from the interviews that there were very few chances for job-embedded professional development and that most of the professional development activities took the form of workshops.

Examples of teachers' struggle to find time for professional development due to their workload can be found in the following quotes:

Saeed: I am a supervisor and a teacher. I teach 36 hours a week. I teach every day from 7.30 until 1.15. I am always in class so I can't observe my colleagues' classes. I do my paper correction and prepare exams at home. I hardly ever find time to conduct a research.

In the following two examples, Sara and Zahra reiterate Saeed's point regarding the lack of time for professional development and even disclosed how their excessive workload hold them back from participating in any professional development activity. Here is Sara's comment:

Sara: I have 21 hours of teaching plus being an HOD. Some PD events take place after school. After teaching seven or eight classes, I feel exhausted. I am obliged to attend professional development workshops. When I am exhausted, I can't learn anything. If I feel frustrated after class, I would not want to learn.

Another example of how teachers' workload can lead teachers' to feel overloaded and impede their pursuit of professional development can be found in the following example:

Zahra: I am a teacher and head of department at the same time. Sometimes, I don't find time to eat during the school day. I have to prepare for my lessons, check teachers' lesson plans, meet with parents, conduct model lessons, substitute my colleagues' classes when they are absent, meet with the school principal, co-teach with my colleagues. The extensive workload and exhaustion often lead me to refrain from participating in any professional development activity. Some of the professional development activities take place during the weekend which adds to my stress and exhaustion. I love to take part in PD but my teaching and administrative duties leave me with little time to initiate or participate in PD.

Another impediment that the interviewees reported was the lack of qualified presenters. Four of the interviewees reported that the professional development presenters at their schools were not qualified. Two of these interviewees were Khaled and Emad who had the following to say:

Khaled: I am not pleased with my professional development experience although I am extremely motivated to seek PD opportunities. Professional development at my school is done for documentary purposes but no learning truly takes place. Once I asked the academic advisor to show me how to implement a strategy she shared during the workshop. I wanted her to show me how to implement the strategy in my class and with my students (shows signs of frustration and then anger). She came to the classroom, and surprisingly, she wasn't able to implement the strategies she advocated. I feel that professional development is done for show off.

In the following excerpt, Emad also expressed his dissatisfaction with the professional development presenter at his school as he thought she is not qualified enough to initiate and lead professional development activities.

Emad: Professional development at my school is often offered by the head of the English department. She is a nice person but I don't think she is qualified to deliver professional development. I think she goes through some websites to gather information. The workshops she leads take the form of lectures. I think professional development should be led by an expert presenter who can show us how to implement certain strategies inside our classrooms and not just discuss theories.

D) Research Question Four : Is there any variation among the UAE English Teachers' self-report and their views regarding their professional development?

There was an overall consistency between teachers' responses to the Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET) and the individual interviews. The questionnaire revealed that teachers find the professional development activities they engage in effective as the Efficacy category ranked first



with ( $M=3.78$ ) as the mean. The results from the interviews also revealed that teachers perceived professional development positively.

Furthermore, the teachers' responses to the Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET) revealed that they are also generally pleased with the content delivered during professional development as the mean of the Content category was ( $M=3.33$ ). The qualitative data retrieved from the interviews supported these quantitative data. During the interviews, the majority of teachers ( $n=6$ ) reported that professional development has enhanced their pedagogical practices and classroom management skills and improved their classroom environment while some ( $n=4$ ) argued that the content of PD they took part in was either repetitive or irrelevant to grade levels they teach.

Despite teachers' overall satisfaction with the content of PD, many of them contended that the PD presenters generally don't take their background and learning styles into consideration. The mean of the questionnaire item "PD presenters take my background and learning styles into consideration" was relatively low ( $M=2.98$ ) compared to other items in the questionnaire. During the interviews, some of the interviewees asserted that their learning styles are often ignored during professional development.

Moreover, the current study also revealed that although teachers were generally satisfied with the context of professional development, many of those teachers believed that they were dissatisfied with some context-related factors such as the lack of food and refreshments during professional development activities especially when these activities take place after long school days or during weekends. The item with the lowest mean in the Context category was "I am offered refreshments,

breakfast/lunch during long PD events” with ( $M=3.28$ ) as the mean for this item. During the interviews, teachers also stressed the importance of refreshments and food in making them regain their energy and enabling them to stay focused. The interviewees also emphasized the importance of adequate air-conditioning, lighting, and sound system in making a professional development experience successful.

The two categories that had the lowest means compared to the other categories were Time and Support as these categories had ( $M=3.29$ ) and ( $M=3.05$ ) as their means respectively. As for Time, the questionnaire item “I am able to meet my family obligations even when PD takes place outside school hours” had the third lowest mean ( $M=2.87$ ). During the interviews, teachers explained how they resent professional development activities that take place after school as they often feel mentally and physically exhausted after a long day of carrying out teaching and administrative duties. The interviewees also reported that the conflict between the timings of these professional development activities and their family commitments leads them to feel stressed out.

As for school support, the questionnaire item that ranked last in the whole questionnaire was “My school offers incentives (e.g. financial bonus) for attending PD with ( $M=2.42$ ) as the mean for this item. The qualitative data supported these findings as most of the teachers reported that they only receive certificates for attending professional development activities. One of the interviewees even reported that he receives nothing for seeking PD. Only one interviewee reported that his school provides him with financial rewards after completing certain hours of PD. Furthermore, some of those teachers reported that they rarely receive verbal encouragements from their school leaders when they implement new instructional

strategies in their classrooms. These interviewees emphasized that verbal encouragements are important to boost their motivation and enhance their sense of job satisfaction.

### 4.3 Summary

Chapter four presented the findings of the study. Through employing triangulation, the researcher combined the advantages of the qualitative and quantitative designs. The Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers and Survey on PD Models and Teachers' Motivations were completed by 200 teachers and provided the quantitative data that was essential to answer the first two research questions. Moreover, the interviews provided the qualitative data that helped answer the third research question regarding teachers' general perceptions towards PD opportunities they were involved in, the opportunities that were gleaned from their participation, and the obstacles that hampered their professional growth. The data retrieved from both the questionnaires and interviews were compared to answer the fourth research question.

Eight findings were gleaned from the questionnaire, the survey and the interviews. The first finding answers the first research question # What are the perceptions of English teachers in private schools in the UAE towards their professional development experiences? The analysis of Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET) revealed that the overall average of the questionnaire is high ( $M=3.39$ ). The category with the highest score is the Efficacy category which had the highest mean ( $M=3.78$ ) among all the professional development categories (see Table 7).

The second and third findings relate to the second research question# What professional development models are available to English teachers in private schools in the UAE? What models do English teachers in private schools in the UAE prefer? What motivates English teachers in private schools in the UAE to participate in PD models? As for the second finding, the data retrieved from the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation revealed that training activities are the most applied models (53.5%) at private schools and that the majority of teachers (42%) prefer workshops and training to other types of professional development such as peer observations (22%), Study Groups (19%), and mentoring (17%).

The third finding also relates to the second research question. As Table 16 showed, teachers mainly seek out PD opportunities to enhance their instructional abilities (37.5%), equip themselves with the latest in the field (30%), and enhance their students' learning (28%).

The fourth finding relates to the third research question # How do English teachers in private schools in the UAE view their professional development experiences. Both qualitative and quantitative findings revealed that teachers value the role that professional development plays in developing their subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical practice and enhancing their students' achievements. The data retrieved from the interviews with teachers revealed that teachers are aware of the efficacy of professional development. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that the majority of teachers do not receive incentives to pursue professional development opportunities. During the interviews, teachers reiterated the importance of incentives as signs of leadership acknowledgment for the effort they exert to grow

professionally. Teachers also emphasized the important role that context plays in creating a positive learning experience. In addition, the interviews with the teachers revealed that lack of time and lack of qualified presenters were two of the major impediments that hamper their pursuit of professional development.

The fifth, sixth and seventh findings relate to the fourth research question: Are there any variations among the UAE English Teachers' self-report and their views regarding their professional development? As for the fifth finding, the data retrieved from the interviews supported the quantitative data as all of the interviewees discussed how professional development has played a major role in enhancing their knowledge and skills. Furthermore, teachers who participated in the interviews also emphasized that they seek PD to enhance their knowledge and improve the learning experiences for their students. These teachers also highlighted the key role that incentives would play in motivating them to participate in professional development activities.

As for the sixth finding, the data gleaned from the interviews and the questionnaire revealed that a well-designed professional development context that takes the participants' comfort into consideration and encourages the collaboration among those teachers is essential for the success of any PD initiative. The questionnaire analysis revealed that Context category ( $M= 3.53$ ) had the second highest score among all other categories. Moreover, during the interviews teachers emphasized that context -related factors such as comfortable chairs, proper sound system, suitable lighting, food, and refreshment can play a paramount role in making them perceive a professional development activity positively.

The seventh finding is that finding time for PD and balancing between family obligations and professional development were critical challenges for most teachers. The mean of the Time category ( $M=3.29$ ) was lower than the means of the Efficacy ( $M=3.78$ ), Context ( $M=3.53$ ), and Content ( $M=3.53$ ). Furthermore, during the interviews, the interviewees discussed how the exhaustion they feel after a busy school day does not only prevent them from seeking professional development opportunities but also hampers their understanding of the content of professional development activities especially when these activities are held at the end of the day. During the interviews, teachers also discussed how the lack of qualified presenters was another impediment that prevents them from making the best of professional development offered by their schools.

The eighth finding that was gleaned from the teachers' responses to the questionnaire and interviews is that leadership support is a key factor that impedes or facilitates their pursuit of professional development. The Support category ( $M=3.05$ ) ranked last among all the five categories of professional development. Furthermore, the interviews also revealed that teachers did not consider certificates as real incentives and that these teachers prefer other types of incentives such as load reduction, financial rewards, or career advancement opportunities.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Implications**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This study explored the essence of professional development experience in the UAE. The study employed mixed method research design to explore the perceptions of English teachers in private schools in one of the major education zones in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The instruments included the Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET), and Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation, and individual interviews. This chapter will include a summary of the research findings, the implications of the study, and recommendations for future research.

### **5.2 Discussion**

A) Discussion of Research Question 1 : What are the perceptions of English teachers in private schools in the UAE towards their professional development?

One of the major findings of the study is that English teachers in private schools in the UAE are aware of the important role that professional development plays in enhancing their skills and knowledge. The analysis of Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET) revealed that the overall average of the questionnaire is high ( $M=3.39$ ) which reflects teachers have positive perceptions towards PD. The Efficacy category ( $M=3.78$ ) ranked first among the all the questionnaire categories. The item with the highest score in the Efficacy category was “I feel motivated to practice the new skills I learnt during the PD activities” and “PD opportunities deepen my subject matter knowledge and enhance my classroom

skills” with ( $M=4.03$ ) and ( $M=3.94$ ) as the means respectively. These results reflect that teachers are aware of the key role that PD activities play in enhancing their skills and that teachers are also motivated to implement those strategies in their classrooms.

The Context category came second with ( $M=3.53$ ) as the mean for this category. The item with the highest score in this category was “Attending off-site PD activities can make a learning experience more productive and memorable” with ( $M=3.72$ ) as the mean score. This reveals that teachers enjoy professional development activities that take place outside school context and find those activities more efficient. The category with the highest mean score after the Context category was the Content category with ( $M=3.53$ ) as the mean score. These results reveal that teachers are generally satisfied with the content of PD events they take part in. The item with the highest score in the Content category was “The pedagogical and content knowledge of the PD activities are helpful” with ( $M=3.73$ ) as the mean for this item. These results reveal that teachers find the content delivered during professional development as beneficial. These results are in line with arguments made by (Wei, Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 2003; Van Driel & Berry, 2012) who pointed out that high-quality professional development should focus on enhancing teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge.

The categories with the lowest two scores are the Time category and the Support category with ( $M=3.29$ ) and ( $M=3.05$ ) as their means respectively. The item with the lowest score in the Time category was “I am able to meet my family obligations even when PD takes place after school hours” with ( $M= 2.87$ ) as the



mean score. These results are in line with the speculations of Abdal-Haqq (1996) who suggested that professional development programs that are scheduled outside school hours could encroach with teachers' personal lives. As for the Support category, the item with the lowest score was "My school offers incentives (e.g. financial bonus) for attending PD" with (M= 2.42) as the mean score for this item. These results reveal that teachers are not offered incentives to pursue professional development opportunities. These results contrast with the literature (Speck & Knipe, 2005; Vegas & Umansky, 2005) on the importance of incentives in boosting teachers' morale and motivating them to pursue professional learning opportunities.

B) Discussion of Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of English teachers in private schools in the UAE regarding PD models?

- a. What professional development models are available to English teachers in private schools in the UAE?
- b. What professional development models do English teachers in private schools in the UAE prefer?
- c. What motivates English teachers in private schools in the UAE to participate in PD models?

As for the first and second parts of research question two which are related to professional development models available to English teachers and the models they prefer, the data gleaned from the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation gleaned that the majority of teachers (42%) prefer Workshops and Training to other types of professional development such as Peer Observation (22%), Study Groups (19%), and Mentoring (17%). Similarly, the interviews revealed that most teachers perceive most of the workshops conducted at their schools favorably. Some of the interviewees contended that they prefer workshops to other professional

development models. For example, some of the interviewees' responses were as follows: "Professional development workshops enable me to learn numerous strategies within a short period of time" and "I prefer workshops to other types of professional development because I prefer learning from experts than learning from colleagues." The findings were consistent with the results of studies conducted by Giraldo (2014) and Cheung (2013) who reported that well-designed workshops could enhance teachers' skills and even positively change their attitudes. On the other hand, these results were inconsistent with the findings reported by AlHassani (2012) who revealed that teachers preferred peer-coaching to training workshops. One possible explanation for this discrepancy between the results of this study and Al Hassani's (2012) is that the quality of professional development training in the UAE schools has witnessed significant improvement since 2012. In her study, AlHassani (2012) reported that one of the reasons why teachers viewed professional development negatively was due to the lack of qualified trainers. Several private schools in the UAE have addressed that issue by hiring external consultants and inviting expert teachers at their schools to conduct and supervise professional development activities.

The results of the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation also revealed that 22% of the teachers who took part in this study believed that peer coaching plays an important role in their professional development. These results further support the speculations made by Galbraith and Anstrom (1995) and Robbins (1991) who emphasized the role of peer coaching can play in refining teachers' skills and helping them build new practices.

Finally, only 16% of the teachers who completed the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation reported that their schools have established mentoring programs. This contradicts with the wealth of literature (Hansford et al., 2003; Villani, 2009; Portner, 2001) that has emphasized the importance of mentoring programs in supporting new teachers at the beginning of their careers and helping them grow professionally. The lack of mentoring programs might be one of the reasons why many schools in the UAE suffer from high turnover rates.

As for the third section of the second research question which relates to teachers' motivations for seek PD, the data retrieved from the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation revealed that the majority of teachers are intrinsically motivated to seek PD opportunities. As Table 16 revealed, 37.5% of teachers seek PD activities to enhance their instructional abilities while 30% seek those activities to equip themselves with the latest in the field. These results echo Maslow's (1943) theory of needs with regards to individuals' need to grow and even attain self-actualization.

C) Discussion of Research Question3: How do English teachers in private schools in the UAE view their professional development experience?

The results of interviews with teachers revealed that they are aware of the crucial role that professional development plays in keeping them up-to-date on emerging educational technologies, enhancing their subject-matter knowledge, and introducing teachers to new instructional practices. For example, some of the interviewees suggested that professional development "helped them update their

practices”, “enhanced their ICT skills”, “enabled them to differentiate instruction” and “improved their classroom environment”. These results were consistent with arguments made by Neuman and Cunningham (2009), Johnson (2011), and Robinson (2013) who emphasized the key role that PD plays in enhancing teachers’ content and pedagogical knowledge.

Furthermore, it was evident that professional development plays a major role in enhancing teachers’ motivation. Some of the interviewees revealed that participating in professional development activities makes them feel confident that they can overcome any situation in the classroom because professional development enhances their abilities and skills. These qualitative and quantitative results support Bandura’s (1994) arguments regarding the crucial role that mastery experiences play and how they enhance people’s beliefs in their abilities.

The individual interviews with teachers also revealed that several impediments hamper their pursuit of professional development. One of these challenges was the lack of tangible incentives. During the interviews, teachers emphasized the key role of incentives as signs of recognition on the part of their school leaders for the efforts that they put for seeking PD opportunities and implementing the PD strategies they learn. Nevertheless, only one of the ten interviewees reported that he receives financial rewards for seeking PD. Another impediment that was gleaned from the interviews was the time constraints due to excessive workload. All ten interviewees discussed how lack of time prevents them from seeking PD opportunities. Some of those interviewees even disclosed that the timing of PD, especially PD events that take outside school hours, prevented them from fulfilling their obligations towards their families. These results are consistent

with research conducted by AlNeaimi (2007) who suggested that professional development programs that are scheduled outside school hours could encroach with teachers' personal lives.

D) Discussion of Research Question 4: Is there any variation among the UAE English Teachers' self-report and their views regarding their professional development?

A consistency was noted between teachers' responses to Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation and their responses to the interviews. For example, the data gleaned from the survey revealed that 42% of teachers preferred Workshops to other models. For example, some the interviewees contended that they prefer workshops to other professional development models. For example, some of these interviewees' responses were as follows: "Professional development workshops enable me to learn numerous strategies within a short period of time" and " I prefer workshops to other types of professional development because I prefer learning from experts than learning from colleagues." The results of the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation also revealed that 22% of the teachers who took part in this study perceive peer coaching favorably. Some of the interviewees confided that peer coaching has given them the opportunity to refine their practices and learn new useful strategies that are relevant to the context of their schools. This was evident through some of the interviewees' responses such as the following: "Visiting my colleagues' classrooms has enabled me to learn new strategies" and "I love to learn from my colleagues because the ideas they suggest and strategies they implement are relevant to my school context." These results further support the plethora of literature (Dantonio, 2001; Joyce & Showers, 2002;

Galbraith & Anstrom,1995) that emphasized the key role that peer coaching plays in fostering teachers' skills.

Despite the overall consistency, an inconsistency was noticed between teachers' responses to the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation and their responses to the interviews with regards to the part that is related to importance of financial rewards in motivating teachers to pursue PD. While only 3% of the participants who completed the survey reported that receiving a raise would motivate them to seek professional development, nine of the interviewees ( $n=9$ ) discussed the important role that financial rewards play in boosting their confidence. Some of the interviewee's responses were as follows: "As teachers we need real incentives such as a financial raise", "Money makes miracles", and "I prefer financial rewards to certificates." One possible interpretation for this discrepancy in results is that the researcher interviewed the teachers individually and assured them that their answers would remain confidential which might have the teachers to express their honest opinions rather than give socially acceptable responses.

There was also an overall consistency between teachers' responses to the Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET) and the interviews. The questionnaire revealed that teachers find the professional development activities they engage in effective as Efficacy category( $M=3.78$ ) ranked first. The results from the interviews also revealed that teachers perceived professional development positively. Some of the teachers responses are as follows: "Professional Development keeps me updated with the latest in the field" and "I take

the strategies presented during professional development into consideration as I am planning my lessons.”

Furthermore, the teachers’ responses to the Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers (PDQET) revealed that they are also generally pleased with the content delivered during professional development as the mean of the Content category was ( $M=3.33$ ). The qualitative data retrieved from the interviews supported these quantitative data. During the interviews, the majority of teachers ( $N=6$ ) reported that professional development has enhanced their content knowledge while some ( $N=4$ ) argued that the content of professional development they took part in was either repetitive or irrelevant to the grade levels they teach.

Despite teachers’ overall satisfaction with the content of PD, some of them reported that the professional development leaders at their schools are either not qualified while others reported that those presenters generally don't take their background and learning styles into consideration. The mean of the questionnaire item “PD presenters take my background and learning styles into consideration” was relatively low ( $M=2.98$ ) compared to other items in the questionnaire. During the interviews, some of the interviewees asserted that their learning styles are often ignored during professional development. Others reported that the professional development leaders deliver the content of professional development in the form of lecture without incorporating hands-on experiences.

Moreover, the current study also revealed that although teachers were generally satisfied with the context of professional development, many of those teachers believed that they were dissatisfied with some context-related factors such as the lack of food and refreshments during professional development activities

especially when these activities take place after long school days or during the weekends. The item with the lowest mean in the Context category was “I am offered refreshments, breakfast/lunch during long PD events” with ( $M=3.28$ ) as the mean for this item. During the interviews, teachers also stressed the importance of refreshments and food in making them regain their energy and enabling them to stay focused.

The two categories that had the lowest means compared to the other categories were Time and Support as these categories had ( $M=3.29$ ) and ( $M=3.05$ ) as their means respectively. As for Time, the questionnaire item “I am able to meet my family obligations even when PD takes place outside school hours” had the third lowest mean with ( $M=2.87$ ). During the interviews, teachers explained why they prefer PD that takes place during the school day and not outside the school hours. Some teachers attributed that to exhaustion they feel at the end of the day while others asserted that they find difficult to make arrangements for their children when professional development takes place outside school hours.

As for school support, the questionnaire item that ranked last in the whole questionnaire was “My school offers incentives (e.g. financial bonus) for attending PD with ( $M=2.42$ ) as the mean for this item. The qualitative data supported these findings as 9 out of 10 of the interviewees reported that they only receive certificates for attending professional development activities. Furthermore, some of those interviewees disclosed that they rarely receive verbal encouragements from their school leaders when they implement new instructional strategies in their classrooms. The interviewees reported that the lack of verbal and financial incentives signified that their schools do not acknowledge the efforts they exert to seek professional development opportunities.



### 5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from the finding of the current study:

- 1) School administrators should provide teachers with tangible incentives to encourage them to seek professional development opportunities. These incentives can include paying the fees of online professional development classes, providing teachers with financial compensation, and offering teachers who are actively involved in initiating professional development (e.g. mentoring) a reduced teaching load.
- 2) School leaders should reexamine the time allotted for professional development at their schools. Instead of scheduling professional development events in the afternoon, school leaders can schedule those events in the morning. In the meanwhile, students can be engaged in extracurricular activities. Furthermore, schools should consider hiring qualified substitute teachers to allow more time for teachers to engage in peer coaching or Study Groups. This strategy would reduce the pressure on the teachers and increase their motivation to pursue professional development opportunities.
- 3) The results from the Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation and teacher interviews revealed that very few private schools in the emirate of Abu Dhabi have well-structured mentoring programs for new teachers. School leaders should motivate experienced teachers to act as mentors for the novice teachers by offering them incentives. These incentives might include offering teachers a promotion opportunity, a financial raise, a

teaching load reduction or an exemption from supervision duties such as break duty or morning assembly.

- 4) School leaders can increase the effectiveness of professional development programs by differentiating the content of professional development activities based on teachers' disciplines, learning styles and teaching experiences. These school leaders should be aware that, just like their students, teachers have different learning styles and varying professional needs. Furthermore, teachers might be more motivated to take part in professional development activities if they feel that those activities acknowledge their personal interests, learning styles, and readiness levels. Moreover, a focus on a particular subject-matter might enhance teachers' pedagogical content knowledge.
- 5) To address the issue of differentiation and resolve the time-constraints problem, schools may encourage their teachers to pursue on-line professional development. Well-established online programs enable teachers to customize the content of professional development based on their needs. Moreover, those teachers would have the opportunity to interact with other teachers to reflect on their experiences and share best practices. The flexibility of these on-line programs would enable teachers to enhance their skills, and at the same time, meet their family and work obligations.

#### **5.4 Implications for Future Research**

As enhancing the student achievement becomes the hallmark of any educational reform, the professional development of teachers in the UAE should receive more attention. Therefore, educational researchers in the UAE should

conduct studies of a similar nature to the current study with a larger sample of teachers employed in schools from different regions of the UAE. These studies can draw a comparison between the perceptions of teachers employed in public schools and those who work in private schools. Researchers can also consider conducting a similar study using an exploratory design to explore the perceptions of teachers in more depth through gathering qualitative data in the first phase and supporting that data by gathering quantitative data in the second phase. Such studies will add more to the existing literature on professional development as they would cover a wider and more diverse population. It is obvious that there is still much to be learned about the impact of professional development on student achievements and about the professional development models that can make the greatest impact on students' academic performance.

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## Appendix B

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE OF ENGLISH TEACHERS

The purpose of this survey is to collect information about your PD (PD) you have achieved so far. Each statement is followed by five numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, and each number means the following:

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| ‘1’ means ‘ <b>Strongly Disagree</b> ’                       | ‘2’ means that ‘ <b>Disagree</b> ’. |
| ‘3’ means ‘ <b>Neutral</b> ’ (About <b>50%</b> of the time.) | ‘4’ means ‘ <b>Agree</b> ’          |
| ‘5’ means ‘ <b>Strongly Agree</b> ’                          |                                     |

After reading each statement, *circle the number* which applies to you. Note that there is no right or wrong responses.

E1. PD opportunities deepen my subject matter knowledge and enhance my classroom skills

1   2   3   4   5

E2. I feel motivated to practice the new skills I learnt during the PD activities.

1   2   3   4   5

E3. The PD activities I attend have a positive impact on my students’ achievements.

1   2   3   4   5

E4. Onsite PD activities (i.e. coaching) are more effective than workshops.

1   2   3   4   5

E5 I feel more confident in my abilities as a teacher after participating in PD activities.

1   2   3   4   5

E6. PD activities equip me with new practices.

1   2   3   4   5

E7. I feel that my students are more engaged after applying the skills I learnt during PD activities

1   2   3   4   5

S1. My school provides feedback/ coaching after each PD activity.

1   2   3   4   5

S2. The school supports me as a provider and initiator for PD activities.

1   2   3   4   5

S3. My school offers incentives (e.g. financial bonus) for attending PD.

1   2   3   4   5

S4. My school provides a substitute teacher to cover my classes during my PD sessions

1   2   3   4   5

S5. My school offers me teaching load reduction when I involve in PD activities

1   2   3   4   5

S.6. My school creates a culture of collective learning to sustain PD activities.

1   2   3   4   5

C1. The pedagogical and content knowledge of the PD are of great help to me

1   2   3   4   5

C2. I am asked to suggest topics for the PD activities that are planned.

1   2   3   4   5

C3. My school takes my suggestions for the PD topics into consideration.

1 2 3 4 5

C4. The PD presenters take my background and learning styles into account.

1 2 3 4 5

C5. PD activities are relevant to my daily teaching practices.

1 2 3 4 5

N1. The setting where PD activities are conducted is convenient to me.

1 2 3 4 5

N2. The PD environment encourages interaction among teachers.

1 2 3 4 5

N3. I am offered refreshments, breakfast/lunch during long PD events.

1 2 3 4 5

N4. PD activities take place in well-equipped rooms (e.g. air condition, technology, etc.).

1 2 3 4 5

N5. Attending off-site PD activities make my learning experience more productive and memorable

1 2 3 4 5

T1. The PD. timing is convenient for me.

1 2 3 4 5

T2. I am able to meet my family obligations even when PD takes places outside school hours.

1 2 3 4 5

T3. I can balance between my teaching responsibilities and PD participations

1 2 3 4 5

T4. My school gives me the choice to select the suitable time for PD activities.

1 2 3 4 5

T5. I prefer to attend during school day PD activities (e.g. coaching; peer observation)

1 2 3 4 5

T6. I am given enough time to master the new strategies I learnt before moving to new ones.

1 2 3 4 5

## Appendix C

### Survey on PD Models, Effectiveness, Availability, and Motivation

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Please follow the instructions to respond to the questions in each section.

**1. Can you rank the following PD models from the most effective (1) to the least effective (4).**

1. Workshops/Training Activities
2. Mentoring
3. Peer Observation
4. Study Groups

**2. Which of the following models are applied mostly at your school? (You can select more than one)**

1. Workshops/Training Activities
2. Study Groups
3. Mentoring
4. Peer Observation

**3. What would motivate you to attend a PD session? Rank the following options from the most important (1) to the least important (5).**

1. To enhance my instructional abilities
2. To equip myself with the latest in the field.
3. To enhance my students' learning.
4. To receive a raise/ a promotion.
5. To impress my principal.



## Appendix D

### The Interview Questions

1. In your opinion, what constitutes an exemplary Professional Development experience in terms of
  - Time
  - Content
  - Context
2. In what ways does Professional Development impact your profession?
3. What are the factors that hinder your participation in PD?
4. What type of support/incentives does your school provide to encourage you to attend PD activities?
5. Are you generally satisfied with the professional Development opportunities offered to you? What are those opportunities and what are the obstacles?
6. What recommendations do you suggest to improve the quality of the PD activities at your school?

## Appendix E

### Consent Form to Participate in Research Interview

This appendix presents the consent form that the interviewed teachers had to sign. The form introduced the teachers to the purpose of the study and assured the teachers that their confidentiality would be respected.

#### ❖ Purpose

The purpose of the interview is to gather information about your perspective(s) as an English teacher regarding your professional development experience. The interview will take anywhere between 25 to 30 minutes. During the interview, I will audiotape and take notes. The information obtained from the interview will remain confidential and will be used for the research purposes only.

---

#### ❖ Rights

I understand that my participation in the interview is voluntary and that I

I have the right to decline to answer any question or withdraw from the interview at any time.

---

#### ❖ Consent

I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. The researcher has answered all my questions, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this interview.

---

Participant's Signature

Date

---

Researcher's Signature

Date

## Appendix F

### Jurors of Interview

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This appendix presents the names of the UAEU faculty members who helped the researcher establish the validity of the interview questions.

Dr. Ali Ibrahim	Associate Professor, UAE University
Dr. Mohamad Shaban	Associate Professor, UAE University
Dr. Negmeldin Alsheikh	Associate Professor, UAE University

## Appendix G

### Jurors of Professional Development Questionnaire of English Teachers

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This appendix presents the names of the UAEU faculty members who helped the researcher establish the validity of the questionnaire.

Dr. Ali Ibrahim	Associate Professor, UAE University
Dr. Mohamad Shaban	Associate Professor, UAE University
Dr. Sadiq Ismail	Associate Professor, UAE University
Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Mekhlafi	Associate Professor, UAE University
Dr. Adeeb Jarrah	Assistant Professor, UAE University

## Appendix H

### ADEC Approval Letter



Date: 14/12/2015  
Ref: 15121401

التاريخ: 2015/12/14  
الرقم: 15121401

To: Private Schools Principals,

السادة / مديري المدارس الخاصة المحترمين

Subject: Letter of Permission

الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة باحثين

Dear Principals,

تحية طيبة وبعد،،،

The Abu Dhabi Education Council would like to express its gratitude for your generous efforts & sincere cooperation in serving our dear students.

يطيبُ لمجلس أبوظبي للتعليم أن يتوجه لكم بخالص الشكر والتقدير لجهودكم الكريمة والتعاون الصادق لخدمة أبنائنا الطلبة.

You are kindly requested to allow the researcher/ Rabab Ali Atwi, to complete her research on:

ونود إعلامكم بموافقة مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم على موضوع الدراسة التي ستجريها الباحثة / رباب علي عطوي، بعنوان:

**EXPLORING THE ATTITUDES AND VIEWS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN THE UAE**

**EXPLORING THE ATTITUDES AND VIEWS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN THE UAE**

Please indicate your approval of this permission by facilitating her meetings with the sample groups at your respected schools.

لذا، يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة ومساعدتها على إجراء الدراسة المشار إليها.

For further information: please contact Mr Helmy Seada on 02/6150140

للاستفسار: يرجى الاتصال بالسيد/ حلمي سعدة على الهاتف 02/6150140

Thank you for your cooperation.

شاكربن لكم حسن تعاونكم.

Sincerely yours,

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير،،،



المهندس / حماد علي الظاهري  
المدير التنفيذي، قطاع المدارس الخاصة وضمان الجودة

Eng. Hamad Ali Al Dhaheri  
Executive Director, Private Schools and Quality Assurance Sector