Kindergarten teachers' perceptions of conditions for professional learning communities
in Dammam, Saudi Arabia

by

Asma Mohammed Bin Ateeq

B.S., Princess Nora bint Abdul Rahman University, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2006
M.S., Shawnee State University, Portsmouth, OH, 2014

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2018

Abstract

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a model of collaborative professional development that involves teachers and administrators working together on an ongoing basis to develop shared visions, plans, goals, resources, and ideas in order to increase student learning. Research indicates that students in schools with teacher PLCs are significantly more academically successful than students in schools that do not have PLCs. The teachers in PLCs also report positive benefits. There are six equally important dimensions of an effective PLC: shared and supportive leadership; shared beliefs, values and vision; collective learning and application of learning; supportive conditions (both structural and relational), and shared personal practice (Hord & Sommers, 2008). The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of kindergarten teachers through the use of a survey and to further explore how two kindergarten teachers in Dammam describe their experiences of the conditions needed for implementing PLCs in their schools through personal interviews. The design of this study was mixed methods research conducted via a survey (questionnaire) and personal interviews. The data analysis suggests that the overall PLC dimensions in kindergartens in Dammam are somewhat supportive of PLCs. In the quantitative analysis, the mean scores ranged from 2.88 for Shared and Supportive Leadership to 3.15 for Shared Personal Practice (on a scale of 0-5). In the qualitative analysis, the participants' descriptions of their experiences indicated that Shared Values and Vision was the weakest dimension.

 Keywords: professional learning community, kindergarten, conditions for PLC, Dammam, Saudi Arabia

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Dean Debbie Mercer

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I dedicate this research to my husband,

For showing belief in me and being a source of positive energy in my life; and to

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Who are the source of my happiness and the joy of my life.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Introduction to the Study

My research investigated the perceptions of kindergarten teachers in Dammam, Saudi Arabia to see how they perceived their schools as they relate to the conditions necessary for successful professional learning communities. This research helped the researcher know more about the conditions of kindergartens in Dammam, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the schools that have PLCs or may want to implement them.

Research suggests that professional learning communities have the potential to increase teacher satisfaction and student achievement. Administrators bear the responsibility of promoting conditions that improve student success, and PLCs have been identified as an effective tool for accomplishing that goal. The research on the effectiveness of PLCs is promising; however, most of the research focuses on PLCs in the United States. A thorough review did not result in locating much published research on PLCs in Arab countries. My study was designed to contribute to the body of knowledge in this area. The design of this study was mixed-methods. I collected quantitative data through a survey, and I collected qualitative data through personal interviews with two participants.

What is a Professional Learning Community?

The concept of professional learning communities (PLCs) began in the 1960's and became more popular in the late 1980s to early 1990s (All Things PLC, 2018). Researchers began to examine successful schools where students were achieving academically, and they noticed that the teachers in those schools were working together, sharing their experiences and exchanging ideas (Blankstein et al., 2008; Darling-Hammond, 1995; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Marzano, 2003; Newman & Wehlage, 1995). Hord and Sommers (2008) identified six

characteristics that the successful schools had in common. These were: (1) shared and supportive leadership, (2) shared values and visions, (3) collective learning and application, (4) shared personal practice, (5) supportive conditions-relationships, and (6) supportive conditions-structures (All Things PLC, 2014). This type of teacher collaboration was named "professional learning communities."

There is no universally-accepted definition of professional learning community, because the words used in the term (professional, learning, and community) all have various meanings (Watson, 2014). De Neve and Devos (2017) use a very broad definition, stating "schools that provide collaborative opportunities are identified as professional learning communities." Other researchers, such as Sigurdardottir (2010) and Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, and Thomas (2006), have found it necessary to provide more specific definitions in order to conduct their research. Two of these definitions give an overall "feel" for the meaning of the term PLC. "A professional learning community (PLC) consists of a group of professionals sharing common goals and purposes, consistently gaining new knowledge through interaction with one another" (Sigurdardottir, 2010, p. 397). The definition provided by Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, and Thomas (2006) is "a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way" (p. 223). Activities that may be included in the collaborative interaction between PLC members include conversational routines, guided reflection, engaging in metacognition, recording ideas to improve instruction, choosing to focus on specific content, and teacher-control over learning (Christ, Arya, & Chiu, 2016).

The purpose of a PLC is "to enhance teacher effectiveness as professionals, for students' ultimate benefit" (Stoll, et al., 2006, p. 229). A school may have several PLCs, each comprised

of a small group of teachers who teach the same grade level or the same academic subject. However, sometimes a PLC can also be formed online by teachers who are either too busy or too far apart to get together in person (Flanigan, 2012).

Some keywords that often show up in research for effective PLC are: collaboration, collective responsibility, shared leadership, working together, transparency, shared decision-making, working against isolation, collaborative problem-solving, and dialogue. Much of the research suggests that one of the most positive ways of influencing the educational work environment is to have teachers working in community with one another (Blankstein et al., 2008; Darling-Hammond, 1995; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Marzano, 2003; Newman & Wehlage, 1995). In this way, teachers can be better equipped to move forward with clarity of vision, a solid understanding of what is expected, and opportunities to consistently assess their effectiveness.

At the heart of PLC is an understanding of the need for growth and development rather than an assumed sense of fixed, insular pedagogical expertise. Kalule and Bouchamma (2013) note that "to successfully develop professionally, teachers need many learning opportunities, including reflection, dialogue and collaboration, particularly among their peers" (p. 90). To ensure that students achieve academically, teachers must constantly strive to improve their instructional practices, since "reinforcing their capabilities enables them to reflect on their own practice and knowledge level and . . . to develop greater competency" which can enhance decision-making skills and student outcomes (Kalule & Bouchamma, 2013, p. 90). The authors note that as teachers develop their expertise, they ought to be guided along as learners of their craft and given opportunities to share their acquired skills with peers. They stress the importance of time and note that time must be set aside for instructional supervision if the desired outcome is to be achieved. By developing teachers' ability to systematically examine their own teaching

methods, teachers can get to know their strengths and weaknesses, and can develop sufficient insights to approach their own pedagogical problem-solving. Teachers will not only be learning "how to learn" but also "[transforming] their knowledge into practice for the betterment of their students" (Kalule & Bouchamma, 2013, p. 91).

A PLC can be structured in different ways, depending on the needs of the school system and the teachers. For example, elementary schools generally structure their PLCs by grouping teachers according to the grades they teach (third grade teachers' PLC, fifth grade teachers' PLC, etc.). High schools generally structure their PLCs by grouping teachers of the same subject together (math teachers' PLC, English teachers' PLC, etc.) (Lomos, Hofman, & Bosker, 2011). There are other types of PLCs that focus on different aspects of student learning. Some PLCs may focus primarily on the needs of students who are English language learners, students with disabilities, students who are Mexican migrants, or students with financial or social struggles (DeMatthews, 2014). A PLC can be based in a school, district, cross-district, or can be national (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004).

There is also a difference between newer PLCs and ones that are more established. In younger PLCs, the teachers are less open about their classroom practice. They may be uncomfortable sharing their experiences in the classroom with each other because they have not yet established a relationship of trust. In mature PLCs, the teachers have a stronger commitment to sharing their classroom experiences (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001) and they are more committed to helping the other teachers on the PLC experience growth, rather than just focusing on their own personal growth (De Neve & Devos, 2017). Mature PLCs can also vary. Some will have an openness to change, while others will continue to use the same instructional methods, regardless of the level of student achievement.

Knowing their weaknesses and strengths through encouraged communication, teachers can work with greater clarity on what is expected and how to improve. According to DuFour and Mattos (2013), "the most powerful strategy for improving both teaching and learning . . . is not by micromanaging instruction but by creating the collaborative culture and collective responsibility of a professional learning community" (p. 37). PLCs can enhance transparency about administrative expectations, helping teachers to work towards established, evaluated, and improved common goals. As one researcher states, "professional learning communities provide opportunities for professional staff to look deeply into the teaching and learning process and to learn how to become more effective in their work with students" (Morrissey, 2000, p. 3).

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of kindergarten teachers broadly through the use of a survey and to further explore how two kindergarten teachers in Dammam describe their experiences of the conditions needed for implementing PLCs in their schools through personal interviews.

Research Questions and Sub-Questions

The following research questions and sub-questions directed the design of this study.

1. What is the perceived condition of PLCs for teachers who do or do not belong to schools with a PLC?

   a. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the teacher's level of education?

   b. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of years the teacher has taught?

   c. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the age of the teacher?

d. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of students in the class?

e. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of teachers in the school?

2. What are the teachers' experiences related to the conditions for PLCs in their schools?

   a. What are the teachers' experiences related to shared and supportive leadership in their schools?

   b. What are the teachers' experiences related to shared beliefs, values, and vision in their schools?

   c. What are the teachers' experiences related to collective learning and its application in their schools?

   d. What are the teachers' experiences related to shared personal practice in their schools?

   e. What are the teachers' experiences related to supportive conditions-relationships in their schools?

   f. What are the teachers' experiences related to supportive conditions-structures in their schools?

Research Null Hypotheses

Reported PLC conditions will not vary significantly as a function of the levels of:

1. Existence of a PLC in the school (independent samples t-test);

2. Demographic questions (one-way ANOVA);

   a. The teachers level of education (one-way ANOVA);

   b. The number of years the teacher has taught (one-way ANOVA);

c. The age of the teacher (one-way ANOVA);

d. The number of students in class (one-way ANOVA); and

e. The number of teachers in the school (one-way ANOVA).

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of kindergarten teachers through the use of a survey and to further explore how two kindergarten teachers in Dammam describe their experiences of the conditions needed for implementing PLCs in their schools through personal interviews. This was a mixed-methods study, using interviews to collect the qualitative data and a survey to collect the quantitative data. The qualitative data allowed me to explore how two kindergarten teachers in Dammam described their experiences of the conditions needed for implementing PLCs in their schools. The participants were interviewed through the Whats Up app, with audio but no video. This was out of respect for the Saudi culture. Some women are comfortable using an Internet conference with video, but others are not. The reason for selecting a mixed-methods design was that qualitative interviews are capable of providing more details and a deeper understanding of the conditions that were present in the participants' schools, while the survey data provided a broad perspective.

I interviewed each female teacher individually, exploring her experiences at her school as they pertained to each of the six conditions necessary for PLCs. I expected the procedure to take about four months, because I interviewed the women in Arabic, and then I transcribed the interviews in Arabic. The transcribed interviews were translated into English for the results and findings section in the last chapter of my paper. Each participant was interviewed three times. The first interview was primarily for us to get to know each other, so that the participants would become comfortable with me. It was more natural and organic. The second interview was an in-

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depth open-ended interview. According to Battacharya (2012), these types of interviews "usually focus on digging deep into one's experiences with a few key questions prepared in advance. The researcher focuses on using the key questions as probes to peel away a superficial understanding of one's experiences to a deeper understanding of one's experiences" (p. 107). We were able to go deeper in the second interview because the contact had already been made and we had established a relationship of trust. The third interview was more phenomenological. I asked very open-ended questions and kept the conditions for PLC's in mind, but allowed the conversation to flow more freely.

Definition of Terms

1. Symbolic Interactionism-- For the purposes of this study, symbolic interactionism was defined as "a framework or perspective composed of an imagery and conceptualizations in terms of which this imagery is expressed, as well as a set of initiating premises from which questions of social psychology can be pursued" (Stryker & Vryan, 2003, p. 3). The specific concepts of this framework are discussed later in this paper.

2. Professional Learning Community (PLC)– For the purposes of this study, a professional learning community was defined as "a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way" (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006, p. 223).

3. Professional Learning Communities Conditions – For the purposes of this study, a condition for professional learning communities was defined as one of six environmental or interpersonal characteristics that have been identified by Hord and Sommers (2001) as essential for a successful PLC. These characteristics are: (1) shared and supportive

leadership, (2) shared values and visions, (3) collective learning and application, (4) shared personal practice, (5) supportive conditions-relationships, and (6) supportive conditions-structures.

a. Shared and supportive leadership – Shared and supportive leadership means that the power and decision-making authority is distributed between the administration and teachers. An administration that appreciates, nurtures, accepts and encourages their teachers creates a motivating work environment. (Hord & Sommers, 2008).

b. Shared Beliefs, Values, and Visions – Shared beliefs, values, and visions means that the principal and school staff collaboratively create a common purpose that works towards the increased learning of the students (Hord & Sommers, 2008). High quality learning is accomplished when the talents of the PLC group are engaged and developed within the common mission (Morrissey, 2000). However, PLC does not simply revolve around agreeing with good ideas, rather it is concerned with carrying out a mental image of what is the most important goal of an organization and the individuals within (Al-Mahdy & Sywelem, 2016).

c. Collective Learning and Application – Collective learning and application is less about independent learning and more about learning important topics and effective teaching skills together in order to better address students' learning (Hord & Sommers, 2008). Application involves staff conversations, asking questions, problem solving, and applying new curriculum.

d. Shared Personal Practice – Shared personal practice should be an everyday procedure, "reflective cycle" (Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2007), that involves peers helping peers and teachers helping teachers to build and improve instructional

behaviors, yet this practice is only useful if there is mutual respect and trust (Hord &
Sommers, 2008).

e. Supportive Conditions-Relationships – Relational factors are comprised of the amount
of trust, respect, and caring among individuals which is a basis for giving and
receiving knowledge but which also takes time to establish. Social activities provide
opportunities to improve attitudes and relationships among school staff and
community (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Hord, 1997).

f. Supportive Conditions-Structures – Structural factors include time and place for
meeting, technology and books that enhance communication and professional
development to support collaboration and student learning (Hord & Sommers, 2008).
Common planning time, such as weekly team meetings, is a valuable area in which to
share best practices and analyze data about the students' progress (Stegall & Linton,
2012).

4. Kindergarten teachers– For the purposes of this study, kindergarten teachers were defined
as women who are employed full-time in a government-sponsored preschool, teaching
children aged 3-6 years old. In Saudi Arabia, the teachers are not required to have
teaching licenses.

5. Dammam, Saudi Arabia—For the purposes of this study, the term "Dammam" referred to
the city of Dammam, Saudi Arabia and the surrounding area generally associated with the
city. Dammam is located in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, on the Persian Gulf, and
serves as the capital of that region. The region of the city covers approximately 300
square miles and the population is just over 1,000,000 people (Eamana, 2017).

Statement of Significance of Study

This research was designed to examine the experiences of kindergarten teachers in Dammam schools that do not have PLCs. When a school establishes a PLC under the right conditions, everyone benefits. The teachers experience a greater commitment to the school. They become more effective as educators, providing higher intellectual learning tasks for their students. They learn in community, which is "more powerful than independent learning" (Hord & Sommers, 2008, p. 20). In addition to the benefits to teachers, effective PLCs result in greater academic achievement for students (D'Ardenne et al., 2013; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Stegall and Linton, 2012).

According to Hord & Sommers, 2008, there are six conditions that are necessary for a PLC to be successful. It is important, therefore, to examine each school and determine whether those conditions are already fully present partially present, or absent. This information then can be used to determine whether that school is ready for a PLC or not. My research was designed to examine those conditions, as experienced by kindergarten teachers, in order to identify areas that need to be addressed before PLCs can be successfully implemented. The results of the survey and the interviews provided specific data that can be used to guide planning as administrators work toward improving the conditions in their schools, setting the groundwork for successful PLCs that benefit both the staff and the students.

Experiences in Saudi Arabia

In 1926, King AbdulAziz arranged an education meeting in Mecca with the purpose of establishing a formal education system in Saudi Arabia. After the meeting, the Saudi Arabian Education Department was officially established. King AbdulAziz appointed a group of eight members who oversaw the education department and were required to meet at least twice a

week. A year later, the government began its program of public education with four elementary schools on two levels. The first level covered the first three years of public schooling and the second level covered four more years. The Education Department had the authority to make other governmental decisions concerning education, such as giving permission for a private school to open in 1939 and establishing the first Saudi national curriculum in 1958. In 1943, the education department combined the two separate levels of elementary education and established one system of six years of elementary school (Haikim, 2012).

Later, the Saudi education department created a level before elementary school that was identified as kindergarten. This is the preliminary level for the other levels of education, and it is unique in that the children are very young. It was emphasized that the kindergarten teachers needed to be especially gentle and patient with such young children. Even though this level is necessary for the student's development, it is not required for all the Saudi students to attend the school (Haikim, 2012).

Currently, there are six levels of education in the Saudi Arabian system, five of which are gender-segregated: boys attend schools with male teachers only, and girls attend schools with female teachers only. The only exception is the preschool level, where all the teachers and the principals are female, regardless of the gender of the students. There are a few preschools where boys and girls both attend. At these schools, they are only segregated during class time; they eat breakfast and snack and have recess together. From approximately age 1-6, some children attend preschool. The preschool program is divided into two parts: nursery school for children ages 1-3, and kindergartens for children ages 3-6. The kindergartens are further divided into KG1, KG2, and KG3, for ages 3-4, 4-5, and 5-6, respectively. However, preschool is not mandatory, and

many families choose not to participate in this free program due to scheduling and transportation difficulties (Aljabreen & Lash, 2016).

According to Al-Assa (2009), more private schools are opening preschools in rural areas to reach more students, but there would still not be enough preschools to serve all the eligible students of preschool age, if their parents wanted to send them. Unlike many Western cultures, families in Saudi Arabia are not convinced of the value of the experiences and education (academic and social) that are received at the preschool level. As a result, many working mothers hire untrained nannies to care for their children while the mother is at work, rather than making arrangements for their children to spend the mornings in a preschool with trained and accredited preschool teachers (Aljabreen & Lash, 2016).

The next level of education is primary or elementary school, for children aged 6-12. This is followed by Intermediate school (ages 12-15) and Secondary school (ages 15-18). These levels of education are compulsory in Saudi Arabia. The secondary schools may focus on arts and sciences, or they may be vocational schools. Students who successfully complete the secondary level are permitted to register for higher education, which is free to all.

According to Rugh (2002), many Saudi Arabian schools are run in an authoritarian manner, with top-down leadership that makes it very difficult for teachers to work collaboratively with each other and with the administration. "Government regulation, the emphasis on rote memorization, and the amount of the curriculum devoted to the study of religion" can limit teachers' abilities to collaborate on curriculum development or extend it beyond what is required (Rugh, 2002, p. 50). There is a high degree of bureaucratic control over the education process, the method of study, and the material covered in class. Such external circumstances leave no room for teachers to share their experiences and concerns. They are thus

unable to monitor their progress relative to their colleagues, and this situation engenders not only an insularity that limits the scope of their growth as teachers but also discourages open discussion of ideas with administrators, thereby limiting overall growth.

In an effort to develop and improve the Saudi Arabian education system, King Abdullah implemented the public education development project known as "Tatweer" in 2007. The word "tatweer" in Arabic means reform, change, development or improvement. Tatweer focused on the quality of education to guarantee that the students of public education in Saudi Arabia were equipped with the skills that they needed in order to thrive in an increasingly globalizing world. Tatweer's (2014) vision was to place students in the core of the education system "by enhancing teacher professional development as an embedded activity of the school . . . organized into professional learning communities . . . allowing them to learn from each other on an ongoing basis" (2014, pp. 16-17). The overall goal of the Tatweer reform was to improve the schools and education system through developing new techniques and creating an environment to foster growth.

The reform strived for "excellence for all" (Alyami, 2014, p.1516), meaning each student deserved to excel and each teacher deserved to be excellent. This reform put a strong emphasis on developing the teachers and assisting in their collaboration. Another key factor Tatweer focused on was team commitment. All teachers, administrators, and staff were to be unified in their values, goals, and mission in order to achieve objectives. After the implementation of this reform, little evaluation was done regarding the effectiveness of this change. A qualitative study conducted by Rfah Hadi Alyami of the Institute of Education: University of Reading, United Kingdom, in 2014 explored closing the gap between the implementation of the reform and the impact it had on the education system in Saudi Arabia. The study concluded with this final

result: "giving schools more autonomy in its decision–making will lead to school effectiveness and help to achieve the desired goals" (Alyami, 2014, p.1523). A large influence within the quality of the education is based upon its educators. In order to maintain a high a quality of education, it is of the utmost importance to invest in the development of its leaders (Rodriguez-Campos, Rincones-Gomez, & Shen, 2005; Steyn, 2010).

In an effort to develop the economy, government, health system, education system, housing, and more, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia created a new initiative entitled Vision 2030 in which they have established new ideas and ways of processing and preparing the citizens for a positive change that will advance the Kingdom to a more innovative level. Specifically focusing on the education portion of this new initiative, one of their goals is to have the teachers collaborate with the families in order to establish a relationship rooted in trust, communication, and growth. However, before this kind of effective communication between parents and teachers can happen, the teachers must be in good communication with each other, having established a relationship of respect and collaboration. This culture of fluent PLCs collaboration is one that will require time in order take root and thrive. Once this effective PLC community is established, the teachers will be able to communicate more effectively with the families (Saudi Arabia government, n.d.).

Saudi Arabia's government sees a need for improvement in several areas, one of them being early childhood education. The Saudi Arabian government states that, "We will invest particularly in developing early childhood education, refining our national curriculum and training our teachers and educational leaders" (Saudi Arabia government, n.d, p. 36). This kind of change will better equip the teachers in helping the students achieve greater success.

Researcher Positionality

As a researcher, I engaged in an internal conversation with my perspective on teaching to determine how to interact with my subjects. During the interview process, our ideas and thoughts were shared, allowing our perspectives to grow and change. Since I was part of the research process, it is natural that my biases will influence my understanding and interpretation of the information that I collected from the participants in the interview process. Therefore, it was important for me to examine and identify potential sources of bias that may affect my data collection.

I am a teacher. I believe that kindergarten is one of the most important educational experiences that a child can have, and I believe kindergarten should be compulsory for all children in my country. I would like all children in Saudi Arabia, as in the whole world, to have the chance to learn in this early stage of life and to experience the formative power of early childhood learning in its full capacity to establish a solid foundation for intellectual achievement and steadfast maturing.

I have always been interested in expanding my knowledge in problem-solving, discussing educational problems with my friends more thoroughly to find solutions to serve the children who are our future generation. I have both taught and volunteered in several schools, helping the children and also the school administration in the development of the schools. The first school was very established in the field of Early Childhood Education, in terms of the development of the school, curriculum, and availability of resources. The second school was pre-school and kindergarten-only, and I worked there in the first year of this brand new school. I was not only a kindergarten teacher there but also strong supportive presence for the administration. We worked from morning until night to establish a high-quality school.

I attended college in Saudi Arabia, and then came to the United States to study education in graduate school. It is my ultimate life dream to enrich the lives of young people through education. I am interested in cutting-edge research for the development of excellence in education. I am dedicated to being professional in this aspect because I will be teaching in Saudi Arabia where this information can be a huge benefit to many teachers, schools, and children.

As someone who has had the opportunity not only to study in my home country but also abroad, I believe that I have developed the global perspective that is needed to lead well in the twenty-first century. Previous academic endeavors have allowed me to develop that vision fully and to enable it to flourish fully in both theory and practice. Having had exposure to world issues from the standpoint of a teacher and researcher, I have developed a broader understanding of the issues that face teachers in both the United States and Saudi Arabia.

Taking all this into consideration, my research focus was on the teachers of the kindergarten schools in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. Because I have volunteered in some preschools in Riyadh, I have seen firsthand the shortcomings in the education system. After difficult and unsatisfying experiences at some schools, during which time my colleagues and I collaborated only rarely, I came to the conclusion that many teachers here do not have the opportunity to prioritize collaboration. In my observations, I noted teachers' lack of satisfaction, lack of focus, and lack of vision. This situation has been seen and observed by Altayar (2003). She discerned a similar lack of passion in Saudi Arabian teachers that I noticed when I made my observations, such as a lack of responsibility, accountability, desire, enthusiasm, patience, and discipline, co-occurring with poor lesson planning skills and poor classroom management. As I made my observations, the teachers spent most of their time isolated in their classrooms, creating their lesson plans independently of each other, similar to Altayar's (2003) observations. Instead, they

could have been discussing their experiences with each other and sharing their challenges in an effort to help each other overcome difficulties. When teachers intentionally invest in supporting each other to grow, a foundation of skills, experiences, concentrations, and knowledge can be built. These characteristics can benefit the whole group of teachers when collaborating with one another (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004). Teachers benefit greatly from being open and supportive of each other, willing to collaborate and work closely with each other in the issues that really matter, from the beginning to the end. Some of the benefits to the teachers of participation in PLCs are: reduction of a sense of isolation; increased commitment to the school's mission and goals; increased understanding of the content and the teacher's role; feeling professionally renewed and inspired; more satisfaction; and higher morale (Hord, 1997).

Because of a lack of support, guidance, and collaboration, my colleagues and I had no idea what our coworkers were doing or if we were even instructing correctly and well. Because the kindergarten teachers in Riyadh rarely collaborate, they have little to no relationship with one another. Another possible reason for the difficulties in some of the preschools in Saudi Arabia may be the lack of funding. According to Aljabreen and Lash (2016), "While Saudi preschool progress has advanced significantly over the last 40 years, the Kingdom's preschool development is still less than what many other modern nations have achieved" (p. 317). Rural communities do not have access to preschools, and many preschools are underfunded with old, repurposed facilities that may not be safe for children. For all these reasons, my aim was to examine the PLC process and determine whether it could be effectively used by kindergarten teachers in Saudi Arabia.

Limitations and Possibilities of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was that I received the contact information for my participants through the Department of Education in Saudi Arabia. They contacted the principals and ask them for recommendations of teachers who would be willing to participate in my survey. It is possible that the teachers were fearful that there may be repercussions from the principal if they were honest about situations at the school that were not good. Even though I assured them of confidentiality, fear may have affected what they were willing to say to me and reduced my ability to go deeper into their experiences at the school. Al-Taneiji (2009) conducted a similar survey of teachers in United Arab Emirates and reported 789 returned questionnaires out of 850 (a response rate of 92.8%), while Al-Mahdy & Sywelem (2016) sent a similar survey to 500 teachers in Saudi Arabia and reported a response rate of 50.2%. Based on these results, I anticipated a response rate of approximately 50%.

Al-Mahdy & Sywelem (2016) do not discuss any tactics they might have used to increase the response rate, but Al-Taneiji (2009) specifies that her surveys were conducted by telephone, and the telephone interviews were scheduled for times that were convenient to the participants. Since my survey method and the culture of my participants was be very similar to those of Al-Mahdy & Sywelem (2016), I anticipated that my response rate would also be similar to theirs.

Dillman, Smyth, & Christian (2014) report that tailored design is an important part of creating an effective survey. "Tailored design" means that the survey should be designed to fit the "particular situations" of the survey respondents (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014, p. 15). The survey items should be written only after considering concepts such as the data that is desired and the characteristics of the respondents. The survey that I chose for a research

instrument was specifically designed to be used for teachers in Arab countries, to gather data about the conditions necessary for successful Professional Learning Communities.

According to Dillman, Smyth, & Christian (2014), one of the reasons that people do not respond to surveys is that they question the legitimacy of the survey. They wonder if it is junk mail or spam, for example. My survey was sent to them from the government agency that oversees public education in their region, so I believe this helped to convince them that the survey was legitimate.

There are several steps that a researcher can take to increase the response rate for a survey, according to Dillman, Smyth, & Christian (2014). For example, a researcher should explain the research project to the intended participants. The explanation should include a statement that points out the benefits of the research and assures the participants of confidentiality. The researcher should send a reminder to the participants after a certain amount of time has passed, and restate the benefits of the research.

Another reason that some people don't respond is that they are not sure what a survey question is asking. If they don't have a way to clarify the question, they give up and don't complete the survey. To address that possibility, I provided my WhatsApp phone number and other contact information in the e-mail with the survey. That way, participants could contact me with any questions that arise as they are completing the survey.

Another potential barrier to respondents could be the length of the survey. Participants may not have a block of time when they can complete the entire survey in one sitting. To reduce that concern, the survey was designed to save answers that are in progress. This way, if the participant was interrupted or needed to finish the survey at a later time, the answers were saved

and the participant was able to access the survey and complete it later. The survey did not submit the answers to me until the participant clicked "submit."

There are some other limitations to my research. While the survey was able to give me a basic picture of what is going on, it could not give me a full picture because a four-point scale does not allow room for discussion. In order to get a more complete picture of the situation in Dammam kindergartens, I also interviewed two of the teachers. It would have been preferable to have many interviews; however, time constraints only permitted me to interview two participants. To provide me with a more in-depth understanding, each teacher was interviewed three times, for 30-40 minutes per interview. This amounted to approximately 3-4 total hours of interaction with participants. The interviews were then transcribed, which took three weeks to complete. Then I had the participants review the transcripts of the interviews and send corrections or feedback, which took additional time. Finally, I examined the transcripts closely to look for themes. Due to the time restrictions I faced in my graduate program, I needed to design the research in a way that was reasonable, yet provided me with the broadest and deepest material possible. One of the ways that I ensured a broader experience was by selecting participants from two different schools that are not physically in close proximity to each other. This selection should have increased the likelihood that the participants did not know each other and probably had different experiences and perceptions. Also, I believe that the depth of the interviews and the three separate interactions with each participant provided me with richer data than if I would have interviewed six participants, but only met with them one time each.

Once the interview participants were selected, I asked them to allow me to interview them by Skype or other Internet video conferencing software. I realized that some Muslim women may not be comfortable using internet video, so I also gave them the option of a

telephone interview. I would have preferred to conduct the interviews in person, because in Saudi Arabian Muslim culture, people are less likely to give information to a stranger, even with assurances of confidentiality. A personal interview results in greater trust than an e-mail, survey, phone call or video conference. However, I was studying abroad and unable to go in person to collect my data, and I did not have any contacts in that region who would have been able to collect the data in person for me.

It is also possible that some of the teachers were not willing to apply PLC in their schools and, therefore, saw the study as a waste of time. They may not have had the willingness to collaborate or share their power or resources once a PLC was implemented. Maloney and Konza (2011) found that some teachers were not willing to invest time in PLC activities and some teachers did not value professional development. If the teachers in my study had those attitudes, then they may not have taken time to think through their responses.

Summary

In summary, a professional learning community (PLC) is a group of people who share a common purpose and goals and work together to achieve those goals. It is a model that can be implemented in schools by teachers and administration, where the teachers collaborate to improve student achievement. There are six characteristics that are necessary for a PLC to be successful. This research was designed to determine whether the six characteristics that are necessary for a PLC to be effective were present, according to the reports of kindergarten teachers in Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

In the next chapter, I provide a literature review detailing researcher's views of PLCs. These reviews include general conditions of PLCs, the process and outcomes of PLCs in the United States, PLCs in other countries, and philosophers' views of PLCs.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review is organized into five sections. The first section presents an overview of symbolic interactionism. This is the theoretical framework that guided the data collection and analysis. The second section presents the views of philosophers whose perspectives are compatible with the goals and objectives of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The third section presents an examination of the literature on PLCs, organized by each of the six conditions that are necessary for successful PLCs. The fourth section presents research on the effectiveness of PLCs in the United States. The fifth section examines similar research conducted on PLCs in other countries besides the United States. This chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Theoretical Framework: Symbolic Interactionism

The theoretical framework that guided the methodology for this research was symbolic interactionism. Denzin (2003) describes symbolic interactionism this way: "Simultaneously interpretive and analytic, structural and interactional, interactionism is both a theory of experiences and a theory of social structure" (p. 3). Symbolic interactionism is a way of examining and explaining social interaction. "Social interaction can be defined as a method that forms and expresses human behavior" (Aldiabat, 2011, p. 1065).

Herbert Blumer coined the term "symbolic interactionism" (Blumer, 1969), and Blumer's writings and teachings are seen as "the primary source of the perspective of symbolic interactionism" (Fine, 1993, p. 61). Blumer explains the reason for developing the theory of social interactionism:

The influence was along the line of giving to students a clearer picture of the nature of

social interaction between human beings consisted of meaningful objects, a recognition

that human beings constructed their actions through process of self-interaction, and an

appreciation that group life took the form of fitting together diverse lines of conduct

(Blumer, 1979, p. 22).

A fundamental difference between symbolic interactionism and other theories of social

interaction is the role that social interaction plays. Blumer (1969) explains the difference this

way: "Social interaction is a process that *forms* human conduct instead of being merely a means

or a setting for the expression or release of human conduct" (p. 8).

Symbolic interactionism has five foundational concepts (Charon, 1998). First, symbolic

interactionism focuses on the nature of interpersonal interactions. It looks at how people interact

with each other. Second, the theory is concerned with intrapersonal interactions--how an

individual's actions are affected by that person's thoughts at the time. This intrapersonal

interaction is crucial. In this part of the meaning-making process, the individual "has to point out

to himself the things that have meaning" (Blumer, 1969, p. 5). The individual is communicating

with himself. Once he has identified the things that have meaning, he interprets those meanings

and interacts based on his interpretations. This is a formative process (Blumer, 1969).

Third, how an individual defines a situation determines how the person will act in that

situation. "We do not respond to reality as it really is; we respond to reality as we find it"

(Charon, 1998, p. 28). The fourth concept underlying symbolic interactionism is the idea that a

person's actions are not a result of his or her past. The decisions we make and the actions we

take are a result of how we define the conditions of our current situation. Fifth, human beings are

in a unique position to take an active part in the cause of their own actions. As Stryker, 2008

explains it, "Humans have the capacity to resolve blocks to ongoing activity by internally manipulating symbols to review and choose among potential solutions" (p. 17).

Oliver (2012) demonstrates an articulate definition of the benefit of incorporating symbolic interactionism within a study: "The purpose is to understand how individuals and groups make meaning and act in situations in which automatic responses are inadequate" (p. 411). According to Oliver (2012), symbolic interactionism emphasizes that one individual's perspective can tell us something important about what is true, but no single perspective tells the whole story. If we want to determine what is really going on, we need to examine where the perspectives of different people converge.

Philosophers' Perspectives on PLCs

Parker Palmer

Parker Palmer's philosophy emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the teacher and his or her coworkers, students, and subject. He recommends the model of community that he calls the "therapeutic model," which he says "makes intimacy the highest value in human relationships, because intimacy is regarded as the best therapy for the pain of disconnection" (Palmer, 2007, p. 92).

In the ideal classroom, according to Palmer (2007), the teacher and the students share what they know and they learn from each other. He calls this approach to education the "community of truth," and says that the teacher must create a subject-centered classroom in order to build a community of truth (Palmer, 2007, p. 100). Palmer notes that a traditional teaching approach has the teacher at the center, giving knowledge and information to the students. In a subject-centered classroom, the teacher does not simply give information to the students. Instead, the teacher and the students examine together and learn from each other. He says that it is

necessary for teachers to have an open mind and be willing to consider new ideas. This attitude is essential for successful PLC's, as well. If teachers are not willing to learn from each other and share their classroom experiences with the intent of learning how to improve, then the PLC will not be as effective for those teachers.

Palmer (2007) notes that sometimes teachers do not create a community of truth in the classroom because they say that they have too much material to cover to spend time establishing a culture that encourages students to get involved. Teachers say that they have to "cover the curriculum" (teach everything in the chapter or book). This only allows them to give the students the information and then give them the test and then move on to the next chapter. They do not have time to discuss details with the students. Palmer says that teachers must stop worrying about covering every topic in the curriculum, because rushing to cover material, testing, then covering more material does not result in learning. The students memorize facts without understanding or caring about the subject, and they forget the material as soon as the test is over. This traditional approach will not work well for teachers in a PLC. The design of a PLC requires teachers to examine the data they are collecting and reflect on what methods they have used for instruction and whether those methods have resulted in true learning.

Palmer (2007) says that there are two ways for teachers to grow as teachers: learn from our inner selves, or learn from other teachers. We need to learn both ways. It is necessary to learn about ourselves, but we also need to learn from the community of teachers. One problem with teaching as a profession is that teachers work solo—we go into our classrooms and teach, and no one sees what we are doing or whether we are doing a good job. When the principal comes in to evaluate us, he/she often just marks on a form what is seen in the short time that he/she is observing. There is no way that what he/she sees can give a true idea of whether we are

good teachers or not. "The nuances of teaching cannot possibly be captured this way" (Palmer, 2007, p. 147). Palmer says that this kind of teacher evaluation is the only way the principal can evaluate us because we insist on keeping observers out of our classroom while we teach. This practice of keeping others out of our classroom keeps individuals from growing as teachers and makes it harder for schools and universities to educate students well. Palmer says, "There is only one honest way to evaluate the many varieties of good teaching with the subtlety required: it is called 'being there.' We must observe each other teach, at least occasionally—and we must spend more time talking to each other about teaching" (Palmer, 2007, p. 148). This idea of teachers observing each other and talking with each other about teaching is foundational to the concept of PLCs.

According to Palmer (2007) there are three parts to the solution to the problem of how to best evaluate teachers and keep teachers from being closed off in their own classrooms. First, teachers need to talk with each other about something besides technique. They need to talk about who they are inside, why they became teachers, paradoxes they face, mistakes they have made, and successes they have had. These topics could be part of the first meeting of a PLC, but forming this type of intimacy is not a key part of a successful PLC. As the PLC develops, teachers will need to identify and examine their mistakes and successes with each other, but if they spend much time discussing topics such as why they became teachers, the PLC will be less focused and more time-consuming.

Palmer (2007) states the important thing when we try to get teachers to talk with each other about these things is to have a rule that no one is allowed to give anyone else any advice. Teachers are only allowed to talk about their own classroom experience, not someone else's. They need to speak honestly and listen to each other without judging. This kind of attitude also is

not compatible with PLC objectives. While teachers need to be respectful of each other, they are expected to give advice, talk about each other's classroom experiences, and sometimes judge whether another teacher's specific instructional technique was successful.

The second part of the solution, according to Palmer, is "new ground rules for dialogue" (Palmer, 2007, p. 155). He says that teachers need to change the way they talk with each other, because teachers compete against each other and give each other advice instead of listening. If we are going to change the culture among teachers, we have to change the way teachers interact with each other. He suggests forming a "clearness committee," which is something Quakers do (Palmer is a member of the Quaker religion). A clearness committee is formed when someone who has a problem asks four or five colleagues to be on his/her clearness committee. Then the committee meets for two or more hours, and the "focus person" (the one with the problem) talks about the problem. The committee members are only allowed to ask general, honest, and open questions. They can't give any advice, or even give a clue about what they think the focus person should do. As the focus person talks and answers the questions, he is able to listen to his "inner teacher" to "hear more clearly the guidance that comes from within" (Palmer, 2007, p. 159). Again, this approach would not fit well within the PLC design. PLCs are not expected to solve personal problems that teachers have, and the participants are not expected to just listen silently while a "focus person" talks for hours. However, the concept of listening quietly while someone presents a problem in the classroom could be very helpful in a PLC meeting.

The third part of the solution, according to Palmer, is a need for leadership for the teachers. "Good talk about good teaching is unlikely to happen if presidents and principals, deans and department chairs, and others who have influence without position do not *expect* it and *invite* it" (Palmer, 2007, p. 161, emphasis in original). He is saying that the school leadership/

administration has to create systems and opportunities for teachers to interact with each other in ways that help them grow professionally. He talks about a college that has a "teaching consultant" that teachers can go to when they have a problem and need to talk about it. This is compatible with current PLC practice.

According to Palmer (2007), many teachers like his ideas, but they get discouraged when they think about their school and the education system in America, and they feel like nothing will ever change. They think the school system (the institutions or organizations) are too powerful, and individual teachers like them don't have any way to make things change. He recommends that the teachers who feel this way and who want to teach with a subject-centered approach and in a community of truth should speak out about this desire. That way, they can connect with like-minded teachers and they can support each other. This idea of like-minded teaching is an important part of a successful PLC. In order for a PLC to be successful, the participants need to have a shared vision and shared goals.

bell hooks

Another philosopher who has ideas compatible with PLCs is bell hooks. Like Palmer, hooks believes that teachers should be learning along with their students. She states, "engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process" (hooks, 1994, p. 21). She says that the important lessons are ones that the teacher and the students learn together, in a process of mutual engagement. This concept is carried further by the PLC process, because when teachers collaborate and have a shared vision and shared practice, they are also looking at a subject together and learning together in a process of mutual engagement.

Embracing the challenge of self-actualization makes a teacher better. It requires the teacher to strive for the best instructional practices that engage students and help them to become learners who are able to live fuller and deeper lives (hooks, 1994). This challenge to become a better teacher is supported by PLCs. The participants are expected to share their successes and failures in the classroom with the purpose of examining what worked and what didn't, so that the teachers can be more and more effective and the students can be better and more successful learners.

Like Palmer, hooks believes that teachers need to interact with each other, rather than stay isolated in their classrooms. "It is crucial that critical thinkers who want to change our teaching practices talk to one another, collaborate in a discussion that crosses boundaries and creates a space for intervention" (hooks, 1994, p. 129). The ideas of collaborating, crossing boundaries (especially the closed door of the solo teacher's classroom) and creating space for intervention are all components of PLCs.

Although she doesn't use Palmer's term "community of truth," hooks also believes that classrooms should be learning communities "where everyone's voice can be heard, their presence recognized and valued" (hooks, 1994, p. 185). However, hooks notes that most teachers do not want to invest time in discussing teaching methods and they do not see that such discussions make their teaching more effective. She says that one of the biggest obstacles to transforming educational practices is that most progressive professors are uncomfortable examining how class biases shape conduct in the classroom. They would rather continue the pedagogical processes that are more comfortable to them. This challenge also influences the success of PLCs. When teachers are not interested in change, they will not be willing to participate fully in the PLC process.

hooks places a high value on the concept of collaboration and relationship between teachers and students. She notes that "sharing experiences and confessional narratives in the classroom helps establish communal commitment to learning" (hooks, 1994, p. 186). It is likely that hooks would support PLCs for the same reason, even though the focus of the PLC is the shared experiences and narratives between the teachers in the PLC, rather than between the teachers and their students.

The concept of "critical thinking" is foundational to hooks' philosophy. She states that critical thinking is "the primary element allowing the possibility of change…no matter what one's class, race, gender, or social standing…without the capacity to think critically about ourselves and our lives, none of us would be able to move forward, to change, to grow," (hooks, 1994, p. 202). She states that critical thinking is the heart of engaged pedagogy. In a PLC, each teacher is expected to share specific classroom struggles. The members of the PLC then are expected to take the time to think critically about the situation, research potential solutions, and then develop a plan of action to address the issue. After implementing the plan and collecting data, the teachers collectively determine the success of the plan and decide on the next step.

hooks strongly believes that teachers need to examine themselves, their teaching practices, their values, and their relationships with students and with other professional educators. When they examine these components of their profession, and they think critically about them, they are empowered to change their pedagogy to make it more about student learning. She says, "Ideally, education should be a place where the need for diverse teaching methods and styles would be valued, encouraged, seen as essential to learning," (hooks, 1994, p. 203). She says that this process of collective, engaged learning with teachers and students together is a way for all of us to move beyond our boundaries and experience freedom.

Richard DuFour

One of the most well-known philosophers associated with PLCs is Richard DuFour. Dr. DuFour was a public school educator for 34 years and is one of the leading authorities on the PLC process and how to implement successful PLCs in schools (DuFour & DuFour, 2012). In his blog, DuFour discusses specific examples that support the need for professional collaboration among teachers. He talks about how his son's AP course instructors collaborated extensively to provide the best educational experience for all their students, rather than each teacher being concerned only with the success of the students in their own classrooms. He also gives an example of a recent study that revealed that non-surgical procedures for preventing heart attacks were just as effective as and considerably less dangerous than the surgical procedures. This information was only revealed as a result of many medical professionals sharing their experiences and collaborating (DuFour, 2007).

DuFour states, "That is what we advocate for educators. That they come together to develop strategies for gathering evidence that their students are learning the things that the teachers have agreed are the most essential, they discuss the evidence, and use it to inform and shape their practice," (2007, p. 1). This is similar to Palmer's (2007) argument that teachers and students need to examine the "Great Things," which are the important ideas that will give students the opportunity to examine and learn along with the teacher.

DuFour believes that the role of the teacher is to ensure that students learn (DuFour, 2004). The student is not allowed to fail, regardless of his or her academic deficiencies or learning problems. When formative assessments indicate that a student needs interventions, the interventions are not optional; the student must be required to participate. The interventions should become more and more intensive until the student begins succeeding. The role of the

school administration is to provide the structure and support that is necessary for the teachers to ensure student learning, such as scheduling time for collaboration among teachers and time for intervention for students (DuFour, et al., 2006). According to DuFour, schools that are committed to student learning "will guarantee that each student receives whatever additional support he or she needs" (2004, p. 8).

Shurley Hord

Another philosopher who supports PLCs is Shurley Hord. Dr. Hord is the scholar laureate of Learning Forward. She taught at both the elementary school level and the college level, and she conducted research on school improvement. She now travels as a consultant and gives presentations on school improvement strategies ("Shurley Moos Hord," 2017). Dr. Hord describes herself as a "student of school change and improvement," (Hord, 1997). She has seen many failed attempts to effect improvement in schools, and she has researched the characteristics that make school change successful. As a result of her many years of research, she has come to the conclusion that PLCs are an effective method of improving the education system and increasing student achievement.

Hord states that the purpose of schools is student learning, and the most critical factor in whether students learn well is quality teaching (Hord, 2010). Like DuFour, Hord believes that the role of the teacher is to ensure that students are learning. In order to do that effectively, the teacher needs to collect data and examine it to see which students have achieved the learning goals and which haven't. Then the teacher needs to research methods that can be used to help the students who are struggling. This is best done in a community of learners who can do the research as a team and collaborate to try new approaches and evaluate them for effectiveness (Hirsh & Hord, 2010).

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One of the critical components of effective teaching is the teacher's commitment and willingness to change. The fact that a teacher participates willingly in a PLC does not guarantee that the teacher's instructional practice will improve. Hord states, "Well-intentioned teachers can be committed to great teaching, and still the beliefs, habits, and strategies they have adopted over the years may work against them" (Hirsh & Hord, 2010, p. 11). If the teachers are not open to changing their instructional practices, the PLC will not be successful.

Hord also believes that is it essential to have shared power, authority, and decision making. No one person or group should be allowed to dominate the process of the PLC, because it is important to ensure that every participant feels empowered. Even though they need the opportunity to persuade each other in order to come to consensus, every member should feel that he or she has a voice and is being heard (Hirsh & Hord, 2010).

John Dewey

In the early 1900s, John Dewey began to draw a relationship between progressivism and democracy, in which he saw schools as "a miniature democratic society in which students learn the skills necessary for democratic living" (Stankiewicz, 2001, p. 46). Emphasizing "how to think, not what to think" and stressing the importance of developing students' ability to become active thinkers, Dewey found a way to avoid the old ways of teaching whereby teachers would deposit knowledge into passive students (Stankiewicz, 2001, p. 46). Education was a matter of drawing out rather than imposing knowledge, which explained Dewey's belief that the curriculum should be interdisciplinary, focused on problem-solving, and developed collaboratively between students and teachers (Stankiewicz, 2001, p. 47).

Dewey and his followers believed that education should promote critical thinking, self-directed learning, and creativity in the service of creating capable members of a democracy.

Deweyan Progressive educators favored "group consciousness" and the needs of the community when developing educational programs. Dewey's views on the role of the teacher are similar to Palmer's, in that they both see the teacher as more of a facilitator of learning than a presenter. Palmer notes that education does not happen when students just memorize facts that are presented to them; teachers need to choose the "great things" and present them to the students for examination and discussion. According to Dewey (1897), "The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences" (p. 78). Both Palmer and Dewey believe that the best learning comes from experiences.

Dewey understood that education is fundamentally transformative and that enhancing education means enhancing the quality of the life experience (Hansen, 2007). That is why he pushed for more within the present conditions, for cultivating more pedagogical talent for enhancing creativity in the classroom, and for richer activities and materials. For him, both mind and body are implicated in learning; thus, an understanding of the physical educational environment becomes important (Hansen, 2007). Everything, including lighting, materials, space, and so on, is capable of enhancing or hampering learning, so it is best to understand these aspects so that we can work to maximize students' learning potential. Dewey understood the limitations that stand in the way of limitless human possibility, and yet he continued to advocate for trying to build upon what is already present and what is still to come (Hansen, 2007). Dewey also pushed the educator's role even further, beyond knowledge and facts, into depth of understanding of the historical trajectory and creativity and feeling that gives rise to the subject matter in the first place (Hansen, 2007).

In *Experience and Education*, John Dewey (1995) presented a new way of approaching education which would ultimately change education dramatically. In traditional education, students would be required to memorize information and to learn by rigid methods that were not serving them. Students were not able to develop their understanding or to acquire insight into the various complexities of their changing world. The old way of learning was weak and unable to produce independent critical thinkers and problem solvers, so Dewey (1995) argued that it was necessary to "search for a more effective source of authority," (p. 21) away from an egocentric, authoritarian approach towards more collaborative, guided learning. By this approach, Dewey believed that students would become empowered to think and to develop on their own.

Dewey (1995) makes an important point of distinction between education and educative. While education is meant to be good and formative, it does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. In fact, education can be experienced in a defective way, leaving students feeling desperate to understand but not really understanding at all, only knowing how to repeat learned tasks in a dull, mindless, and dutiful way. Worse yet, some experiences are mis-educative—that is, they have the opposite effect, of arresting and distorting growth, affecting our personality in unforeseeable ways. Dewey believes that when education is handled in a rote manner, students can end up developing an antagonistic attitude to ideas, losing the impetus to learn because learning itself becomes drill-based, automatic rather than autonomous.

Dewey's ideas have had an impact on the world as well as in my own curriculum development and teaching style, such that the old ways of working seem so thoughtless and obsolete. Ultimately, I hope that education at all levels would reach the point where Dewey hoped to take us, in which self-control and freedom can coexist for students and their teachers. I think that Dewey would agree with the PLC process of encouraging teachers to reflect on their

practice. He would agree with the idea of having teachers to work as a community or team, but I think he would disagree with DuFour's intense focus on teachers as the driving force of education and learning. He would also disagree with the PLC's focus on examining data and making decisions based on that data, rather than examining individual students and making decisions based on the needs and interests of those individual students. I think Dewey would not like the idea of teachers trying new approaches and "testing them" on their students, unless the new approaches involved giving students more freedom to learn the way they want to learn.

Professional Learning Communities

A PLC consists of a group of teachers and their leading principal who are committed to gaining deeper knowledge and understanding of their students with the goal of improving academic achievement. These communities work together to create learning networks for the benefit of the school. A PLC works to accomplish the goal of improving students' achievement by focusing on inquiry and concentrated learning for the PLC members. Members of this community use various assessments to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their students, so that they can apply this knowledge to close the achievement gap. These meetings are often frequent and include review, goal setting, brainstorming, assessing, and improving (Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2007).

In today's school systems, we see many issues revolving around the community of teachers, student achievement, as well as the overall success of the school. Many schools are suffering from numerous issues having to do with a lack of a supportive culture, isolated teachers, ill-equipped teachers for challenging students, minimal interactions with colleagues, and a gap between the staff and principal (Morrissey, 2000). Many of these challenges can be addressed by a PLC. For example, in addition to the other benefits of PLCs, the structure that is

necessary for a successful PLC can be beneficial for unorganized, unprepared teachers, and teachers who do not manage their time effectively. Morrissey states, "Professional learning communities are a balance between organizational structure and productive, substantive use of that organization and time" (2000, p. 43). As stated by Schmoker, "If there is anything that the research community agrees on, it is this: the right kind of continuous, structured teacher collaboration improves the quality of teaching and pays big, often immediate, dividends in student learning and professional morale in virtually any setting. Our experience with schools across the nations bears this out unequivocally" (Schmoker, 2004, p. 48).

Becky Burnette (2002) is a great success stories of a principal who implemented PLCs. Her school in the United States has classes for students from kindergarten to fifth grade, with 393 students and 22 teachers in the year that the PLCs were first implemented. Burnett states:

> Student performance on the state tests matched the school's all-time record in one of the nine areas tested and established new records in the other eight areas. Students also showed gains on our local assessments. The staff was enthusiastic about the new collaborative culture we were building (Burnette, 2002, p. 54).

After one year of implementing PLCs, she reported seeing great improvement in both student achievement and the staff's attitude. For example, the rate of third grade students passing the Standard of Learning State Tests in history prior to the establishment of PLCs was 79%. The passing rate after the PLCs were established was 96%.

"Many teachers and administrators find the opportunity to meet with colleagues and openly reflect on practice to be a welcome change from the isolation and focus on individual effort that characterize the traditional professional context of education" (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004, p. 3). Many schools suffer from a lack of communication and

collaboration, causing disunity amongst the teachers. A PLC can bring about a positive change to the lackluster environment making it one of togetherness and community. Teachers tend to teach in the way that they are taught (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005). Teachers won't enhance their teaching ability if they do not receive professional development. A positive result of investing in teacher's development is greater confidence, capability, and fulfilment within their profession (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005).

Basic Conditions Necessary for PLC to be Effective

Hord (1995) examines the research on professional learning communities and organizes the essential characteristics into five dimensions. These dimensions of PLCs are: (1) shared and supportive leadership, (2) shared values and vision, (3) collective learning and application of learning, (4) shared practice, and (5) supportive conditions. After more than a decade of research into the topic, Hord and Sommers (2008) found continued support for these five dimensions, with two slight variations. First, "shared values and vision" was enlarged to "shared beliefs, values, and vision," and second, "shared practice" was specified as "shared personal practice" (Hord & Sommers, 2008, p. 9). They also divided the dimension of "supportive conditions" into two areas: "physical and structural factors," and "relational factors and human capacities" (Hord & Sommers, 2008, p. 13).

The key position for a school's ability to develop these conditions is the principal, who acts as the catalyst for the changes that must occur in order for a PLC to succeed (Hall & Hord, 2006; Leithwood, et al., 2004; Murphy et al., 2006). The principal must understand the importance of leadership that is shared by the PLC members. It is also the responsibility of the principal to support the development of the PLC by making space for the PLC to meet, both physical space (such as an appropriate location) and temporal space (sufficient time and specific

days) so that the needs of the PLC are met (Hall & Hord, 2006). The principal is also responsible for building unity within the PLC by helping to establish a shared vision and ensuring that the PLC goals support the district's goals (De Neve & Devos, 2017). The principal needs to monitor to ensure that the PLC members have a clear focus and are involved in collaborative inquiry (Stoll, 2011).

Shared Leadership. One of the keys to effective PLCs is shared leadership, according to Hoffman, Dahlman and Zierdt (2009). Shared leadership means that the administration and faculty share the power and decision-making authority. When leadership is shared between the PLC participants, most of the teachers report that they feel a heightened sense of belonging. In an effective PLC, each teacher needs to be responsible for doing his or her share of the work. The staff shares the decision-making responsibility (Maloney & Konza, 2011; Stegall & Linton, 2012).

A PLC that is improving the students' learning is one that first understands the importance of an empowered teacher. If a teacher is being nurtured and encouraged in their own learning, they will then be able to guide and direct their students. According to Morrissey (2000), "when teachers in professional learning communities are provided the support and development they need for their own learning to improve their classroom practice, significant value is placed on the effect continuous learning has on their work" (p. 24). A growing teacher is able to better impact his or her classroom.

Successful PLCs have principals who deliberately share the leadership role. Morrissey explains:

Principals held high expectations for their teachers by asking them to serve on decision-making teams and to acquire the information necessary for themselves and others to

make sound instructional decisions. Teachers were expected to grow professionally;

many developed professional growth plans and portfolios that reflected the goals of the

school and their desire continually to improve instruction (2000, p. 39).

"A learning community of professionals in a school represents a viable context in which

teachers and administrators can share decision making, collaborate on their practice, and hone

their skills to increase student learning." (Morrissey, p. 34, 2000) This kind of leadership

relationship fosters a positive community.

Likewise, the administrator of the school is very important to the success of the PLC.

According to Spanneut (2010), "principals have opportunities to play key roles in establishing

the conditions within which PLCs can flourish" (p. 101). The principals are responsible for

making time for dialogue and for helping to create an environment of open sharing rather than

just a supervisory relationship. The principal plays a key role in establishing a shared vision

based on consensus and common interests and goals, which in turn builds unity in the PLC (De

Neve & Devos, 2017). The administration is also responsible for ensuring that the teachers are

trained in how to collaborate, involving the teachers in the PLC development, ensuring that the

PLC goals support the district's goals, and helping meet the needs of the PLC. According to Stoll

(2011), the leadership should be responsible for making sure that the participants have a clear

focus, that others are involved in the leadership, and that the participants are involved in

collaborative inquiry.

One of the top elements of a successful PLC is the availability of experts such as

university faculty members (Linder, Post, & Calabrese, 2012). During the 2010-2011 school

year, Roberta Linder, Gina Post, and Kathryn Calabrese, members of the Education Department

of a small, liberal arts college in the Midwest in the United States, utilized funds from a

Congressional Appropriations grant to initiate and guide the development of PLCs in three

community schools.

Table 2.1

Results of End-of-Year Survey

Component of PLC	M	SD
Reading and discussing journal articles	4.31	0.62
Reading and discussing book chapters	4.42	0.65
Selecting/implementing/sharing/discussing results of activities	4.63	0.56
Selecting and receiving new materials related to the PLC's selected topic	4.59	0.50
Meeting on a regular basis	4.54	0.65
Being able to study a selected topic in depth	4.93	0.27
Having the assistance of a university faculty member	4.89	0.32

Note. From Linder, et al. (2012), p. 18.

Teachers appreciated the opportunity that it gave them to talk about issues in depth,

especially regarding how to explain a topic. PLC produced excitement about being able to focus

strongly on one topic rather than many as well as the opportunity to use that topic as a model of

study, for which busy classroom teachers who have to teach five or more subjects lack the time.

They appreciated being able to implement new instructional techniques, disrupting their previous

instructional routines, evaluating new classroom practices, learning from each other, and

conducting action research to investigate their chosen topics. But especially, the results showed

very positive comments regarding teachers' enjoyment of being able to work with university

faculty, as they found the leadership inspiring and sympathetic, instrumental to focus,

knowledgeable, without bias, and helpful in its allowance for individually meaningful ways to

help students.

Real change will not occur "without the involvement of key personnel representing the various stakeholder groups," as there must be "a broad vision for change" that includes "key leaders, as well as a grassroots understanding of the multiple diverse factors that exert influence on any given classroom—such an understanding that can be provided only by classroom teachers" (Hoffman, et al. 2009, p. 29). Positive changes in leaders' behaviors result from "deeper understanding of complex issues related to professional learning communities, beliefs that are aligned with quality teaching and high levels of learning for all students, and 'next action thinking'" that sustains the momentum of change (Hoffman, et al., 2009, p. 29). So far, "opportunities for teachers to interact either within or outside school have been mostly sporadic and random," and the need for practitioners to work together becomes even stronger when they have to guard against "conflicting government views of professional work" (Maloney & Konza, 2011, p. 76). Besides that, educators need to feel empowered to make enduring change and they must accommodate commitments such as regular meetings, reading, preparation before meetings, and the willingness to engage in discussions. In working together with university researchers, care must be taken also to ensure that the researchers are not a constraining influence on teachers' communication and contribution (Maloney & Konza, 2011).

One important aspect of supportive leadership is the attitude and behaviors of the school's principal. The principal at Boones Mill Elementary School recognized the value of communication as a component of supportive leadership and instilled a practice to ensure that the PLC was effective. Principal Burnette created a color-coded worksheet for the teachers to fill out during their PLC time that allowed them to give feedback to her about the successes and failures from their meeting. She also established a chairperson for each department who would be

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responsible for communicating with her and the leadership of the school about needed materials, resources, corrections, and improvements (Burnette, 2002).

As Morrissey (2000) describes, the leadership style and active participation of a school principal is an essential part of PLC success. A shared leadership format, rather than a domineering principal, will empower the staff to scrutinize, inquire, and seek resolutions for school improvements, all the while growing together towards a common goal. The job of a principal in this type of setting is to equip, support, and empower the teachers, and share the decision making responsibility.

Morrissey (2000) lists positive characteristics of a principal who is leading a PLC. Principals should provide supportive conditions and resources, share in decision making, empower teachers toward leadership roles, create structures for teacher's learning, and implement systems for feedback. Successful principals communicate high expectations for their team as well as have a presence and regular interaction with their teachers. This kind of leadership will create a supportive and encouraging atmosphere for teachers to have the freedom to take the actions necessary for the best interest of their students.

DeMatthews (2014) conducted a qualitative multi-case study in six elementary schools in west Texas. In this study, principals and teachers were observed and interviewed for one academic school year to see how leadership was distributed amongst the teachers and how they collaborated and worked together to facilitate quality PLCs. This was done by observing ten PLC meetings in each of six different schools, totaling sixty observed PLCs. He discovered that all the principals in the study believed that it was very beneficial for a PLC to consist of open minded teachers who are ready for discussion, as well as teachers who are leaders in their schools. Most

of the principals recognized that the best approach to leadership was to support the teachers in leadership rather than delegating authority (DeMatthews, 2014).

Shared Beliefs, Values, and Vision. Shared beliefs, values, and vision are necessary for an effective PLC (Maloney & Konza, 2011). "The values . . . are embedded in the day-to-day actions of the school staff, wherein the learning community engages and develops the commitment and talents of all individuals in a group effort that pushes for learning of high intellectual quality" (Morrissey, 2000, p. 5). In contrast to shared values, shared vision is easier to identify. "Sharing vision is not just agreeing with a good idea; it is a particular mental image of what is important to an individual and to an organization" (Al-Mahdy & Sywelem, 2016, p. 48). Once the members of the PLC feel that they can trust each other and they understand each other, they become willing to communicate their personal visions, which then can be used to develop a shared vision (Hord, 1997). A PLC with shared beliefs, values, and vision has staff who value their own learning and are able to stay focused on the PLC goal of student learning. When developing a shared vision, it is important to keep in mind the overall focus of the PLC on student achievement. "A fundamental characteristic of the professional learning community's vision is its unwavering focus on student learning" (Morrissey, 2000, p. 5).

In order for the teachers' decisions to contribute to the school's common goal, one must view the decision through the lens of the school's vision. This will allow the conclusion to be filtered by the common goal. One way of determining whether the members have a shared vision is through the process of goal-setting. D'Ardenne et al. (2013) mention that goal-setting is an important part of the PLC meetings. These goals should be results-oriented (DuFour, 2012). Goal setting is more successful when "All professional members of the school are invested in their own learning and make the changes necessary to become more effective in addressing the

needs of all students, helping them to achieve high standards of learning" (Morrissey, 2000, p. 7). This shared value helps to unify the teachers as they set goals to accomplish their common purpose of improving the students' learning.

Doolittle, Sudeck, and Rattigan (2008) observe that in their network of twelve professional development schools, there was sometimes a lack of "practical or collaborative strategies that allow for refocusing energies and articulating priorities" (p. 303). What makes these communities difficult is first, the need to respond to multiple sets of stakeholders, standards and competing views of teaching and learning; and second, the need for meeting multiple sets of standards, namely national, state, and even professional development schools' standards with layers of bureaucratic challenges and confusion about learner outcomes. By focusing on "a mutually agreed-upon educational initiative and using a systemic change model," real work can be accomplished and sustained (Doolittle, et al., 2008, p. 305).

Collective Learning and Application ("Collaborative Culture"). The characteristic of collective learning and application refers to the participants' determination of what and how they will learn, as well as how they will use it to improve student learning outcomes. "A school's existing capacity to do collaborative work before introducing PLCs and the readiness of school leaders to engage in this work greatly influenced PLCs' growth" (Thessin & Starr, 2011, p. 50). A vital component of a successful PLC is motivated participants in a collaborative culture (Maloney & Konza, 2011). DuFour (2012) notes that creating enthusiasm and motivating teachers to participate in PLC is one of the responsibilities of the administration before the PLC is implemented. This expectation is not always found in Saudi Arabia, where the administrators are often expected to be more like business managers than encouragers and culture-setters (Abduljawad, et al., 2008; Aljabreen & Lash, 2016).

Song (2012) and Easton (2012) state that this atmosphere of collaboration encourages teachers and increases their willingness to participate, and is the only way all students in a school can achieve at high levels. D'Ardenne et al. (2013) lists several positive results of collaboration. Collaboration helped the participants make sure that the quality of their work was consistent and helped them to determine the desired quality level of the lessons that they were teaching. But upholding these tenets of reflection, democracy, and collegiality is sometimes hard to achieve in reality (Kristmanson, Lafargue, & Culligan, 2011). It is important to establish an atmosphere in the PLC that encourages the teachers to participate.

Two elements of a successful PLC according to teachers are: the ability to study one's self-chosen topic in-depth and selecting, implementing, sharing and discussing the results of their activities (Linder, et al., 2012). One of the ways to establish these elements and encourage participation may be to spend some time during the initial formation of the PLC deciding on the PLC's guiding principles. For example, a PLC involving teachers of foreign languages in a public high school began by discussing the rationale for the PLC and identifying three guiding principles that were research-supported and fit their individual beliefs and the vision and mission of the school. The principles that they chose were democratic pedagogy, autonomous learning, and intercultural awareness. They referred to these guiding principles regularly as they reflected on their instructional practices and discussed their results (Kristmanson, Lafargue, & Culligan, 2011).

As Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) note, in the last two decades, research has defined "a new paradigm for professional development—one that rejects the ineffective 'drive-by' workshop model of the past in favor of more powerful opportunities" of high-quality professional development (p. 46). A national survey (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon,

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2001) shows that when teachers received coherent professional development, their own knowledge and skills grew and their practice changed. Hands-on work that helped teachers to grow in their knowledge of the content as well as on how best to teach it produced efficacy, but that is not all. When the professional development meets the criteria of effective in terms of sustained, job-embedded, collaborative teacher learning strategies, teachers can have that opportunity to work together and engage in continual dialogue, to examine their practice and student performance, and to develop and implement more effective instructional practices that enhance their overall expertise.

Thessin and Starr (2011) write in "Supporting the Growth of Effective Professional Learning Communities" that "learning how to work in teams does not just magically happen" and that districts must be "deliberate in their efforts to teach teachers how to collaborate" (p. 50). When implementing PLCs system-wide, districts play four key roles:

- "Ownership and support—Districts must involve teachers and administrators in developing and leading the PLC process;

- Professional development—Districts must teach administrators and teachers how to work together effectively in PLCs;

- Clear improvement process—Districts must show how PLCs fit into the district's improvement process so that each PLCs work fits into an overall plan; and

- Differentiated support—Districts must support school according to their unique needs in order to help them move on to the next step in their PLC growth" (Thessin & Starr, 2011, p. 51)

It is not enough to put teachers together and expect them to work together or understand the process, hope, or expectation, especially when teachers are unaccustomed to working together.

They will simply not make progress and/or become confused by what they should be doing, especially if they are used to having full control of their classroom teaching style, content, etc. "Simply putting well-meaning individuals together and expecting them to collaborate was not enough"; they need "professional development and guidance to achieve this goal" (Thessin & Starr, 2011, p. 50). Amongst teachers, working together requires fostering habitual and continuous group learning as well as providing teachers with team-building resources and skills. Clear expectations and differentiated support are vital in the first year so that the learning needs of individual teacher teams can be met. By establishing certain guiding principles, such as learner autonomy, intercultural awareness, and democratic pedagogy, teachers in Kristmanson, et al.'s (2011) study were able to provide a philosophical framework for their work. They also came up with a shared action plan that was consistent and systematic, and adaptable by all.

Likewise, if leadership coaches are brought into the schools to work with teachers and principals, they have to "temporarily relinquish power" in order to adopt a partnership approach to interaction, but in return, what they get is "authentic power gained through choice" which replaces "empty power" (Knight, 2011, p. 21). Their success is directly linked to doing away with top-down feedback, which is based on the assumption that there is only one right way to see things, and replacing it with the partnership approach which is about the collaborative exploration of data.

Shared Personal Practice. One of the key components of a successful PLC is shared personal practice, which may also be referred to as "deprivatized practice" (De Neve & Devos, 2017). This is evidenced by the willingness of participants to "make their teaching public with the aim of giving and receiving feedback" (De Neve & Devos, 2017, p. 264). Eastwood & Louis (1992) state that developing a collaborative atmosphere is a very important factor of successful

schools and will help to increase the impact of the PLC. Teachers interact and share their experiences in their classrooms as they implement the plans of the PLC, they examine student information together, and then they all use that feedback to adjust their strategies (D'Ardenne, et al., 2013; DuFour, 2011; Stegall & Linton, 2012). This requires the teachers first to reflect on their own teaching. The focal point of the best teachers is on how well the students are learning rather than on their teaching abilities. In order to maintain this focus one must continually consider and review the students' attainment of knowledge, therefore initiating a reflective cycle (Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2007).

One way to effectively reflect on and share personal practice is to videotape. For example, Christ, Arya, and Chiu (2016) examined a PLC that decided to videotape the teachers as they worked with students. Then the entire group watched each videotape and together the PLC members critiqued the instruction. The researchers learned that the teachers were more likely to make changes to their instructional practice after viewing their videos with their colleagues. These changes resulted in greater student learning. Another way that teachers share their personal practice is through observing other teachers in the classroom, and then discussing what they observed (Thessin & Starr, 2011). This type of observation is familiar to many new teachers in the U.S., because it takes place during student teaching, internships, and first-year mentoring. The teacher preparation observations in Saudi Arabia are similar (Aljabreen & Lash, 2016). However, occasionally there is resistance to sharing personal practice for more experienced teachers. Sometimes the teachers are willing to discuss assessment strategies and results, but they are reluctant to speak up when the focus of the PLC meeting is instructional practice in the classroom (Popp & Goldman, 2016).

Supportive Relationships. Supportive relationships are a necessary element for PLC to be successful. Some of the characteristics that are necessary for an effective PLC include openness, caring, truthfulness, and respect. The supportive relationships need to extend to the administration as well. In a PLC, the teachers need to develop the ability to listen to each other, even when they disagree (Stegall & Linton, 2012). The teachers develop a climate of mutual respect and support each other as they work to implement the PLC goals (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Kohm & Nance, 2009). The principal is crucial in establishing supporting relationships in the PLC. "Essentially their leadership role is one of establishing a high-trust environment where it is safe for teachers to change practice and to innovate" (Harris & Jones, 2010, p. 179). Trust has been identified as precondition for a successful PLC (Cranston, 2009; Hord, 1997). In order to develop trust among the members of the PLC, the culture of the workplace needs to nurture warm relationships among the teachers. Hord (1997) gives examples of ways that principals can encourage supportive relationships among the staff. One principal, for example, sponsored activities such as an impromptu volleyball game between staff members after school, a dinner at a local restaurant, and a potluck supper with staff members and their families.

Figure 1 suggests that "when teachers have many opportunities to collaborate, their energy, creative thinking, efficiency, and goodwill increase—and the cynicism and defensiveness that hamper change decrease" (Kohm & Nance, 2009, p. 68).

Figure 1. Collaborative vs. Top-Down Cultures	
In collaborative cultures...	**In top-down cultures...**
Teachers support one another's efforts to improve instruction.	Teachers discourage challenges to the status quo.
Teachers take responsibility for solving problems and accept the consequences of their decisions.	Teachers depend on principals to solve problems, blame others for their difficulties, and complain about the consequences of decisions.
Teachers share ideas. As one person builds on another's ideas, a new synergy develops.	Ideas and pet projects belong to individual teachers; as a result, development is limited.
Educators evaluate new ideas in light of shared goals that focus on student learning.	Ideas are limited to the "tried and true"—what has been done in the past.

Figure 1 Collaborative vs. Top-Down Culture (Kohm & Nance, 2009, p. 68)

This type of community requires a deep level of vulnerability, keeping beliefs and practices open for questioning and feedback. Strong relationships and deeply rooted trust amongst the teachers are required in order for this necessary vulnerability to occur (Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2007). "Collegial relationships include positive educator attitudes, widely shared vision or sense of purpose, norms of continuous critical inquiry and improvement, respect, trust, and positive, caring relationships. The power and effectiveness of professional learning communities come from their position as communities of continuous inquiry and improvement" (Morrissey, 2000, p. 7). "A spirit of professional respect and trust motivates teachers to work together on school improvement initiatives" (Morrissey, 2000, p. 38).

Supportive Structures. Structural factors, according to Hord and Sommers (2008), include conditions such as time to meet, places to hold meetings, resources, and policies that support the PLC process. Schools need supportive structures, such as common planning time, to facilitate effective PLCs (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Easton, 2012). Sometimes it is difficult for teachers to find time to plan together. At some schools, the principals make

arrangements for the teachers in the PLC to meet while the students are in music or art class, or in the library, or receiving tutoring, or while a substitute teacher fills in (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Maloney & Konza, 2011). Easton (2012) notes that another important activity to be done during common planning time is to "develop common assessments for learning, analyze evidence of student learning, and use that evidence to learn from one another" (p. 3). D'Ardenne et al. (2013) also stressed the importance of common planning time to the success of the PLC program. Common planning time is used to share best practices and analyze data about the students' progress. The format of weekly team meetings "should be flexible and allow for rich discussion" (Stegall & Linton, 2012, p. 64).

Process and Outcomes of PLC in the United States

Research shows that educators in schools that have embraced PLCs express higher levels of professional satisfaction. They are also more likely to take collective responsibility for student learning and help students achieve at higher levels (Louis & Wahlstom, 2011). These teachers are also more likely to share teaching practices, make results transparent, engage in critical conversations about improving instruction, and institutionalize continual improvement (Bryk, et al., 2010). They promote shared leadership (Louis et al., 2010).

Stegall and Linton (2012) report that the PLC approach has been very effective in improving student achievement in a North Carolina school district. In this district, the teacher collaboration groups were called "goal teams." They shared responsibilities, collaborated, took on leadership roles, and made decisions regarding educational practices. The administration created an environment of trust. The results of this PLC approach show that the third through eighth grade students made "remarkable strides" in both reading and math achievement as

determined by state testing (Stegall and Linton, 2012, p. 65). The high school students also increased their scores significantly.

Williams (2013) found that reading teachers in Texas who applied PLC concepts benefited from the experience, in addition to the academic benefits to the students. The teachers reported that they appreciated the opportunity to learn and share their knowledge with one another. Their feedback indicated that they felt the students' responses in reading were positive and they felt they were implementing successful teaching strategies. Results of the study showed significant increases in students' scores in both reading and math over the five year period.

In addition, D'Ardenne et al. (2013) reported on the success of a PLC for third-through-fifth grade reading teachers. These teachers met regularly once or twice a month to set goals, monitor progress, create lesson plans, and revise lessons. They found that in the first year, 23 students averaged four text levels of growth in reading and 66 students averaged 2.9 text levels of growth. The improvements continued the second year.

Not only do students improve but teachers can make remarkable strides in their ability to teach innovatively. However, schools must work to streamline the process, to create an interrelated system of teaching and training, by "seamlessly link[ing] curriculum, assessment, standards, and professional learning opportunities," so as to avoid disparities between what teachers learn in professional development work and what they can actually implement in their classrooms (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, p. 48). In Ohio, the National Science Foundation's Project Discovery offered sustained professional development linked to system-wide changes in science standards and curriculum. There, teachers attended "an intensive six-week summer institute covering science or mathematics content, then participated in six seminars throughout the school year focusing on curriculum equity and authentic assessment," in

addition to receiving "on-demand support and site visits from regional leaders and content with peers through newsletters and annual conferences" (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, p. 48). These efforts led to *increased long-term use* of teachers' inquiry-based instructional practices, and this is all thanks to the confidence teachers gained as well as the knowledge and support that they received throughout the year, on-demand and periodically.

In a California statewide reform (Cohen & Hill, 2001), there were two approaches which proved highly successful. The first engaged teachers in learning new mathematics curriculum units, then allowed them to share their experiences upon return with other teachers and to problem solve in preparation to teach subsequent units. In the second approach, teachers evaluated student work on assessments, guided by conceptual roadblocks students faced on the assessments, and learned how to anticipate and address these misunderstandings. By focusing on *how* teachers learn, the administration was able to provide active learning opportunities that allowed these teachers to transform their teaching, modeling new strategies and constructing opportunities for teachers to practice and reflect.

As with any progressive changes, extra care must be put into the school's *cultural development* if the school is to experience academic and behavioral success. Green, Malsch, Kothari, Busse, and Brennan's (2012) article "An Intervention to Increase Early Childhood Staff Capacity for Promoting Children's Social-Emotional Development in Preschool Settings" shows that preschool programs that provided training to program staff in early childhood mental health best practices and promoted a healthy organizational culture had very high success rates. Research links "early social-emotional development, especially emotional control, self-regulation, attention, and appropriate social skills, to the development of higher-order cognitive function and to school readiness" (Green, et al., 2012, p. 123). Staff must be properly trained and

given the right skills, support, and resources that they need to successfully promote children's positive social-emotional development and to work with children with challenging behaviors. These are absolutely critical to children's well-being, as effective capacity-building interventions can have lasting impacts on children's educational competencies at this time and in their future lives.

There are also reports of failed efforts at establishing PLCs. For example, Provini (2013) notes the following characteristics of failed PLCs: "Insufficient access to timely data on which to base instructional decisions; poor infrastructure (especially lack of scheduled time for teachers to meet, or inefficient use of the limited time available); lack of teacher buy-in for the process (perception that the decision to implement a PLC was imposed upon teachers by administrators); lack of teacher ownership of the process (perception that administrators dictate what teachers do during their collaborative time); and a building culture in which teachers tend to _compete_ rather than collaborate" (p. 1).

A qualitative case study of a failed PLC examined the teachers' perspectives of what went wrong. Sims and Penny (2015) conducted six teacher interviews and three observations of PLC meetings. The participants generally reported that the PLC either had no effect on their teaching, or it had a negative effect. The researchers learned that there were a variety of reasons why the PLC was not successful. One of the issues that the teachers identified was that they felt the meetings were spent only on discussing data and not actually collaborating with each other. They cited lack of a common conference period as a negative factor. They reported that when they did get together for the PLC, the discussion focused on data and test scores, rather than on what worked and what didn't. Although the teachers had a common goal of collaborating and improving student test scores, the implementation of the PLC process was not effective.

Some PLCs fail because they are not implemented for a long enough period of time. Morrissey (2000) explains that a professional learning community does not occur overnight, but rather requires dedication and commitment by all parties involved. In the beginning stages of a PLC, some teachers perceive the administration's attempt to establish a PLC as just another "fad" and they don't buy into it at first (Gardner, 2009). The PLC isn't effective without teacher buy-in, so the administration drops that approach and looks for some other way to improve educational achievement. If the school district would have continued to work on developing the collaborative environment for another couple years, the teachers may have discovered that the approach is effective, and they may have become more supportive.

There are six important components that make up a successful PLC. A PLC is lacking one of these six, they are not able to achieve their maximum potential (Schmoker, 2006). A prime example of this would be a school that does not allow enough time for their staff to collaborate with each other, as seen at Becky Burnette's school, Boones Mill Elementary (Burnette, 2002). Staff members at this school valued their colleagues, but felt the need for more collaboration time. They recognized that they could accomplish more if they could frequently work together. Burnette's solution to this issue was to create a master schedule that made space for the teachers to communicate as much as what was essential. This new schedule had special programs for the students to participate in such as computer skills, arts, physical education, etc., allowing the teachers time every week away from the students to collaborate.

As mentioned in DeMatthews (2014) study, some PLCs are not a success because the teachers do not feel prepared or equipped for the tasks at hand. This is why it is vital for administration to invest in the continuous learning of their teachers. Other issues such as poorly

conduct meetings, unproductive time, unfinished assignments, and poorly done products may cause a PLC to struggle. These can be prevented by strong leadership assisting the team.

As described by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (2004), some issues that may occur in a PLC could include focusing too much on the process and not enough on content, teacher reluctance to be vulnerable with their work preventing quality feedback, a culture of distrust and injustice, ineffective leadership, undocumented findings and data, as well as ineffective structural changes.

PLCs in Other Countries

The overall success of PLCs in the United States and other Western countries has gained attention in various places around the world, including European, Asian, and Arab countries. However, there are several gaps in the literature. For example, there are only two available studies on PLCs in Arab countries. One study was conducted on teachers in United Arab Emirates (Al-Taneiji, 2009), and one study was conducted by Egyptian researchers on three different countries: Egypt, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia (Al-Mahdy & Sywelem, 2016). My study will contribute to the literature by adding to the sparse research in this area.

Sigurdardottir (2010) reports on a study of three schools in Iceland. This mixed-methods study was conducted in two phases. The first phase was a comparison study of two different schools with different levels of effectiveness, as measured by the scores on national tests. In this phase, the researcher looked for a correlation between the national test scores for each school and that school's teachers' perceptions of the schools' professional learning community. There were a total of 92 participants in this phase of the study who responded to a 52-item questionnaire. The results indicated a significant correlation between the teachers' reports and the students' test scores. The school with the highest national test scores also had significantly higher teacher

reports of key characteristics of professional learning communities, such as collaborative learning. Shared values and vision and shared leadership were the two characteristics with the highest correlation to student test scores.

In phase two, a third school was selected to be the "intervention" school. The students in this school were 6-16 years old. The teachers at school "C" completed the same questionnaire as in Phase I, both before and after the intervention. Twenty-seven teachers at the intervention school responded to the pretest, and 32 responded to the posttest. The intervention had several parts. First, the administrative team participated in a study group to learn about professional learning communities. Second, the entire professional staff was trained to focus on student learning as a team. Third, the participants worked to define a clear vision for the school, and fourth, the staff participated in a 3-month in-service training on differentiated learning. The researchers compared the achievement of the students in the experimental school to the achievement of the students in the other two schools. After two years of intervention, the teachers were again surveyed to see if the characteristics that help to create an effective PLC had improved. The results showed no significant change in the teachers' perceptions of those characteristics at their school, although they did report changes in their classroom practice. However, the students' test scores rose "far above predicted outcomes after the intervention and were among the highest in the group of 19 schools" (Sigurdardottir, 2010, p. 405).

Wennergren and Blossing (2017) examined a PLC in Sweden from a unique perspective. They researched a small school in a rural area of Sweden that had been required to establish a PLC due to poor student achievement. Some of the teachers worked to include their students in the PLC process, making them part of the "community of practice" (Wennergren & Blossing, 2017, p. 48). For example, the teachers would try a different lesson plan structure, examine the

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results, and consider feedback from the students before continuing. The students would also be involved in planning the weekly activities and in evaluating the results. The teachers report that involving the students in the process made it feel as though the teachers and students were all active participants, learning together. The initial step the teachers needed to take was establishing an atmosphere of respect for learning by inviting the students to participate in establishing the learning goals. Once that respect was established, the level of engagement grew between teachers and students. One teacher reported a stronger incentive among the students when they recognized that the teacher was looking up material and trying to find resources, just the way the students were.

Hairon and Tan (2017) conducted research on professional learning communities in two Asian cities: Singapore and Shanghai. These two cities are "top performers" in the Program for International Student Assessment and they have many similarities. For example, the mother tongue language is Mandarin, they both have strong economies and well-educated populations, and they have similar cultural values and practices (Hairon & Tan, 2017). They note that Singapore began a PLC initiative in 2009, but they had already had 12 years' experience with teacher learning communities, which they called "learning circles." Singapore has a nationwide PLC model, in which every school is a PLC comprised of several "professional learning teams."

In Shanghai, the term "PLC" is not used. These schools have "teaching-research groups" and "lesson preparation groups." The goals and objectives of these groups are very similar to those of a PLC. The objectives of a teaching-research group include exchanging ideas on teaching experiences, raising professional standards, and improving education quality. All schools in Shanghai have teaching-research groups (Hairon & Tan, 2017).

In China, the current education reform movement has involved several different approaches, but prior to the establishment of PLCs, none of them had been successful (Song, 2012). Once the PLC movement began, improvements were noted. For example, Song (2012) reports on a project where thirty-two schools in three cities began using PLCs. They found that the PLC approach helped the teachers feel more empowered and more open to curriculum reform. The researchers concluded "the key to truly implementing reform in schools and classrooms rests in teacher empowerment and the establishment of a PLC" (Song, 2012, p. 93). In a country such as China, which implements strict curriculum requirements and discourages questioning of the authority, PLC enhances learning by allowing teachers to feel more in control of their work, which resulted in increased care about their work and the sense that their superiors cared about them as well.

Six schools participated in a pilot program to investigate the effects of PLCs in Wales. Each school chose a focus and used the PLCs as a vehicle for change. The members of the PLCs were required to collaborate with each other within their PLC, the others in their school, and people in PLCs in other schools in the project. Some of the topics that they focused on in the PLCs were thinking skills, integrated curriculum and student engagement. The following year, all six schools "had established new ways of working and had clear plans to extend the PLC work further" (Harris & Jones, 2010, p. 177). The schools reported that as a result of the pilot program, they felt that they had established a clear focus on increasing student engagement, an increased number of assessment strategies, and improved communication within the schools.

Al-Taneiji (2009) investigated the characteristics of PLCs in fifteen randomly-selected elementary and secondary schools in United Arab Emirates. To find out which PLC-related conditions were present in the schools, she chose to survey the teachers. The survey instrument

she used was the Professional Learning Community Assessment Instrument by Olivier, Hipp, and Huffman (2003). This instrument was originally created in English, so Al-Taneiji first had the survey translated into Arabic. Then she re-assessed the translated survey to establish its reliability, which ranged from .83 to .93 (Al-Taneiji, 2009). She first contacted the principals of the schools to ask for their assistance and support. Then she distributed the surveys to the fifteen principals to be given to the teachers. She conducted a follow-up phone call to each principal to be sure the surveys had been given to the teachers and recollected. The principals then mailed the completed survey to the researcher. She had a 92.8% response rate (789 completed surveys out of 850 teachers). These completed surveys came from 290 male teachers at secondary schools for boys, and 499 female teachers at secondary and elementary schools for girls.

After the first phase of her data collection, when she distributed and collected the questionnaires, she began the second phase of data collection, which was the interview phase. She randomly selected three teachers from each of six randomly selected schools for a phone interview. She contacted the teachers by phone and asked open-ended questions such as "How does the school principal deal with you and your colleagues?" (Al-Taneiji, 2009, p. 20). Her analysis shows that the male teachers were significantly more likely to indicate that their schools had some of the conditions necessary for an effective PLC. However, none of the schools appeared to be prepared to fully support a PLC. The only characteristics that were found in these schools were shared and supportive leadership, and supportive structures. The other characteristics were not present in these schools.

Al-Mahdy and Sywelem (2016) examined the conditions for PLCs in three Arab countries: Oman, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. The survey that they used for their study was the Professional Learning Communities Assessment – Revised (PLCA-R), which was developed by

Olivier, Hipp, and Huffman (2010). They first had the survey translated into Arabic and established the reliability of the translated version. Then they randomly selected public schools to survey. Arab countries generally separate the male students from the female students, and along with that policy, they employ male teachers for male students and female teachers for female students. As a result, the researchers needed to survey multiple schools in order to get a representation of both male and female teachers' responses. For example, in Egypt, they selected 21 male schools, sending surveys to 525 male teachers, and also nine female schools, sending surveys to 225 female teachers. The teachers were randomly chosen by the principal from nine different grade levels. In the same way, the researchers sent surveys to 272 male and 575 female teachers in Oman and 260 male and 240 female teachers in Saudi Arabia. They received responses from 1,486 teachers.

The analysis of the questionnaire responses indicated that Saudi and Omani teachers felt that their schools did have all of the conditions that are necessary for effective PLCs to function, although some conditions were not strongly present. The Egyptian teachers did not believe that their schools were ready for PLCs, indicating that supportive and shared leadership was the only condition present. This may be a result of a highly centralized system, a shortage of qualified teachers, high student-teacher ratio (up to 50:1) and poor funding resulting in lower quality facilities and resources. In contrast, the teachers in Oman and Saudi Arabia work fewer hours, have smaller class sizes, receive higher salaries, and have greater access to technology. The researchers also found that female teachers reported more favorable conditions than those reported by male teachers.

Summary

This chapter reviews the relevant literature examining the effectiveness of PLCs and the conditions that are necessary for a PLC to be successful. Overall, the research shows that a good PLC in a school results in higher academic achievement for the students in that school. Also, the teachers who participate in a strong PLC report positive feelings about the PLC. In the United States, the PLC process has been researched thoroughly, but in other countries there has been less research. Singapore, Shanghai, China, and the United Arab Emirates are a few of the other countries who have had published research conducted on this topic. The researchers conclude that overall, PLCs have a similar effect in those countries as they have in the United States. Also found in this paper are multiple examples of how various philosophers view the education systems and improvements that need to be made. None of the philosophers reviewed here feels that it is important to tell teachers what to teach and how to teach it. DuFour mentions this by saying, "Teachers at my school were not asked to obey, or conform, but they were asked to honor and apply practices that have been well established as having a positive impact on students' achievement and school culture" (DuFour, 2007). They are focused more on the importance of teachers being learners and helping students be more successful as learners and growing as learners. To achieve this goal, they all believe that teachers need to dialogue with each other, examine their own practices, and be willing to change and grow and learn along with their colleagues and students. This is a key goal of PLCs.

In the next chapter, the methodology will be presented, including a description of the participants and the data collection methods and instruments. The methodological framework will be explained and the design of the research will be outlined. The chapter will provide an

explanation of the data analysis procedures and evaluation plan. It ends with a summary of this

research document and conclusion.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

This research project was designed to investigate the perceptions of kindergarten teachers in Dammam, Saudi Arabia as they were related to the six conditions necessary for successful professional learning communities. Quantitative data was collected through the use of a written survey, while qualitative data was collected through personal interviews with two participants. The concepts of symbolic interactionism were considered as data was collected and analyzed to identify themes in the interviews. As expressed by Teo and Osbourne (2012), "The symbolic interactionist framework allows us to tease out nuances" in the interview data (p. 23). By identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the six conditions, the results of this research should provide guidance to administrators who want to either implement PLCs in their schools or strengthen the PLCs that they have already begun implementing. This chapter presents the research questions, research purpose, methodology, methodological framework, basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism, participant selection, data collection procedures, validity/reliability/trustworthiness, content and design, data analysis, missing data, ethical issues, and summary.

Research Questions and Sub-Questions

PLC conditions will vary as a function of

1. What is the perceived condition of PLCs for teachers who do or do not belong to schools with a PLC?

    a. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the teacher's level of education?

b. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of years the teacher has taught?

c. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the age of the teacher?

d. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of students in the class?

e. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of teachers in the school?

2. What are the teachers' experiences related to the conditions for PLCs in their schools?

a. What are the teachers' experiences related to shared and supportive leadership in their schools?

b. What are the teachers' experiences related to shared beliefs, values, and vision in their schools?

c. What are the teachers' experiences related to collective learning and its application in their schools?

d. What are the teachers' experiences related to shared personal practice in their schools?

e. What are the teachers' experiences related to supportive conditions-relationships in their schools?

f. What are the teachers' experiences related to supportive conditions-structures in their schools?

Research Null Hypotheses

Reported PLC conditions will not vary significantly as a function of the levels of:

1. Existence of a PLC in the school (independent samples t-test);

2. Demographic questions (one-way ANOVA);

    a. The teachers level of education (one-way ANOVA);

    b. The number of years the teacher has taught (one-way ANOVA);

    c. The age of the teacher (one-way ANOVA);

    d. The number of students in class (one-way ANOVA); and

    e. The number of teachers in the school (one-way ANOVA).

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of kindergarten teachers broadly through the use of a survey and to further explore how two kindergarten teachers in Dammam described their experiences of the conditions needed for implementing PLCs in their schools through personal interviews.

Methodology

This was a mixed-methods study, using interviews to collect the qualitative data and a survey to collect the quantitative data. The reason for selecting a mixed-methods design was that the qualitative interview was capable of providing more details and a deeper understanding of the conditions that were present in the participants' schools, while the survey data provided a wider perspective. This mixed-methods design fit well with my research purpose because the survey provided a broad overview of the perceptions of many kindergarten teachers, while the personal interviews allowed me to explore more deeply the experiences and perceptions of two of those teachers.

Methodological Framework

The theoretical framework guided this research was symbolic interactionism. "Social interaction can be defined as a method that forms and expresses human behavior" (Aldiabat,

2011, p. 1065). Symbolic interactionism was pioneered by Herbert Blumer, who built on the foundation begun by constructivist George Herbert Mead, a sociologist at the University of Chicago (Olivier, 2011). Mead studied how individuals develop a concept of self and the ways that individuals interpreted objects and social interactions. He believed that mind and ego were products of society (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin, & Demirbuken, 2009). Blumer, a student of Mead, developed the theoretical framework more fully and coined the term "symbolic interactionism" (Fink, 2015). Blumer's writings and teachings are seen as "the primary source of the perspective of symbolic interactionism" (Fine, 1993, p. 61). Blumer also comments on Mead's ideology about Social Interactionism and writes,

> The influence was along the line of giving to students a clearer picture of the nature of social interaction between human beings consisted of meaningful objects, a recognition that human beings constructed their actions through process of self-interaction, and an appreciation that group life took the form of fitting together diverse lines of conduct (Blumer, 1979, p. 22).

Many other students at the University of Chicago worked to expand this theory, and thus the theory is closely associated with the Chicago School (Fine, 1993). Oliver (2011) articulates definition of the benefit of incorporating symbolic interactionism within a study: "The purpose is to understand how individuals and groups make meaning and act in situations in which automatic responses are inadequate" (p. 411). When a PLC is being organized, there will be different levels of familiarity between the members. Some coworkers may be new to the organization and not know other members very well. Symbolic interactionism seeks to explain how this affects the newer members' interactions within the group. "Having no experience with or information about each other, they use cues in early interaction and cultural cues, attaching meanings to dress,

appearance, speech patterns, etc., to define the situation to organize behavior; and they behave toward others in ways that reflect the definitions" (Stryker, 2008, p. 22).

This theoretical framework helped me analyze the responses of the teachers. According to symbolic interactionism, the participants in my study interpret the conditions of their schools based on their own perspectives of the situations they encounter. The teachers in the same school had approximately the same environment and interacted with the same school leadership. However, according to symbolic interactionism, they may have interpreted or evaluated their school's conditions for PLC very differently as a result of the fact that they each had different interactions with the people and things in their environment.

The two teachers that I interviewed shared with me their individual experiences and impressions of their school environment and their interactions with the people at their school. These six interviews (three with each participant) gave me a deeper insight into the meanings that the teachers had constructed from their experiences. I needed to be aware of the fact that just by interviewing the participants, I was influencing their perceptions of their experiences. "Interviews are meaning-making practices where both parties are necessarily active" (Raz, 2005, p. 327). The process of interviewing is a collaborative interaction, and my questions affected their answers, while their answers affected my questions. Rather than simply collecting data, as I did with my survey, the interviews were a collaborative construction of meaning between me and my participants (Raz, 2005). The fact that I interviewed each participant three different times also had an impact on the data collection. At the first interview, we were just getting acquainted with each other. The participants and I had no shared background. However, that shared background was established and built upon during the second and third interviews. This building of shared meaning affected our interactions (Blumer, 1969).

While I was interviewing and analyzing, I was aware of my role in the process and recognize how my own perspectives affected the interview situation. One way that I prepared myself to maintain awareness of my own perspectives was by putting into writing my positionality. There are a lot of factors that can come into play when interviewing. For example, Raz (2005) notes, "Effective interviewing must pay attention to social structures, communication styles, attitudes towards authority, attitudes toward expression of emotions, relevant belief systems...and discrimination" (p. 336).

Basic Assumptions of Symbolic Interactionism

Blumer theorized that individuals make meaning of objects and events based on their understanding (Blumer, 1969). Blumer summaries three basic premises that underpin symbolic interactionism: (1) human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings the things have for them, (2) individually or collectively, the meaning one makes of things is rooted in the social interaction one has with peers, (3) these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process (Fink 2015).

The social interactions that individuals have are a reflection of the meanings that they make, and these meanings are constantly being modified as more interactions occur. Aldiabat (2011) lists seven basic assumptions of Symbolic Interactionism. The first assumption is that we as humans live in a "symbolic world of learned meanings" (p. 1070). Our society is a series of engagements in symbolic interaction. The second assumption is that "human beings act toward things on the basis of meanings that things have for them" (Aldiabat, 2011, p. 1070). For example, in some cultures, a wedding ring is a symbol of commitment. Wearing it at all times is seen as an expression of that commitment. In other cultures, the wedding ring is valued as a special piece of jewelry that is worn for special occasions. Saving it for special occasions

highlights its value, while wearing it at all times would diminish it. The third assumption is that "meanings arise in the process of interaction between people" (Aldiabat, 2011, p. 1070). This says that the meanings of things are social products, not inherent in the things themselves, and the meanings result or grow out of the interactions of people with each other and with the things (Stryker & Vryan, 2003).

The fourth assumption is that "humans and society have a relationship of freedom and constraints" (Aldiabat, 2011, p. 1070). For example, societies have expectations that work as constraints, while individual creativity and personal interpretations provide freedoms. The fifth assumption is "meanings are handled and modified through the interpretive process used by the person dealing with things he or she encounters" (Aldiabat, 2011, p. 1070). People do not react to situations, objects and other people in a consistent and predictable way. There is an interpretive process that is used that helps the individual assign meanings to the objects, people or events being observed. This suggests that the meanings of object and events change as we continue to have social interactions. The sixth assumption is that the self is a social construct that "develops through the social interaction with others" Aldiabat, 2011, p. 1070). The self is an object, no different from other social objects, and it can change through interaction with objects, others, and events, just like any other social construct. The seventh assumption is that "self-concept provides a motive for behavior" (Aldiabat, 2011, p. 1070). Human beings use their concept of self as the basis of their behaviors.

This theory helps to answer the question, "Why do people misunderstand each other?" For example, in America, if a married person does not wear a wedding ring, this is sometimes interpreted as meaning that the person intends to be unfaithful and wants to hide the fact that he or she is married. However, in Arab countries, the wedding ring is seen as a precious piece of

jewelry that is kept safe and only worn when fine jewelry is appropriate for the occasion. Therefore, if an American sees someone from an Arab culture who is married but only wears his or her ring occasionally, the American may question the intentions of the Arab person. The Arab person who does not know American culture may believe that the American does not value the ring very highly, since he or she wears it so casually. The symbolism of the object is different for each individual in this scenario, and it results in confusion and misunderstanding.

This foundation was appropriate for my research because I used interviews as a way of collecting my data. According to Handberg, Thorne, Midtgaard, Vinther Nielsen, & Lomborg (2015), symbolic interactionism is a compatible framework for research conducted by interview methods.

In addition to the qualitative data from the interviews, I gathered quantitative data through a survey. This put my research in the "mixed methods" category. Benzies and Allen (2000) argued that symbolic interactionism is an appropriate theoretical framework for mixed-methods research. They state, "For researchers who use multiple method designs, symbolic interactionism provides a theoretical perspective for conceptually clear and soundly implemented research" (p. 546).

Participant Selection

Participant selection was done through the Department of Education in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. The Director of the Department passed the survey along to teachers who were willing to participate. Participants suitable to my research were kindergarten teachers in Dammam. In Saudi Arabia, kindergarten teachers are only female. Therefore, all my participants were female. I interviewed three teachers, but only used the interviews of two of these teachers for my research. The third teacher was interviewed as a precaution, in case one of the first two teachers

canceled during the data collection process and was unable or unwilling to complete all three interviews. Since both the first and second selected participants completed the entire series of interviews, the interviews with the third teacher were not included in the data analysis.

Data Collection Procedures

In Fall 2017, I submitted a written plan of action identifying my problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions to the Institutional Review Board. I included a literature review and a description of my proposal. I waited for approval before I began contacting preschool teachers in Dammam. I contacted the director of the Department of Education for the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, and she agreed to help me contact the kindergarten teachers in Dammam.

In order to learn the size of my research population, I began by going online to the official website of the General Directorate of Education in the Eastern Region. I used the contact information from that website to send an e-mail asking for data on the number of kindergarten teachers in the city of Dammam and the surrounding area which could be considered the greater Dammam area. I received an e-mail response that explained that I would need to complete a formal request for that data by completing an online application. I completed the application explaining why I was requesting the data and I attached a letter from my research advisor verifying that I was conducting research as part of my graduate studies. My request was approved, and I received the following data. The eastern section of Dammam, in Fall 2017 and Spring 2018, had 448 kindergarten teachers and the western section of Dammam had 415 kindergarten teachers, for a total of 863 kindergarten teachers in Dammam. Based on the population size of 863, I used the formula developed by Thompson to calculate a sample size of 266 completed surveys, with a confidence level of 95% (Thompson, 1987).

Once I had my list of preschools in Dammam, I sent an introductory e-mail letter to the Department of Education, and they forwarded the e-mail to the preschool teachers. In the letter, I explained my research project and asked the teachers to please participate. I gave the teachers one month to complete the survey using the link that was included in the e-mail. In my e-mail, I stated that everything relating to the respondents' survey would be kept within the confines of this study, that it is strictly confidential and anonymous, and that no legal actions or consequences can result from participating. It was vital that teachers understand that they would not be held liable for their participation in this study, due to the nature of the current education system and the need to protect the privacy of these teachers. They needed to be comfortable and secure enough to answer as honestly and completely as they could so that I could get a clear picture of what was going on. After two weeks, I sent an e-mail reminder to the Education Department and asked them to forward it to the kindergarten teachers. I tried to motivate the teachers to respond by including information in my e-mails about the benefits of participating in professional learning communities and explaining that participating in my survey would help them to think about different areas of teaching that play an important part in student learning. While the teachers will greatly benefit from PLCs, their positive growth will greatly impact the pre-existing methods of professional development.

I recognized that some teachers may have had questions about the meanings of some of the terms. Teachers there may not have understood, for example, what collaborative work or collective learning means. Culturally and politically, they may not have been equipped or well set up to understand these more pedagogically progressive and egalitarian approaches. In order to help any respondents with questions such as these, I included my WhatsApp phone number and other contact information in the e-mail and invited them to contact me with any questions that

might arise as they were completing the survey. This information provided free and easy access for the participants to reach me. The survey was designed to save answers that are in progress and not submit them until the participant had completed the survey and clicked to submit. This way, if the participant got interrupted or needed to finish the survey at a later time, the answers would be saved and the participant would be able to access the survey and complete it later.

Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

I used a survey that was created originally by Olivier, Hipp, & Huffman (2010). The original form of the survey was created in English. However, my participants were native Arabic speakers, so the results would not have been as reliable for me if I had used the English version. Therefore, I found an Arabic version of the survey that had been used by other researchers with Arabic-speaking subjects (Al-Mahdy & Sywelem, 2016). They received permission from Olivier to translate the original survey, and I received permission to use the translated version. The version used by Al-Mahdy and Sywelem (2016) was tested by the authors and found to have "very high" reliability and validity (M. Sywelem, personal communication, November 15, 2016).

For the qualitative portion of my research, the concept of trustworthiness was a better fit than the concepts of validity and reliability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). One of the strategies that I used to increase the trustworthiness of the qualitative data was called "member checking" (Ladson-Billings, 1997). After conducting my interviews, I had them transcribed. Then I sent the transcripts to the participants who were interviewed and asked them to submit any corrections or clarifications so that the data was as accurate as possible. A second strategy to increase trustworthiness was field notes (Richards & Morse, 2012). While I conducted the interviews, I wrote notes of what was being said. I also wrote down questions that I had or ideas that I wanted to follow-up with the participant. By taking notes as we talked, I was able to stay focused, follow

up on ideas, and demonstrate to the participant that I was listening closely to what she had to say. This helped to establish rapport with the participant by showing that I cared about her and her ideas and experiences. I also recorded the interviews, so that I could maintain the trustworthiness of the information when I transcribed the conversation for analysis of themes.

Another strategy to increase trustworthiness is for the researcher to examine her or her own biases (Peshkin, 1988). I have explained in this research how I view education, especially the importance of early childhood education. I have also described the experiences that I have had working in preschools or kindergartens in Saudi Arabia. By thinking about my beliefs and values in this area, I have brought my potential bias into the open. This made it easier for me to monitor my interactions with the participants and to reduce the impact that these biases could have on my research.

Content and Design

To answer my quantitative research question "Do the basic six conditions for PLC exist in Dammam, Saudi Arabia kindergartens?" I used a published survey entitled "Professional Learning Communities Assessment - Revised" (PLCA-R) (Olivier, Hipp, & Huffman, 2010) to collect teachers' perceptions about PLC. The survey was designed to evaluate the conditions at Saudi Arabian schools based on the teachers' perceptions to see if the school had the collaborative environment necessary for PLC. This survey was developed in English and then translated into Arabic. The Arabic version was used by Al-Mahdy and Sywelem (2016) to determine if the conditions for PLC were present in schools in Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. I contacted Al-Mahdy and Sywelem and the original creators (Olivier, Hipp, & Huffman) and received permission from all parties to use the Arabic version in my research. I included both the PLCA-R and the corresponding Arabic version in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

The design of this study was mixed methods. The survey was a questionnaire that assessed the teacher's perceptions of his or her principal, staff, and stakeholders based on the six dimensions of a PLC and related attributes. It specifically mentioned that there are no right or wrong responses and that the scale reflects the teacher's personal degree of agreement with the statement, from Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). The statements are written so as to be as neutral, unbiased, and objective as possible. The survey as a whole is organized according to two main columns: Statements and Scale. Altogether, there are 52 questions, broken down into 6 categories that fall under the Statements column. These categories are: Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Visions, Collective Learning and Application, Shared Personal Practice, Supportive Conditions-Relationships, and Supportive Conditions-Structures. At the bottom of each category is a blank space for teachers to

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write comments if desired. Each category had as little as 5 and as many as 11 questions. Under Scale, there are 4 answer choices which represent degree of agreement, out of which the teacher can choose only one for each statement. The survey showed quantitatively how the teachers in Saudi Arabia viewed their experiences at their school with regard to Principals, Staff, and Stakeholders. I can also determine comparative measures, such as the number of Strongly Disagree (SD) answers versus Strongly Agree (SA) answers. In addition, I examined which categories were more likely to elicit Agree (A) or Strongly Agree (SA) versus Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), in order to determine which attributes or resources are strongly available, available, unlikely to be available, or highly unavailable (nonexistent).

I formatted the survey so that it was compatible with K-State Qualtrics, which allowed me to administer the survey online. Qualtrics is a web-based survey tool that can be used to conduct surveys and collect data for research. It allows respondents to begin answering the survey, then save their answers and return to the survey to complete it later. The data can be directly exported to Word, Excel, or PowerPoint (California State University, 2015). In my cover letter, I explained how the online survey worked and reassured the teachers that their answers would be anonymous. They did not need to give their names, only the name of the school where they worked. They only complete the survey one time and once it was submitted, they could not access it again.

Data Analysis

Since each teacher selected answers corresponding to her degree of agreement with the statement based on four choices, I was able to assess the schools' availability of attributes linked to PLC, which then allowed me to get a clearer picture of how ready they were for PLCs. Scores ranged from 1-4 corresponding to the answer choices from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly

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Agree (SA). The higher the scores, the stronger the teacher's rating of the school's PLC-linked attributes. I also included a set of demographic questions, such as age of instructor, number of years in the classroom or how long they have been at the current school.

Scores ranged from 45 being the lowest to 180 being the highest score that this survey can garner. I was able to see, quantitatively, the teacher's level of agreement or disagreement with the PLC-linked attributes *by category*, and this was helpful, for instance, in seeing just which key areas are healthy and which are under-performing. I was also able to calculate the mean from all total scores from every teacher to see where on the scale all of these teachers' responses fell. While the mean is just the average, it nonetheless helped me to see how overall this selection of Dammam kindergartens was doing with regard to PLCs.

I conducted a repeated measures analysis of the key scales after checking the dimensions with factor analysis; the repeated measures analysis was followed with post hoc paired samples t-tests to compare each pair of scales. The result highlighted which scales are the most favorable to least favorable with respect to these new ideas of PLCs. See Table 3.1 for the plan of my data analysis.

Table 3.1

Plan for data analysis

Research Questions	Data Sources	Data Analysis
What is the perceived condition of PLCs for teachers who do or do not belong to schools with a PLC?	Survey responses, sorted into group 1 (yes to PLC) and group 2 (no to PLC)	t-tests comparing responses from group 1 and group 2 for each condition
What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the teacher's level of education?	Survey responses	One-way ANOVA
What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of years the teacher has taught?	Survey responses	One-way ANOVA
What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the age of the teacher?	Survey responses	One-way ANOVA
What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of students in the class?	Survey responses	One-way ANOVA
What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of teachers in the school?	Survey responses	One-way ANOVA
What are the teachers' experiences related to the conditions for PLCs in their schools?	Interview responses	Coding and thematic analysis
What are the teachers' experiences related to shared and supportive leadership in their schools?	Interview responses	Coding and thematic analysis
What are the teachers' experiences related to shared beliefs, values, and vision in their schools?	Interview responses	Coding and thematic analysis
What are the teachers' experiences related to collective learning and its application in their schools?	Interview responses	Coding and thematic analysis

What are the teachers' experiences related to shared personal practice in their schools?	Interview responses	Coding and thematic analysis
What are the teachers' experiences related to supportive conditions-relationships in their schools?	Interview responses	Coding and thematic analysis
What are the teachers' experiences related to supportive conditions-structures in their schools?	Interview responses	Coding and thematic analysis

My data collection and analysis was conducted in eight steps (Figure 2). I used NVivo 10 for Windows, a coding program that allowed me to transcribe my participants' direct quotes rather than my own transcription of their responses. An approach to conducting interviews that I appreciate was done by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1997), who recommends conducting member checks. This process entails sending the transcripts directly to the participants to check for accuracy. I then read the transcripts a second time, looking for ideas that addressed my research questions as well as looking for important themes. I color-coded any word, phrase, or idea that was related to each question, and then I spread each page out on one table and looked for patterns.
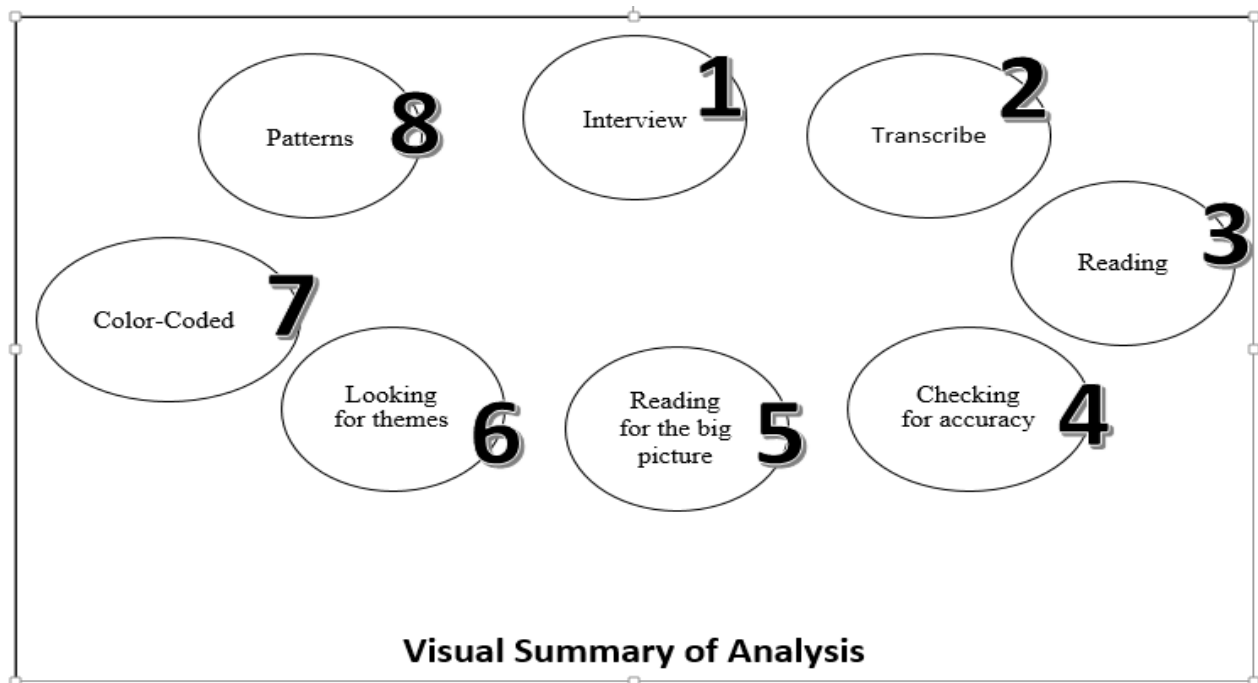
Figure 2 Visual Summary of Analysis

My plan was to look at each individual survey response as a testimony of how teachers would rate the current state of their schools in terms of Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Vision, Collective Learning and Application, Shared Personal Practice, and Supportive Conditions in terms of Relationships and Structures. I also looked at the surveys as a whole, comparatively, to see how teachers were rating their schools relative to other respondents from other schools. If a teacher's total scoring of his or her school was low in certain areas, I was be able to see that that particular school had weaknesses in those areas. The data also helped me to see which schools were most in alignment with PLC and which were lacking. If all schools were not in alignment with PLC, then those results would have told me that overall, the Saudi Arabian schools in Dammam were not currently promoting a PLC environment among teachers, administrators, staff, and key stakeholders. The mean and the median were instrumental to my evaluation plan because they told me approximately how close or how far a particular school was to PLC-readiness.

Missing Data

There was a possibility that some teachers would begin to complete the survey, but then skip some of the questions or submit the survey without fully completing it. Only 6 teachers began the survey and then did not complete it. I discarded those surveys and did not use any of the responses at all. I kept a record of how many completed surveys I had received, and I continued to send reminders and survey links until I reached a total of 266 complete surveys. I used the same approach with the qualitative data collection. I began interviewing three participants, knowing that I only needed two for my research. That way, if I had to throw out the data from one participant, I would still have a "back-up" participant whose data I could use. As it happened, both my primary participants completed the full set of interviews, so I did not need to use the information from the third interviewee in my research.

I included an open-ended question on my survey that gave the participants an opportunity to provide comments on it. Only seven of the 266 participants made comments. One of those participants commented on each category. All of the comments in this section were consistent with the responses of the two women that I interviewed.

Ethical Issues

Before beginning my data collection, I submitted my proposal to the Institution Research Board (IRB) at Kansas State University. The responsibility of university IRBs is to "provide independent review of research conducted by researchers at their own institutions, impartial assessment of the ethical acceptability of proposed research, and a check on investigators' interests" (Grady, 2010, p. 1122). The written approval from the K-State IRB may be found in Appendix A. I also participated in the required Collaborative IRB Training Initiative online program, which covered the topic of ethical considerations of international research.

Since my research involves live subjects, I needed to consider how participation might have affected my subjects, negatively or positively. I took several precautions to protect my participants from any harm due to my research. For example, I made it clear in my introductory email and reminder emails that participation in this study was completely voluntary, and I collected "informed consent" forms from each participant (see Appendix E). I also ensured confidentiality of participants' responses by not asking for personally identifiable information on my survey and using pseudonyms for the two teachers that I interviewed. I also sent transcripts of the interviews to each of the people who participated in that part of my study, so that they could read what I had written and ensure that I had not included anything that would have violated confidentiality or could cause them harm. This also provided an opportunity for the participants to clarify anything that was said, helping to reduce any bias that might have occured as a result of my participation in the interview.

Summary

This chapter discussed the content and design of the proposed quantitative research, including the procedures and timeline of the data collection. The participants of this study were kindergarten teachers in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, who were asked to complete an online survey. The survey included questions about the conditions at the kindergartens, and the teachers responded on a four-point Likert scale. The responses were examined to determine to what extent each of the six conditions that are necessary for effective PLCs were present in the kindergartens, according to the perceptions of the teachers. This chapter also discusses the limitations of the proposed research.

Professional Learning Communities have had a positive impact on schools in the United States and other countries. Many schools who have implemented PLCs have discovered that their

students have achieved greater academic gains than schools without PLCs. These schools have established the basic conditions necessary for successful PLCs. However, not all schools have the conditions that are necessary for PLCs to succeed. It is important to determine whether a school is ready for PLCs before trying to implement them. This research was designed to provide information that helps to describe the conditions at a kindergarten in Saudi Arabia, from the perspective of the kindergarten teachers.

The following chapter assesses the result of my research. I examine the outcome of the mixed-method analysis of my survey. I also list the research questions and answer them according to the data collected by the participants.

Chapter 4 - Analysis of Data/Findings

Introduction

It may be helpful at this point to explain the role of the Department of Education in Saudi Arabia. One of the services that the Department provided was a complete kindergarten curriculum, which was distributed to every kindergarten teacher in the nation. This book included activities for writing, art, discovery, science, math, etc., along with material lists and instructions for how to conduct each activity. Every kindergarten was required to follow this curriculum. However, it was up to the school leadership to determine how closely this book would be followed. In Saudi Arabia, all the preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers and the principals are female.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of kindergarten teachers broadly through the use of a survey and to further explore how two kindergarten teachers in Dammam describe their experiences of the conditions needed for implementing PLCs in their schools through personal interviews.

Research Questions and Sub-Questions

PLC conditions will vary as a function of

1. What is the perceived condition of PLCs for teachers who do or do not belong to schools with a PLC?

   a. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the teacher's level of education?

   b. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of years the teacher has taught?

c. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the age of the teacher?

d. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of students in the class?

e. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of teachers in the school?

2. What are the teachers' experiences related to the conditions for PLCs in their schools?

  a. What are the teachers' experiences related to shared and supportive leadership in their schools?

  b. What are the teachers' experiences related to shared beliefs, values, and vision in their schools?

  c. What are the teachers' experiences related to collective learning and its application in their schools?

  d. What are the teachers' experiences related to shared personal practice in their schools?

  e. What are the teachers' experiences related to supportive conditions-relationships in their schools?

  f. What are the teachers' experiences related to supportive conditions-structures in their schools?

Research Null Hypotheses

Reported PLC conditions will not vary significantly as a function of the levels of:

1. Existence of a PLC in the school (independent samples t-test);

2. Demographic questions (one-way ANOVA);

  a. The teachers level of education (one-way ANOVA);

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b. The number of years the teacher has taught (one-way ANOVA);

c. The age of the teacher (one-way ANOVA);

d. The number of students in class (one-way ANOVA); and

e. The number of teachers in the school (one-way ANOVA).

Quantitative Results

The data from the surveys was input into the SPSS software program for analysis. A total of 266 participants submitted complete responses. As mentioned earlier, all the preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia are women, so all the participants in my study were female and there was no need to analyze any of the responses based on gender. The SPSS software was used to calculate frequencies, percentages, weighted averages, and standard deviations of the responses for both the demographic questions and the questions directly related to the conditions necessary for successful PLCs. The responses for the survey questions related to the six conditions were provided on a scale of 1-4, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 4 indicating "strongly agree."

Responses to Demographic Questions

Presence of PLC. The first demographic question asked, "Do you have a PLC in your school?" Table 4-1 shows the results of the participants' responses to this question. Of the 266 responses, 168 participants said that their schools did not have PLCs. This indicates that the majority (63.2%) of the participants do not have PLCs in their schools.

Table 4-1 Presence of PLC

Table 4.1

Presence of PLC

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
NO	168	63.2	63.2
YES	98	36.8	36.8
Total	266	100.0	100.0

Level of education. The second demographic question asked "What is your highest level of education?" The responses show that most of the participants (82.3%) had achieved the level of a bachelor's degree. The breakdown of responses to this question is shown in Table 4-2.

Table 4.2

Level of Education

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Diploma	25	9.4	9.4
B.S.	219	82.3	82.3
M.A.	10	3.8	3.8
Ph.D.	12	4.5	4.5
Total	266	100.0	100.0

Years of teaching experience. The third demographic question asked, "How many years have you taught?" The response options for this question were divided into five categories, from "less than five" to "more than 20." A little less than half the participants (41.4%) selected the category of 6-10 years. The first two categories ("less than five" and 6-10) accounted for over 73% of the responses, as shown in Table 4-3.

Table 4.3

Years of Teaching Experience

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent

Less than five	86	32.3	32.3
6-10	110	41.4	41.4
11-15	21	7.9	7.9
16-20	16	6.0	6.0
More than 20	33	12.4	12.4
Total	266	100.0	100.0

Age of participants. The fourth demographic question asked for the participant's age, again broken down into six categories, from "21-25" through "46 or older." The responses are shown in Table 4-4. Almost 75% of the respondents were between the ages of 26 and 40.

Table 4.4

Age of Participants

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
21-25	24	9.0	9.0
26-30	65	24.4	24.4
31-35	62	23.3	23.3
36-40	66	24.8	24.8
41-45	24	9.0	9.0
46 or older	25	9.4	9.4
Total	266	100.0	100.0

Number of teachers in the school. The fifth demographic question asked, "How many teachers are in the school?" Table 4-5 shows that the teachers came from a broad range of faculty sizes. While only 16 respondents came from small schools (5 or fewer teachers), the other three categories had a fairly even distribution of responses, with 35.3% of the respondents at schools with 6-10 teachers, 31.6% of respondents from schools with 11-15 teachers, and 27.1% from schools with over 16 teachers.

Table 4.5

Number of Teachers in the School

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
5 or less	16	6.0	6.0
6 – 10	94	35.3	35.3
11 – 15	84	31.6	31.6
More than 16	72	27.1	27.1
Total	266	100.0	100.0

Number of students in class. The sixth demographic question asked "How many students are in your class?" Again, the possible responses for this question were broken into categories, from "five or less" to "more than 25." The majority of participants (55.6%) reported that they had more than 25 students in their classes. See Table 4-6 for a breakdown of the responses.

Table 4.6

Number of Students in Class

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Five or less	8	3.0	3.0
6-10	8	3.0	3.0
11-15	13	4.9	4.9
16-20	53	19.9	19.9
21-25	36	13.5	13.5
More than 25	148	55.6	55.6
Total	266	100.0	100.0

Responses to PLC-Related Questions

The responses to the survey questions were analyzed individually and also grouped by PLC characteristics. In order to examine reliability, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each item in each group. Also, the mean score and standard deviation were calculated for each item, and then the items in each group were given an order based on the mean score, with 1 being assigned to the item in each group that had the highest mean score, 2 being assigned to the item in that group with the second-highest mean score, etc.

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to examine the internal consistency of this instrument. As shown in Table 4-7, this measure ranged from .826 to .931.

Table 4.7

Reliability Statistics

Characteristics	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardized Items
Shared and Supportive Leadership	11	.931	.930
Shared Values and Vision	9	.913	.915
Collective Learning and Application	10	.911	.912
Shared Personal Practice	7	.878	.879
Supportive Conditions - Relationships	5	.826	.833
Supportive Conditions- Structures (combined)	10	.905	.906
Supportive Conditions - Structures A (time, resources)	5	.869	.870
Supportive Conditions - Structures B (communications/environment)	5	.830	.840

Responses by Condition

Shared and supportive leadership. Table 4-8 presents a summary of the results for the
first characteristic, Shared and Supportive Leadership. Most of the items in this group obtained
relative averages between 2.67 and 3.00. The mean score of all the items in this group was 2.88,
with a standard deviation of .635. This made it the lowest-scoring characteristic in this study.

Table 4.8

Shared and Supportive Leadership

Statement	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order
Staff members are consistently involved in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.	28.75	37.80	.632	.929	2.88	.880	5
The principal incorporates advice from staff members to make decisions.	28.82	37.21	.732	.924	2.81	.841	10
Staff members have accessibility to key information.	28.71	38.85	.662	.927	2.92	.732	3
The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed.	28.74	37.40	.746	.923	2.89	.808	4
Opportunities are provided for staff members to initiate change.	28.76	37.75	.705	.925	2.87	.810	7
The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.	28.77	37.10	.737	.923	2.86	.848	9
The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority.	28.95	36.45	.844	.918	2.68	.815	11

Leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff members.	28.76	36.85	.782	.921	2.88	.831	6
Decision-making takes place through committees and communication across grade and subject areas.	28.76	37.22	.795	.921	2.87	.783	8
Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.	28.65	38.33	.713	.925	2.98	.742	2
Staff members use multiple sources of data to make decisions about teaching and learning.	28.63	40.87	.498	.933	3.00	.650	1
Total dimension					2.88	.635	

These results suggest that overall, the kindergarten teachers in the study feel that their leadership is only somewhat shared and supportive, involving them in the discussions about school-related issues and giving them some influence on the decision-making process. The item with the highest rating was "Staff members use multiple sources of data to make decisions about teaching and learning," with a mean score of 3.00. The second highest score was the statement "Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority," with a mean score of 2.98, followed by "Staff members have accessibility to key information," with a mean score of 2.92. The lowest scoring

item was the statement, "The principal participates democratically, with the staff sharing power and authority," with a score of 2.68.

Shared values and vision. The second group of items corresponded to the characteristic of Shared Values and Vision. The mean scores for these items ranged from 3.01 to 3.15, with an average score for this group of questions of 3.07 with a standard deviation of .433. These results are shown in Table 4-9.

Table 4.9

Shared Values and Vision

Statement	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order
A collaborative process exists for developing a shared sense of values among staff	24.60	16.67	.694	.903	3.02	.638	4
Shared values support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning	24.52	16.84	.738	.901	3.10	.581	3
Staff members share visions for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning	24.47	16.76	.652	.906	3.15	.656	1
Decisions are made in alignment with the school's values and vision	24.52	16.67	.742	.900	3.11	.605	2

A collaborative process exists for developing a shared vision among staff	24.62	16.45	.652	.907	3.00	.708	7
School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and guides	24.47	16.56	.726	.901	3.15	.632	1
Policies and programs are aligned to the school's vision	24.62	16.21	.786	.897	3.00	.644	7
Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to increase student achievement	24.54	16.25	.647	.908	3.08	.746	5
Data are used to prioritize actions to reach a shared vision	24.61	16.38	.679	.905	3.01	.698	6
Total dimension					3.07	.433	

There were two items that shared the highest mean score. "Staff members share visions for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning," had a mean score of 3.15, which was the same as the mean score for "School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and guides." The next highest score was for the statement, "Decisions are made in alignment with the school's values and vision," with a mean score of 3.12. The two statements that received the lowest scores are "A collaborative process exists for developing a shared vision among staff," and "Policies and programs are aligned to the school's vision," each with a mean of 3.0.

Collective learning and application. The third group of questions on the survey was related to the characteristic of Collective Learning and Application. Table 4-10 presents the analysis of these responses. The highest mean score was in response to the statement, "School staff members are committed to programs that enhance learning," with a score of 3.20. The second highest score was in response to the statement, "Staff members plan and work together to search for solutions to address diverse student needs," with a mean of 3.16. The overall mean of all the items was 3.12, with a standard deviation of .354. The item with the lowest mean was the statement, "School staff members and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems," with a mean score of 2.97.

Table 4.10

Collective Learning and Application

Statement	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order
Staff members work together to seek knowledge, skills and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.	28.06	15.50	.721	.899	3.14	.659	4
Collegial relationships exist among staff members that reflect commitment to school improvement efforts.	28.04	16.14	.673	.902	3.15	.589	3
Staff members plan and work	28.03	15.45	.799	.894	3.16	.612	2

together to search for solutions to address diverse student needs.							
A variety of opportunities and structures exist for collective learning through open dialogue.	28.06	15.80	.727	.899	3.13	.607	5
Staff members engage in dialogue that reflects a respect for diverse ideas that lead to continued inquiry.	28.06	15.91	.761	.897	3.14	.567	4
Professional development focuses on teaching and learning.	28.07	16.28	.586	.908	3.12	.633	6
School staff members and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems.	28.22	15.96	.652	.904	2.97	.635	8
School staff members are committed to programs that enhance learning.	27.99	16.54	.747	.899	3.20	.478	1
Staff members collaboratively analyze multiple sources of data to assess the effectiveness of instructional practices.	28.15	16.79	.558	.909	3.05	.561	**7**

Staff members collaboratively analyze student work to improve teaching and learning.	28.05	16.56	.571	.908	3.15	.593	3
Total Dimension					3.12	.354	

Shared personal practice. The highest mean score in this category was in response to the statement, "Staff members provide feedback to peers related to instructional practices," with a score of 3.24. There were two statements with the second highest score of 3.23. These were "Opportunities exist for staff members to observe peers and offer encouragement," and "Staff members informally share ideas and suggestions for improving student learning." The overall mean score for the combined items was 3.15, with a standard deviation of .308. The lowest score was for the item, "Staff members collaboratively review student work to share and improve instructional practices," with a mean score of 3.06. The data for this characteristic is shown in Table 4-11.

Table 4.11

Shared Personal Practice

Statement	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order
Opportunities exist for staff members to observe peers and offer encouragement.	18.85	6.42	.669	.860	3.23	.580	2
Staff members provide feedback to peers related to	18.84	6.60	.611	.867	3.24	.570	1

instructional practices.							
Staff members informally share ideas and suggestions for improving student learning.	18.85	6.61	.665	.860	3.23	.532	2
Staff members collaboratively review student work to share and improve instructional practices.	19.02	6.42	.699	.855	3.06	.560	5
Opportunities exist for coaching and mentoring.	18.99	6.59	.680	.858	3.09	.528	4
Individuals and teams have the opportunity to apply learning and share the results of their practices.	18.99	6.49	.697	.856	3.09	.542	4
Staff members regularly share student work to guide overall school improvement.	18.94	6.60	.610	.867	3.14	.572	3
Total Dimension					3.15	.308	

Supportive Conditions – Relationships. The responses in this category had an overall

mean score of 3.085, with a standard deviation of .348. The highest score was for "Caring

relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect," with a mean of

3.210. The second highest score was for "A culture of trust and respect exists for taking risks,"

with a mean score of 3.18. The lowest mean score was for the item, "Relationships among staff

members support honest and respectful examination of data to enhance teaching and learning,"

with a mean score of 3.04.

Table 4.12

Supportive Conditions—Relationships

Statement	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order
Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect.	12.21	3.70	.479	.831	3.21	.590	1
A culture of trust and respect exists for taking risks.	12.24	3.52	.650	.785	3.18	.542	2
Outstanding achievement is recognized and celebrated regularly in our school.	12.50	3.23	.570	.814	2.93	.694	5
School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed change into the culture of the school.	12.36	3.26	.774	.749	3.06	.560	3
Relationships among staff members support honest and respectful examination of data to enhance teaching and learning.	12.38	3.44	.682	.776	3.04	.551	4
Total Dimension					3.09	.348	

Supportive Conditions – Structures. This characteristic had an overall mean score of 2.91, making it the second-lowest scoring characteristic in the survey. The highest score was in response to the statement, "The proximity of grade level and department personnel allows for ease in collaborating with colleagues," with a mean score of 3.15. The second-highest score was for the statement, "Communication systems promote a flow of information among staff members," with a mean of 3.02. The item receiving the lowest score was, "Fiscal resources are available for professional development," with a mean score of 2.64. This data is presented in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13

Supportive Conditions –Structures

Statement	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order
Time is provided to facilitate collaborative work	26.12	23.45	.670	.895	3.01	.589	3
The school schedule promotes collective learning and shared practice	26.20	23.36	.634	.897	2.93	.631	6
Fiscal resources are available for professional development	26.49	21.40	.734	.890	2.64	.819	10
Appropriate technology and instructional materials are available to staff	26.33	21.19	.704	.893	2.80	.875	9
Resource people provide expertise	26.31	21.29	.738	.890	2.81	.830	8

and support for continuous learning							
The school facility is clean, attractive, and inviting	26.30	21.25	.770	.888	2.82	.807	7
The proximity of grade level and department personnel allows for ease in collaborating with colleagues	25.97	24.59	.436	.907	3.15	.614	1
Communication systems promote a flow of information among staff members	26.10	23.22	.674	.895	3.02	.620	2
Communication systems promote a flow of information across the entire school community including: central office personnel, parents, and community members	26.13	23.45	.638	.897	2.99	.614	4
Data are organized and made available to provide easy access to staff members	26.17	22.96	.636	.897	2.95	.688	5
Total Dimension					2.91	.514	

Summary of Responses by Condition

The participants' responses to the survey questions can be ranked in order to give an overall view of the teachers' perceptions of the PLC-related conditions at their schools. See Table 4-14, which shows the characteristics ranked by mean score, with the highest mean score at the top of the table.

Table 4.14

Descriptive Statistics Summary, Ranked

Characteristics	N	M	SD
Shared Personal Practice	266	3.15	.308
Collective Learning and Application	266	3.12	.354
Supportive Conditions - Relationships	266	3.09	.384
Shared Values and Vision	266	3.07	.433
Supportive Conditions - Structures	266	2.91	.514
Shared and Supportive Leadership	266	2.88	.635

Table 4.14 shows that Shared Personal Practice received the highest mean score, with 3.15, while Shared and Supportive Leadership received the lowest score, with 2.88. Supportive Conditions – Structures is the only other condition that received a score less than 3.0. This would suggest that the two conditions that need the most improvement are Shared and Supportive Leadership and Supportive Conditions-Structures.

Comparison of Schools with and Without PLCs

A t-test was conducted to test the hypothesis that there would be a significant difference between the responses of teachers whose schools had already established PLCs and those whose schools did not have PLCs. Table 4.15 provides the descriptive statistics used in this analysis, and Table 4.16 provides the results of the t-test. As shown in Table 4.16, five of the six characteristics evidenced a significant difference. Shared Personal Practice was the only characteristic that did not indicate a significant difference in the answers of teachers at schools that have PLCs versus the answers of teachers at schools that did not have PLCs.

Table 4.15

Existence of PLC versus No PLC

Characteristic	Do you have a PLC in your school?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	d
Shared and Supportive Leadership	NO	168	2.7392	.62396	.04814	0.63
	YES	98	3.1095	.51756	.05228	
Shared Values and Vision	NO	168	2.9901	.52424	.04045	0.43
	YES	98	3.2041	.44235	.04468	
Collective Learning and Application	NO	168	3.0774	.45461	.03507	0.25
	YES	98	3.1908	.41644	.04207	
Shared Personal Practice	NO	168	3.1182	.43297	.03340	0.23
	YES	98	3.2157	.39630	.04003	
Supportive Conditions-Relationships	NO	168	3.0214	.43281	.03339	0.38
	YES	98	3.1939	.46878	.04735	
Supportive Conditions – Structures A	NO	168	2.7262	.64355	.04965	0.49
	YES	98	3.0245	.50991	.05151	
Supportive Conditions – Structures B	NO	168	2.8786	.49040	.03784	0.59
	YES	98	3.1776	.51444	.05197	
Supportive Conditions-Structures (combined)	NO	168	2.8024	.52277	.04033	0.59
	YES	98	3.1010	.47678	.04816	

Table 4.16

Results of T-Test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		F	Sig.	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Shared and Supportive Leadership	Equal variances assumed	3.541	.061	-4.962	264	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.210	233.652	.000
Shared Values and Vision	Equal variances assumed	1.462	.228	-3.396	264	.001
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.551	230.997	.000
Collective Learning and Application	Equal variances assumed	.059	.808	-2.024	264	.044
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.071	217.648	.040
Shared Personal Practice	Equal variances assumed	.031	.860	-1.828	264	.069
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.871	217.777	.063
Supportive Conditions-Relationships	Equal variances assumed	6.256	.013	-3.039	264	.003
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.976	190.141	.003
Supportive Conditions-Structures A	Equal variances assumed	15.368	.000	-3.925	264	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.169	240.433	.000
Supportive Conditions – Structures B	Equal variances assumed	.740	.391	-4.710	264	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.651	195.232	.000
Supportive Conditions – Structures (combined)	Equal variances assumed	2.504	.115	-4.640	264	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.754	218.375	.000

The data in Table 4.16 support the hypothesis that there are statistically significant differences in

the responses of teachers from schools with PLCs as compared to responses of teachers from

schools that do not have PLCs. Teachers from schools that have PLCs tend to rate the conditions

at their schools slightly higher than teachers from schools that do not have PLCs. Once again, the

only characteristic that did not show a significant difference between teachers at schools with

PLCs and teachers at schools without PLCs was the Shared Personal Practice.

Effects of Teacher Education Level

The descriptive statistics of the participants' responses based on teacher education level are seen

in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17

Descriptive Statistics Based on Teacher Education Level

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Shared and Supportive Leadership	Diploma	25	3.2255	.61776	.12355
	B.S.	219	2.8311	.57452	.03882
	M.A.	10	3.2636	.52390	.16567
	Ph.D.	12	2.6364	.96365	.27818
	Total	266	2.8756	.61272	.03757
Shared Values And Vision	Diploma	25	3.3733	.45347	.09069
	B.S.	219	3.0096	.48499	.03277
	M.A.	10	3.3444	.61408	.19419
	Ph.D.	12	3.2870	.57921	.16720
	Total	266	3.0689	.50549	.03099
Shared Personal Practice	Diploma	25	3.2840	.41601	.08320
	B.S.	219	3.0799	.42724	.02887
	M.A.	10	3.3500	.60964	.19279
	Ph.D.	12	3.3000	.51346	.14822
	Total	266	3.1192	.44354	.02720
Collective Application of Learning	Diploma	25	3.2800	.39443	.07889
	B.S.	219	3.1207	.40019	.02704
	M.A.	10	3.3571	.69089	.21848
	Ph.D.	12	3.3333	.49985	.14429
	Total	266	3.1541	.42172	.02586
Supportive Conditions – Relationships	Diploma	25	3.1200	.40825	.08165
	B.S.	219	3.0667	.45021	.03042
	M.A.	10	3.2800	.60516	.19137
	Ph.D.	12	3.1833	.46286	.13362
	Total	266	3.0850	.45325	.02779
Supportive Conditions – Structures (A)	Diploma	25	3.0320	.46790	.09358
	B.S.	219	2.7881	.61304	.04143
	M.A.	10	3.0000	.85375	.26998
	Ph.D.	12	3.1667	.53144	.15341
	Total	266	2.8361	.61397	.03764
Supportive Conditions— Structures (B)	Diploma	25	3.2000	.39581	.07916
	B.S.	219	2.9379	.52232	.03530
	M.A.	10	3.2600	.57388	.18148
	Ph.D.	12	3.2500	.41887	.12092
	Total	266	2.9887	.51895	.03182
Supportive Conditions— Structures (Combined)	Diploma	25	3.1160	.39547	.07909
	B.S.	219	2.8630	.52572	.03552
	M.A.	10	3.1300	.66005	.20873
	Ph.D.	12	3.2083	.44611	.12878

| | | | | Total | 266 | 2.9124 | | .52560 | .03223 |

One-way ANOVAS were conducted to examine the effect of the teacher's education

level on her perceptions of the school's PLC conditions. The results of these calculations are

presented in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18

Teacher Education Level

				Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Shared and Supportive Leadership	Between Groups	(Combined)		5.687	3	1.896	5.295	.001
		Linear Term	Unweighted	1.467	1	1.467	4.097	.044
			Weighted	1.361	1	1.361	3.801	.052
			Deviation	4.326	2	2.163	6.042	.003
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.238	1	.238	.665	.416
			Weighted	.982	1	.982	2.742	.099
			Deviation	3.345	1	3.345	9.342	.002
	Within Groups			93.800	262	.358		
	Total			99.487	265			
Shared Values and Vision	Between Groups	(Combined)		4.416	3	1.472	6.094	.001
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.005	1	.005	.020	.889
			Weighted	.002	1	.002	.007	.932
			Deviation	4.415	2	2.207	9.137	.000
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.412	1	.412	1.704	.193
			Weighted	3.297	1	3.297	13.647	.000
			Deviation	1.118	1	1.118	4.626	.032
	Within Groups			63.295	262	.242		
	Total			67.712	265			
Collective Learning and Application	Between Groups	(Combined)		1.942	3	.647	3.379	.019
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.083	1	.083	.435	.510
			Weighted	.077	1	.077	.403	.526
			Deviation	1.865	2	.932	4.867	.008
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.104	1	.104	.544	.461
			Weighted	1.272	1	1.272	6.640	.011
			Deviation	.593	1	.593	3.094	.080
	Within Groups			50.190	262	.192		
	Total			52.132	265			

Shared Personal Practice	Between Groups	(Combined)		1.439	3	.480	2.750	.043
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.129	1	.129	.742	.390
			Weighted	.123	1	.123	.703	.403
			Deviation	1.316	2	.658	3.773	.024
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.081	1	.081	.462	.497
			Weighted	.912	1	.912	5.228	.023
			Deviation	.404	1	.404	2.319	.129
	Within Groups			45.691	262	.174		
	Total			47.129	265			
Supportive Conditions-Relationships	Between Groups	(Combined)		.601	3	.200	.974	.405
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.134	1	.134	.652	.420
			Weighted	.143	1	.143	.694	.405
			Deviation	.458	2	.229	1.114	.330
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.008	1	.008	.040	.841
			Weighted	.145	1	.145	.708	.401
			Deviation	.312	1	.312	1.520	.219
	Within Groups			53.839	262	.205		
	Total			54.440	265			
Supportive Conditions – Structures A	Between Groups	(Combined)		3.043	3	1.014	2.744	.044
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.312	1	.312	.845	.359
			Weighted	.264	1	.264	.715	.399
			Deviation	2.779	2	1.390	3.759	.025
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.740	1	.740	2.001	.158
			Weighted	2.543	1	2.543	6.880	.009
			Deviation	.236	1	.236	.638	.425
	Within Groups			96.850	262	.370		
	Total			99.894	265			
Supportive Conditions – Structures B	Between Groups	(Combined)		3.237	3	1.079	4.149	.007
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.184	1	.184	.706	.402
			Weighted	.166	1	.166	.637	.425
			Deviation	3.071	2	1.536	5.905	.003
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.279	1	.279	1.072	.301
			Weighted	2.282	1	2.282	8.777	.003
			Deviation	.789	1	.789	3.033	.083
	Within Groups			68.129	262	.260		
	Total			71.366	265			
Supportive Conditions - Combined	Between Groups	(Combined)		3.095	3	1.032	3.855	.010
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.244	1	.244	.910	.341
			Weighted	.212	1	.212	.793	.374
			Deviation	2.883	2	1.441	5.386	.005
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.482	1	.482	1.800	.181
			Weighted	2.411	1	2.411	9.009	.003
			Deviation	.472	1	.472	1.763	.185
	Within Groups			70.114	262	.268		
	Total			73.209	265			

Table 4.18 shows that there are statistically significant differences between the responses of the participants, based on their level of education.

Effects of Teacher Experience Level

The descriptive statistics concerning participants' responses as related to the teachers' experience are presented in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19

Descriptive Statistics Based on Teacher Years of Experience

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Shared and Supportive Leadership	Less than five	86	2.8203	.58651	.06324
	6-10	110	2.7802	.51151	.04877
	11-15	21	3.0390	.66840	.14586
	16-20	16	3.2386	.64954	.16238
	More than 20	33	3.0579	.81844	.14247
	Total	266	2.8756	.61272	.03757
Shared Values and Vision	Less than five	86	2.9755	.48489	.05229
	6-10	110	2.9808	.45274	.04317
	11-15	21	3.2169	.55830	.12183
	16-20	16	3.3056	.55407	.13852
	More than 20	33	3.3973	.50079	.08718
	Total	266	3.0689	.50549	.03099
Shared Personal Practice	Less than five	86	3.1081	.40474	.04364
	6-10	110	3.0264	.41413	.03949
	11-15	21	3.1000	.51186	.11170
	16-20	16	3.3125	.47871	.11968
	More than 20	33	3.3758	.47106	.08200
	Total	266	3.1192	.44354	.02720
Collective Learning and Application	Less than five	86	3.1412	.35503	.03828
	6-10	110	3.0597	.41067	.03916
	11-15	21	3.2313	.47483	.10362
	16-20	16	3.3839	.47443	.11861
	More than 20	33	3.3420	.46831	.08152
	Total	266	3.1541	.42172	.02586
Supportive Conditions—	Less than five	86	3.0930	.44000	.04745
	6-10	110	2.9836	.39828	.03797

Relationships	11-15	21	3.2667	.56332		.12293
	16-20	16	3.2000	.49531		.12383
	More than 20	33	3.2303	.49780		.08666
	Total	266	3.0850	.45325		.02779
Supportive Conditions— Structures (A)	Less than five	86	2.7581	.61901		.06675
	6-10	110	2.7564	.59563		.05679
	11-15	21	2.9429	.63920		.13948
	16-20	16	3.0000	.56095		.14024
	More than 20	33	3.1576	.57175		.09953
	Total	266	2.8361	.61397		.03764
Supportive Conditions— Structures (B)	Less than five	86	2.9791	.46021		.04963
	6-10	110	2.8691	.50715		.04835
	11-15	21	3.0190	.54002		.11784
	16-20	16	3.2375	.68593		.17148
	More than 20	33	3.2727	.47386		.08249
	Total	266	2.9887	.51895		.03182
Supportive Conditions— Structures (Combined)	Less than five	86	2.8686	.49735		.05363
	6-10	110	2.8127	.51154		.04877
	11-15	21	2.9810	.55553		.12123
	16-20	16	3.1188	.55644		.13911
	More than 20	33	3.2152	.49315		.08585
	Total	266	2.9124	.52560		.03223

One-way ANOVAs were calculated comparing responses of teachers based on the

number of years of teaching experience a participant had. See Table 4.20.

Table 4.20

Number of Years of Experience

				Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Shared and Supportive Leadership	Between Groups	(Combined)		5.030	4	1.258	3.475	.009
		Linear Term	Unweighted	3.642	1	3.642	10.063	.002
			Weighted	3.172	1	3.172	8.764	.003
			Deviation	1.859	3	.620	1.712	.165
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.270	1	.270	.745	.389
			Weighted	.052	1	.052	.142	.706
			Deviation	1.807	2	.904	2.497	.084
	Within Groups			94.457	261	.362		
	Total			99.487	265			
Shared Values	Between Groups	(Combined)		6.520	4	1.630	6.952	.000
			Unweighted	5.705	1	5.705	24.333	.000

and Vision		Linear Term	Weighted	5.811	1	5.811	24.786	.000
			Deviation	.709	3	.236	1.008	.390
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.001	1	.001	.006	.937
			Weighted	.245	1	.245	1.046	.307
			Deviation	.464	2	.232	.989	.373
	Within Groups			61.192	261	.234		
	Total			67.712	265			
Collective Learning and Application	Between Groups	(Combined)		3.736	4	.934	5.037	.001
		Linear Term	Unweighted	2.819	1	2.819	15.203	.000
			Weighted	2.286	1	2.286	12.331	.001
			Deviation	1.450	3	.483	2.606	.052
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.428	1	.428	2.309	.130
			Weighted	1.158	1	1.158	6.246	.013
			Deviation	.292	2	.146	.786	.457
	Within Groups			48.396	261	.185		
	Total			52.132	265			
Shared Personal Practice	Between Groups	(Combined)		3.129	4	.782	4.640	.001
		Linear Term	Unweighted	2.201	1	2.201	13.056	.000
			Weighted	1.822	1	1.822	10.807	.001
			Deviation	1.307	3	.436	2.585	.054
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.008	1	.008	.050	.823
			Weighted	.481	1	.481	2.853	.092
			Deviation	.826	2	.413	2.451	.088
	Within Groups			44.000	261	.169		
	Total			47.129	265			
Supportive Conditions – Relationships	Between Groups	(Combined)		2.737	4	.684	3.454	.009
		Linear Term	Unweighted	1.007	1	1.007	5.084	.025
			Weighted	.994	1	.994	5.020	.026
			Deviation	1.743	3	.581	2.932	.034
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.012	1	.012	.058	.810
			Weighted	.375	1	.375	1.896	.170
			Deviation	1.367	2	.684	3.451	.033
	Within Groups			51.703	261	.198		
	Total			54.440	265			
Supportive Conditions – Structures A	Between Groups	(Combined)		5.302	4	1.325	3.657	.006
		Linear Term	Unweighted	4.541	1	4.541	12.531	.000
			Weighted	4.689	1	4.689	12.938	.000
			Deviation	.613	3	.204	.563	.640
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.083	1	.083	.230	.632
			Weighted	.396	1	.396	1.091	.297
			Deviation	.217	2	.109	.300	.741
	Within Groups			94.592	261	.362		
	Total			99.894	265			
Supportive Conditions –	Between Groups	(Combined)		5.254	4	1.313	5.185	.000
			Unweighted	3.817	1	3.817	15.068	.000

Structures B		Linear Term	Weighted	3.121	1	3.121	12.322	.001
			Deviation	2.132	3	.711	2.806	.040
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.300	1	.300	1.183	.278
			Weighted	1.406	1	1.406	5.552	.019
			Deviation	.726	2	.363	1.433	.240
	Within Groups			66.113	261	.253		
	Total			71.366	265			
Supportive Conditions – Combined	Between Groups	(Combined)		5.062	4	1.266	4.847	.001
		Linear Term	Unweighted	4.171	1	4.171	15.976	.000
			Weighted	3.865	1	3.865	14.804	.000
			Deviation	1.197	3	.399	1.528	.208
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.175	1	.175	.670	.414
			Weighted	.823	1	.823	3.154	.077
			Deviation	.374	2	.187	.716	.490
	Within Groups			68.147	261	.261		
	Total			73.209	265			

Table 4.20 suggests that there are significant differences in the responses of the teachers based on the number of years of experience each teacher has.

Age of Teacher

The descriptive statistics for the participants' responses based on the age of the teacher are presented in Table 4.21 It can be seen in the table that there is a significant difference in the responses of the youngest group of teachers compared to the responses of the oldest group of teachers in every characteristic.

Table 4.21

Descriptive Statistics Based on Age of Teacher

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Shared and Supportive Leadership	21-25	24	2.6402	.55943	.11419
	26-30	65	2.8825	.52758	.06544
	31-35	62	2.8123	.57892	.07352
	36-40	66	2.8609	.60538	.07452

	41-45	24	3.1212	.57849	.11808
	46 or older	25	3.0436	.88417	.17683
	Total	266	2.8756	.61272	.03757
Shared Values and Vision	21-25	24	2.8657	.41700	.08512
	26-30	65	2.9915	.47601	.05904
	31-35	62	3.0215	.43330	.05503
	36-40	66	3.0859	.54076	.06656
	41-45	24	3.2315	.49681	.10141
	46 or older	25	3.3822	.59324	.11865
	Total	266	3.0689	.50549	.03099
Shared Personal Practice	21-25	24	3.0375	.40412	.08249
	26-30	65	3.1077	.37388	.04637
	31-35	62	3.0823	.47062	.05977
	36-40	66	3.0591	.45808	.05639
	41-45	24	3.2417	.39223	.08006
	46 or older	25	3.3600	.51801	.10360
	Total	266	3.1192	.44354	.02720
Collective Learning and Application	21-25	24	3.0952	.21754	.04440
	26-30	65	3.1011	.34601	.04292
	31-35	62	3.1728	.44888	.05701
	36-40	66	3.0909	.48243	.05938
	41-45	24	3.2262	.36946	.07541
	46 or older	25	3.4000	.48445	.09689
	Total	266	3.1541	.42172	.02586
Supportive Conditions— Relationships	21-25	24	3.0417	.34881	.07120
	26-30	65	3.0492	.40161	.04981
	31-35	62	3.1032	.50015	.06352
	36-40	66	3.0303	.44686	.05500
	41-45	24	3.1000	.46438	.09479
	46 or older	25	3.3040	.52320	.10464
	Total	266	3.0850	.45325	.02779
Supportive Conditions— Structures (A)	21-25	24	2.8333	.51975	.10609
	26-30	65	2.7569	.58576	.07265
	31-35	62	2.7806	.67819	.08613
	36-40	66	2.7485	.61500	.07570
	41-45	24	3.0333	.48871	.09976
	46 or older	25	3.2240	.56956	.11391
	Total	266	2.8361	.61397	.03764
Supportive Conditions— Structures (B)	21-25	24	2.8417	.45293	.09245
	26-30	65	2.9877	.42261	.05242
	31-35	62	2.9613	.57811	.07342
	36-40	66	2.9121	.52404	.06451
	41-45	24	3.1500	.52170	.10649

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
	46 or older	25	3.2480	.55761	.11152
	Total	266	2.9887	.51895	.03182
Supportive Conditions (Combined)	21-25	24	2.8375	.46045	.09399
	26-30	65	2.8723	.45052	.05588
	31-35	62	2.8710	.59047	.07499
	36-40	66	2.8303	.52769	.06495
	41-45	24	3.0917	.46149	.09420
	46 or older	25	3.2360	.53610	.10722
	Total	266	2.9124	.52560	.03223

One-way ANOVAs were computed to see if the age of the participant had any effect on the participant's perceptions of her school's conditions related to professional learning communities. The results of these ANOVAs are seen in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22

Responses Based on Age of Participant

				Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Shared and Supportive Leadership	Between Groups	(Combined)		3.750	5	.750	2.037	.074
		Linear Term	Unweighted	2.993	1	2.993	8.127	.005
			Weighted	2.232	1	2.232	6.061	.014
			Deviation	1.518	4	.379	1.031	.392
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.030	1	.030	.081	.777
			Weighted	.015	1	.015	.042	.838
			Deviation	1.503	3	.501	1.360	.255
	Within Groups			95.737	260	.368		
	Total			99.487	265			
Shared Values and Vision	Between Groups	(Combined)		4.627	5	.925	3.814	.002
		Linear Term	Unweighted	4.383	1	4.383	18.063	.000
			Weighted	4.234	1	4.234	17.451	.000
			Deviation	.393	4	.098	.405	.805
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.133	1	.133	.547	.460
			Weighted	.202	1	.202	.831	.363
			Deviation	.191	3	.064	.263	.852
	Within Groups			63.084	260	.243		
	Total			67.712	265			
Collective Learning and Application	Between Groups	(Combined)		2.301	5	.460	2.402	.038
		Linear Term	Unweighted	1.533	1	1.533	7.999	.005
			Weighted	1.154	1	1.154	6.021	.015
			Deviation	1.148	4	.287	1.497	.203
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.443	1	.443	2.310	.130
			Weighted	.659	1	.659	3.439	.065
			Deviation	.489	3	.163	.850	.468
	Within Groups			49.831	260	.192		
	Total			52.132	265			

				SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Shared Personal Practice	Between Groups	(Combined)		2.187	5	.437	2.531	.029
		Linear Term	Unweighted	1.277	1	1.277	7.386	.007
			Weighted	1.094	1	1.094	6.332	.012
			Deviation	1.093	4	.273	1.581	.180
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.460	1	.460	2.664	.104
			Weighted	.498	1	.498	2.882	.091
			Deviation	.595	3	.198	1.147	.331
	Within Groups			44.942	260	.173		
	Total			47.129	265			
Supportive Conditions – Relationships	Between Groups	(Combined)		1.551	5	.310	1.525	.182
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.748	1	.748	3.678	.056
			Weighted	.612	1	.612	3.007	.084
			Deviation	.939	4	.235	1.154	.332
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.420	1	.420	2.065	.152
			Weighted	.410	1	.410	2.016	.157
			Deviation	.529	3	.176	.867	.459
	Within Groups			52.889	260	.203		
	Total			54.440	265			
Supportive Conditions – Structures (A)	Between Groups	(Combined)		5.800	5	1.160	3.205	.008
		Linear Term	Unweighted	2.925	1	2.925	8.082	.005
			Weighted	2.752	1	2.752	7.604	.006
			Deviation	3.048	4	.762	2.106	.080
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	2.179	1	2.179	6.021	.015
			Weighted	2.575	1	2.575	7.115	.008
			Deviation	.473	3	.158	.436	.727
	Within Groups			94.093	260	.362		
	Total			99.894	265			
Supportive Conditions – Structures (B)	Between Groups	(Combined)		3.258	5	.652	2.487	.032
		Linear Term	Unweighted	2.358	1	2.358	9.000	.003
			Weighted	1.626	1	1.626	6.209	.013
			Deviation	1.631	4	.408	1.557	.186
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.257	1	.257	.980	.323
			Weighted	.515	1	.515	1.967	.162
			Deviation	1.116	3	.372	1.420	.237
	Within Groups			68.108	260	.262		
	Total			71.366	265			
Supportive Conditions – Structures (Combined)	Between Groups	(Combined)		4.180	5	.836	3.148	.009
		Linear Term	Unweighted	2.634	1	2.634	9.920	.002
			Weighted	2.152	1	2.152	8.107	.005
			Deviation	2.027	4	.507	1.909	.109
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.983	1	.983	3.702	.055
			Weighted	1.348	1	1.348	5.079	.025
			Deviation	.679	3	.226	.852	.467
	Within Groups			69.029	260	.265		
	Total			73.209	265			

The data in Tables 4.21 and 4.22 suggests that there are statistically significant

differences at the $p < .05$ level based on the ages of the participants. Generally speaking, the

older the teacher, the higher the rating. This suggests that older teachers are more likely to

perceive their schools as ready for PLCs, compared to the perceptions of the younger teachers.

Number of Teachers in the School

The descriptive statistics for the participants' responses based on the number of the

teachers in the school are found in Table 4.23 and Table 4.24.

Table 4-23 Descriptive statistics by number of teachers in school

Table 4.23

Descriptive Statistics Based on Number of Teachers in School

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Shared and Supportive Leadership	5 or less	16	2.8295	.74218	.18554
	6 - 10	94	2.8085	.55297	.05703
	11 - 15	84	2.8041	.58330	.06364
	More than 16	72	3.0568	.66392	.07824
	Total	266	2.8756	.61272	.03757
Shared Values and Vision	5 or less	16	3.1736	.44623	.11156
	6 - 10	94	2.9598	.49311	.05086
	11 - 15	84	2.9907	.47461	.05178
	More than 16	72	3.2793	.50934	.06003
	Total	266	3.0689	.50549	.03099
Shared Personal Practice	5 or less	16	3.2250	.34737	.08684
	6 - 10	94	3.0521	.38205	.03941
	11 - 15	84	3.0202	.45224	.04934
	More than 16	72	3.2986	.47516	.05600
	Total	266	3.1192	.44354	.02720
Collective Learning and Application	5 or less	16	3.1607	.32524	.08131
	6 - 10	94	3.1140	.38662	.03988
	11 - 15	84	3.0765	.43424	.04738
	More than 16	72	3.2956	.44232	.05213
	Total	266	3.1541	.42172	.02586
Supportive Conditions – Relationships	5 or less	16	3.1000	.37947	.09487
	6 - 10	94	2.9936	.41732	.04304
	11 - 15	84	3.0310	.46929	.05120
	More than 16	72	3.2639	.45138	.05320
	Total	266	3.0850	.45325	.02779
Supportive Conditions— Structures (A)	5 or less	16	2.7000	.50067	.12517
	6 - 10	94	2.7106	.61425	.06336
	11 - 15	84	2.7429	.61903	.06754
	More than 16	72	3.1389	.53248	.06275

	Total	266	2.8361	.61397	.03764
Supportive Conditions—Structures (B)	5 or less	16	3.0500	.33862	.08466
	6 - 10	94	2.9021	.45884	.04733
	11 - 15	84	2.9429	.57963	.06324
	More than 16	72	3.1417	.52481	.06185
	Total	266	2.9887	.51895	.03182
Supportive Conditions—Structures (Combined)	5 or less	16	2.8750	.36788	.09197
	6 - 10	94	2.8064	.49726	.05129
	11 - 15	84	2.8429	.54646	.05962
	More than 16	72	3.1403	.50593	.05962
	Total	266	2.9124	.52560	.03223

One-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine the effects of the number of teachers in the participant's school. The results are shown in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24

Number of Teachers in the School

				Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Shared and Supportive Leadership	Between Groups	(Combined)		3.251	3	1.084	2.950	.033
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.646	1	.646	1.760	.186
			Weighted	1.980	1	1.980	5.392	.021
			Deviation	1.270	2	.635	1.729	.179
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.757	1	.757	2.062	.152
			Weighted	1.063	1	1.063	2.895	.090
			Deviation	.207	1	.207	.564	.453
	Within Groups			96.236	262	.367		
	Total			99.487	265			
Shared Values and Vision	Between Groups	(Combined)		4.995	3	1.665	6.956	.000
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.171	1	.171	.713	.399
			Weighted	2.221	1	2.221	9.277	.003
			Deviation	2.774	2	1.387	5.795	.003
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	2.551	1	2.551	10.657	.001
			Weighted	2.774	1	2.774	11.588	.001
			Deviation	.001	1	.001	.002	.960
	Within Groups			62.717	262	.239		
	Total			67.712	265			
Shared Personal Practice	Between Groups	(Combined)		3.742	3	1.247	6.754	.000
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.050	1	.050	.272	.602
			Weighted	1.145	1	1.145	6.198	.013
			Deviation	2.597	2	1.299	7.032	.001
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	2.058	1	2.058	11.144	.001
			Weighted	2.495	1	2.495	13.507	.000
			Deviation	.103	1	.103	.556	.457
	Within Groups			48.390	262	.185		
	Total			52.132	265			

				Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Collective Learning and Application	Between Groups	(Combined)		2.100	3	.700	4.072	.008
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.190	1	.190	1.106	.294
			Weighted	.863	1	.863	5.024	.026
			Deviation	1.236	2	.618	3.597	.029
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.714	1	.714	4.156	.042
			Weighted	1.017	1	1.017	5.920	.016
			Deviation	.219	1	.219	1.274	.260
	Within Groups			45.030	262	.172		
	Total			47.129	265			
Supportive Conditions – Relationships	Between Groups	(Combined)		3.338	3	1.113	5.705	.001
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.394	1	.394	2.021	.156
			Weighted	2.011	1	2.011	10.311	.001
			Deviation	1.327	2	.663	3.402	.035
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	1.164	1	1.164	5.967	.015
			Weighted	1.317	1	1.317	6.754	.010
			Deviation	.010	1	.010	.049	.824
	Within Groups			51.102	262	.195		
	Total			54.440	265			
Supportive Conditions – Structures (A)	Between Groups	(Combined)		9.107	3	3.036	8.761	.000
		Linear Term	Unweighted	2.563	1	2.563	7.395	.007
			Weighted	6.575	1	6.575	18.974	.000
			Deviation	2.533	2	1.266	3.654	.027
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	1.501	1	1.501	4.333	.038
			Weighted	2.113	1	2.113	6.099	.014
			Deviation	.419	1	.419	1.210	.272
	Within Groups			90.786	262	.347		
	Total			99.894	265			
Supportive Conditions – Structures (B)	Between Groups	(Combined)		2.626	3	.875	3.336	.020
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.140	1	.140	.535	.465
			Weighted	1.349	1	1.349	5.142	.024
			Deviation	1.277	2	.638	2.433	.090
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	1.215	1	1.215	4.630	.032
			Weighted	1.273	1	1.273	4.853	.028
			Deviation	.003	1	.003	.013	.910
	Within Groups			68.740	262	.262		
	Total			71.366	265			
Supportive Conditions – Structures (Combined)	Between Groups	(Combined)		5.224	3	1.741	6.711	.000
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.976	1	.976	3.760	.054
			Weighted	3.470	1	3.470	13.373	.000
			Deviation	1.754	2	.877	3.379	.036
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	1.354	1	1.354	5.219	.023
			Weighted	1.667	1	1.667	6.424	.012
			Deviation	.087	1	.087	.335	.563
	Within Groups			67.985	262	.259		
	Total			73.209	265			

The data in Table 4.23 and 4.24 suggest that there are statically significant differences between

the teachers' perceptions of their schools, based on the number of teachers in the school.

All of the relationships in Table 4.23 showed a significant linear relationship, where generally

the larger the number of teachers on staff, the higher the ratings of PLC conditions. However,

there are also curvilinear trends for several of the outcomes. In general, it appears that the

schools with the fewest teachers and the schools with the most teachers rated their schools are

more ready for PLCs than the teachers in the moderately-sized schools.

Number of Students in the Classroom

Descriptive statistics regarding the participants' responses based on the number of the

students in the classroom may be found in Table 4.25 and Table 4.26. The data in these tables

suggests that the differences in responses based on the number of students in a participant's class

were very slight or non-existent.

Table 4.25

Descriptive Statistics Based on Number of Students

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Shared and Supportive Leadership	Five or less	8	2.9659	.66082	.23364
	6-10	8	2.7159	.76128	.26915
	11-15	13	2.8322	.59941	.16625
	16-20	53	2.9485	.64566	.08869
	21-25	36	2.9596	.49956	.08326
	More than 25	148	2.8366	.62048	.05100
	Total	266	2.8756	.61272	.03757
Shared Values and Vision	Five or less	8	3.2778	.37562	.13280
	6-10	8	2.8472	.79446	.28089
	11-15	13	2.9060	.36808	.10209
	16-20	53	3.1635	.53978	.07414
	21-25	36	3.0741	.47956	.07993
	More than 25	148	3.0488	.49389	.04060
	Total	266	3.0689	.50549	.03099
Shared Personal Practice	Five or less	8	3.3375	.41726	.14752
	6-10	8	3.0125	.19594	.06928
	11-15	13	2.8385	.32026	.08882
	16-20	53	3.2226	.47904	.06580
	21-25	36	3.1417	.44745	.07458

	More than 25	148	3.0953	.43882	.03607
	Total	266	3.1192	.44354	.02720
Collective Learning and Application	Five or less	8	3.2143	.41824	.14787
	6-10	8	3.0000	.07636	.02700
	11-15	13	3.1209	.30776	.08536
	16-20	53	3.2129	.48576	.06672
	21-25	36	3.1746	.44277	.07380
	More than 25	148	3.1361	.41335	.03398
	Total	266	3.1541	.42172	.02586
Supportive Conditions— Relationships	Five or less	8	3.2500	.41057	.14516
	6-10	8	3.0000	.42762	.15119
	11-15	13	2.8769	.28912	.08019
	16-20	53	3.2340	.51551	.07081
	21-25	36	3.2000	.47809	.07968
	More than 25	148	3.0176	.42051	.03457
	Total	266	3.0850	.45325	.02779
Supportive Conditions— Structures (A)	Five or less	8	2.9500	.25635	.09063
	6-10	8	2.7500	.43753	.15469
	11-15	13	2.8923	.44434	.12324
	16-20	53	2.9962	.62078	.08527
	21-25	36	2.9667	.58846	.09808
	More than 25	148	2.7405	.63907	.05253
	Total	266	2.8361	.61397	.03764
Supportive Conditions— Structures (B)	Five or less	8	3.0750	.23755	.08399
	6-10	8	2.9500	.39641	.14015
	11-15	13	2.9692	.31460	.08725
	16-20	53	3.1019	.54719	.07516
	21-25	36	3.0944	.55237	.09206
	More than 25	148	2.9216	.52561	.04320
	Total	266	2.9887	.51895	.03182
Supportive Conditions— (Combined)	Five or less	8	3.0125	.23566	.08332
	6-10	8	2.8500	.39279	.13887
	11-15	13	2.9308	.31460	.08725
	16-20	53	3.0491	.54618	.07502
	21-25	36	3.0306	.53175	.08862
	More than 25	148	2.8311	.53806	.04423
	Total	266	2.9124	.52560	.03223

Table 4.26

Number of Students in the Classroom

				Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Shared and Supportive Leadership	Between Groups	(Combined)		1.055	5	.211	.557	.733
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.008	1	.008	.022	.881
			Weighted	.126	1	.126	.334	.564
			Deviation	.928	4	.232	.613	.654
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.009	1	.009	.024	.876
			Weighted	.266	1	.266	.703	.402
			Deviation	.662	3	.221	.583	.627
	Within Groups			98.432	260	.379		
	Total			99.487	265			
Shared Values and Vision	Between Groups	(Combined)		1.623	5	.325	1.277	.274
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.009	1	.009	.035	.851
			Weighted	.058	1	.058	.228	.634
			Deviation	1.565	4	.391	1.539	.191
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.413	1	.413	1.624	.204
			Weighted	.017	1	.017	.067	.796
			Deviation	1.548	3	.516	2.029	.110
	Within Groups			66.089	260	.254		
	Total			67.712	265			
Shared Personal Practice	Between Groups	(Combined)		2.167	5	.433	2.255	.049
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.041	1	.041	.211	.646
			Weighted	.084	1	.084	.435	.510
			Deviation	2.083	4	.521	2.710	.031
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.626	1	.626	3.257	.072
			Weighted	.007	1	.007	.036	.850
			Deviation	2.076	3	.692	3.602	.014
	Within Groups			49.965	260	.192		
	Total			52.132	265			
Collective Learning and Application	Between Groups	(Combined)		.480	5	.096	.535	.750
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.011	1	.011	.059	.808
			Weighted	.022	1	.022	.122	.727
			Deviation	.458	4	.114	.638	.636
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.012	1	.012	.066	.798
			Weighted	.094	1	.094	.522	.471
			Deviation	.364	3	.121	.677	.567
	Within Groups			46.650	260	.179		
	Total			47.129	265			
Supportive Conditions –	Between Groups	(Combined)		3.164	5	.633	3.208	.008
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.009	1	.009	.045	.833
			Weighted	.545	1	.545	2.765	.098
			Deviation	2.618	4	.655	3.319	.011

Relationships		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.097	1	.097	.491	.484
			Weighted	.555	1	.555	2.812	.095
			Deviation	2.064	3	.688	3.488	.016
	Within Groups			51.276	260	.197		
	Total			54.440	265			
Supportive Conditions – Structures (A)	Between Groups	(Combined)		3.528	5	.706	1.904	.094
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.018	1	.018	.049	.825
			Weighted	1.457	1	1.457	3.930	.048
			Deviation	2.072	4	.518	1.397	.235
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.134	1	.134	.363	.548
			Weighted	1.322	1	1.322	3.567	.060
			Deviation	.750	3	.250	.674	.568
	Within Groups			96.365	260	.371		
	Total			99.894	265			
Supportive Conditions Structures (B)	Between Groups	(Combined)		1.824	5	.365	1.364	.238
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.008	1	.008	.032	.859
			Weighted	.658	1	.658	2.460	.118
			Deviation	1.166	4	.291	1.090	.362
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.024	1	.024	.090	.765
			Weighted	.621	1	.621	2.321	.129
			Deviation	.545	3	.182	.679	.565
	Within Groups			69.542	260	.267		
	Total			71.366	265			
Supportive Conditions — Structures (Combined)	Between Groups	(Combined)		2.587	5	.517	1.905	.094
		Linear Term	Unweighted	.013	1	.013	.047	.828
			Weighted	1.018	1	1.018	3.748	.054
			Deviation	1.569	4	.392	1.444	.220
		Quadratic Term	Unweighted	.068	1	.068	.250	.617
			Weighted	.939	1	.939	3.455	.064
			Deviation	.630	3	.210	.773	.510
	Within Groups			70.622	260	.272		
	Total			73.209	265			

Qualitative Results

Case Descriptions

Sara. Sara was from an education family. Both of her parents were educators. She volunteered in kindergarten schools all through her college experience. She had worked as a teacher at two different schools. Her current position was teaching at a school that had 6 large classrooms, with middle-income students. In the fall, she had taught KG1 (3-4 year olds), but

then she was transferred to teaching a KG2 class (4-5 year olds) when the KG2 teacher took maternity leave. Sara describes her previous school, at which she had taught KG3 (5-6 year olds), as having had more freedom for the teacher to decide how to present the lessons and in what order to present them. Sara said that she had an open-minded attitude about education and enjoyed learning how other countries approach educating young children. She said that she loved attending workshops and conferences to learn new and better ways to teach, and that she was not afraid to try new things and implement new strategies. Although she felt pressed for time when she was at school, she sometimes went home and read professional development books.

Sara said that she loved to collaborate with her colleagues and help them in any way she could, and she was willing to listen and consider what her colleagues had to say, even when she disagreed with them. She described her approach to instruction by saying, "I'm the person who likes to change and add ideas to my teaching and curriculum. But sometimes I listen to the other teachers and do what they want because it is not essential or the main thing." She said that she was careful to be respectful and gentle when she was making suggestions for improvement or disagreeing with how a colleague was doing something. She contributed money to a fund that the teachers created to pay someone to come in and clean the classrooms because the school did not pay for that service. According to Sara, expressing creativity was one of her highest values. She enjoyed nurturing the creativity of her students through how she presented her lessons.

Rana. Rana's mother worked in education, but her father did not. Rana's first year of teaching had been very difficult and she felt that she did not do well. However, she said that she responded to that experience by working to improve her teaching. Like Sara, Rana said she felt comfortable in her present school, which was also a medium-sized school in a middle-class neighborhood. Rana liked to supplement the curriculum to make it more individualized for her students. She loved to implement new ideas and try new ways of teaching, and her administration was supportive of that, according to Rana. She sometimes spent money from her own paycheck to purchase items that she felt would make her teaching more effective.

Rana also loved to work collaboratively and help her colleagues. However, she reported that in her current position, she did not often have the opportunity to share practice with the other teachers. While she was excited about things she had learned from workshops and conferences, she said that the other teachers did not have time to process and discuss that learning with her. She said that she liked to meet and talk with a variety of people because she could learn from anyone, young or old, and gain experience through them. Rana explained that she loved to tell stories to her students, using narrative as a way of introducing new concepts and reinforcing old ones. She liked to break down tasks and ideas and organize them to make them more manageable. She said she was open to constructive criticism and willing to learn and change. Table 4.27 presents the basic demographic information on the two interviewees, Sara and Rana.

Table 4.27

Demographic Information for Interviewees

	Sara	Rana
Teaching degree	Undergraduate degree in Education	Undergraduate and master's degrees both in Education
Years of teaching experience	1 year volunteering, partial year at private school, 1 year at university, 3 years as kindergarten teacher	1 year at private school, 4 years in previous public school, 2 years at current school
Travel time from home to school	1 hour, 15 minutes	15 minutes
Number of students in classroom	15	30
Age of students	4-5 years old	5-6 years old
Number of teachers in school	11	12
Number of teachers in classroom	1	2
Number of kindergarten classrooms in the school	6	6
Marital status	Married	Married
Number of children	2	3

Participants' Perspectives on PLC Conditions

Shared and supportive leadership.

Sara. Sara said that her principal was wonderful. She felt that the principal did her best to make sure that the teachers implemented the curriculum. Sara described the principal as supportive of the teachers, listening to the concerns they had (both professional and personal) and taking those concerns into account when dealing with the teachers. According to Sara, "The principal knows the difference between the teacher who works hard and the teacher who does not." She observed that when a teacher was working hard and doing her best, the principal

acknowledged that effort and cooperated with her. On the other hand, it seemed to Sara that a teacher who was not even trying to do what was required was pressured to work harder. The principal did not cooperate with that teacher. The principal treated her staff based on their work performance, effort, and personal ethics, such as truthfulness, kindness, and cooperative attitude, according to Sara. Sara reported that the relationships between the principal and the teachers were very good. The principal allowed open communication and was very friendly and nice. However, Sara observed that the principal maintained a professional distance; the teachers and principal did not socialize outside of the school environment.

As an example of the principal's leadership style, Sara explained that she applied the school's vision only because she was "forced" to apply it. While it was expected that each kindergarten would follow the curriculum provided by the Department of Education, it was generally left up to the school leadership to determine how closely this book would be followed and whether supplemental materials and activities would be allowed. The curriculum was over ten years old, which was a concern for Sara.

In her previous school, Sara had felt that she had had more freedom to decide what to teach and how to teach it. The principal at the previous school had told her that she had full reign in her classroom. "You are with the kids all day long. Teach them the way that you want. The important thing is the students' accomplishments," the principal had instructed her teachers, according to Sara. Sara had appreciated that freedom, and within two months, her students had been writing their first and last names. She had chosen to use many of the activities in the supplied curriculum, choosing ones that she had felt nurtured creativity. She especially had appreciated the discovery activities and ones that she had felt strengthened cognitive skills, as

well as some art activities. She said that many of the activities in the book had been easy to implement either as they were or with some modifications.

In her current school, on the other hand, Sara was required to stay close to the national curriculum. While Sara acknowledged that it was a good, comprehensive book, she felt constrained by the leadership's requirement that she adhere strictly to the supplied curriculum. She described feeling that "the kindergarten principal and supervisor from the Education Department (have) bound us with the book." Sara would have preferred to use some of her own creative ideas when teaching. She felt that she could have introduced activities that would spark the children's imaginations, expand their perceptions, and help them see the beauty in the world around them, but she was not permitted to do anything that was not already in the provided curriculum. The only freedom that Sara felt she had in this area was the freedom to decide when and how she chose to evaluate the students' progress.

Not all of these restrictions were due to the principal's leadership. Most of these requirements were handed down from the Department of Education's regional supervisor for the Eastern region. This supervisor inspected the school regularly and made recommendations for improvements. Sara reported that these strict guidelines had begun about two years earlier, when an inspection by the Department of Education had revealed that there were two teachers who had not been following the provided curriculum. As a result, it became mandatory that all teachers implement the book without modifications.

Sara felt that these restrictions were overwhelming, hindering her creative expression and reducing her effectiveness as a teacher. For example, Sara approached the regional supervisor one day with a proposal to modify an art activity that was in the curriculum. She was informed that she was not authorized to make any modifications. At the next meeting the teachers were all

required to sign a paper saying that they would implement the curriculum exactly as written. "And all of that happened because I just want to change some ideas in the art section," Sara concluded. This was very disheartening, Sara explained. She saw her students as very creative, and she knew that they loved to draw. Sara felt that she could nurture that creativity in her students by making some of the activities more differentiated to suit the interests of individual students, but she was not allowed to do that. She was concerned that by adhering strictly to the provided curriculum, she might inadvertently be stifling her students' creativity. She expressed her worry that if the students did not grow creatively in kindergarten, they would miss this critical development point and not be as creative in first grade as they could have been.

Another example of the leadership approach of the Department of Education was the state's decision to lengthen the school day for kindergarten by one hour. While the school day had traditionally been from 7:30-11:30, five days per week, beginning in Fall 2018 the school day would be from 7:30-12:30. The children would continue to their own breakfasts, and they would not be served lunch. The teachers traditionally were required to stay an additional hour, so they would be working until 1:30 instead of 12:30. When this decision was announced, kindergarten teachers in Sara's school requested that at least half of this additional hour be designated for assessment time. This request was denied. Sara said that the teachers were told, "That is not allowed and forbidden." The teachers were informed that the entire hour must be used for teaching the supplied curriculum. The teachers would not be paid extra for the additional hour.

At the time of the interviews, Sara had not given up on trying to get permission to make small modifications to how the material was presented. She reported that she always discussed her lesson plans with the principal, and consistently asked for permission to supplement the

lessons. However, she was consistently told that she must follow the book exactly. One small concession that the principal made was that she sometimes allowed teachers to bring their cellphones and iPads for the children to use, as long as the children's use was closely monitored and the devices were being used for an approved educational purpose.

Sara reported that there was very little shared leadership in her school. For example, there were many committees, and the teachers were required to participate on committees. However, they did not get to choose which committees they were in, nor who led those committees, nor who had which responsibilities on the committees. At the beginning of the school year, the principal handed out a sheet that listed the committees and the members of each one, with their responsibilities. I asked Sara if I could see her copy of the committee list, but she said that she no longer had it; she didn't have a reason to keep it. The principal also decided who was the leader of each committee. For professional development, the principal supplied a variety of resources, including opportunities to attend conferences and workshops, which allowed some individual choice. However, the teachers were also given a list of books to read, with a requirement to write a summary of the books to share their impressions with the other teachers.

Another example of top-down leadership that Sara provided was that the teachers were not free to collaborate without specific permission. For example, when a teacher wanted to observe another teacher in the classroom, she must first get permission from the principal. Then, after the observation, when the two teachers were discussing the observation, the principal was sometimes present for the discussion. The presence of the principal affected what feedback the teachers were willing to provide to each other. "It is best not to say the negative things in front of the principal," Sara explained. However, when the principal was not present, she said that they were more comfortable collaborating with each other and processing the observation more fully.

A second example that Sara gave reflected the teachers' concern for their students' health. Some students had asthma, and they suffered when they were outside during a sandstorm. However, the teachers were not allowed to recommend to parents that they not send their children to kindergarten when there was a sandstorm. Although the teachers were concerned for the students' health, Sarah explained "We cannot say to the families, 'Please make your child absent that day.'" While all students stayed inside during the school day if there was a sandstorm, there were no special arrangements made for students with asthma as they traveled to and from school.

Sara also believed that the teacher evaluation method chosen by the leadership was not as authentic as it could have been. The teachers received a formal observation, which was announced in advance. They were able to spend extra time developing the lesson that would be observed, so that the principal saw the teachers' best work, and not a reflection of the day-to-day experiences of the children in the classroom. While the teachers followed the required curriculum, they were able to maximize their presentation style and work to earn the highest points possible. "The style of the presentation is different. The teachers are trying to be perfect in everything to get points," Sara said. She believed that this approach to evaluation did not give a realistic picture of what was happening in the classroom on a day-to-day basis.

Rana. Rana had had a bad experience in her first year of teaching at a private school. She left after a year because she did not feel appreciated by the principal. She had felt that the principal was not collaborative and the environment in which Rana was working was not conducive to teaching. In her current position at her new school, she felt satisfied and comfortable with her ability to teach. Rana believed that when a person felt comfortable in a certain atmosphere, they were willing to put more effort into their work. At the beginning of the

school year, teachers were given a list of committees to be involved with and were provided a description of their responsibilities. For example, at Al-Jenadriyah, a recent festival celebrating culture and heritage, Rana reported feeling happy with the outcome of the event due to her principal's willingness to coordinate with the teachers in terms of planning. She felt that the shared leadership for this activity was rewarding for the teachers. When I asked Rana if I could see her school's list of committees, she said that she no longer had it because that was at the beginning of the school year, and we were near the end of the year when I interviewed her.

Rana felt that her principal cared about the teachers' professional development and demonstrated that care by encouraging them to attend conferences and workshops, and to observe model teachers. The teachers had the freedom to determine whom they observed and when, as long as the assistant teacher could cover the lead teacher's class during the planned observation. However, the principal shared that leadership responsibility; observing another teacher in Rana's school must be approved by the principal in order to have this flexibility. If Rana were to observe another teacher without the principal's approval, it would not be viewed as appropriate. At the school, many decisions were created through collaboration among the teachers and the principal. Rana stated, "Our principal is very collaborative with us. Some decisions come after our discussions and some of them come from the Education Department in the East and we have to follow them."

A few downfalls of Rana's current teaching position included inefficient lesson planning requirements, inadequate student-to-teacher ratio, and requiring teachers to strictly follow certain teaching guidelines. For example, Rana explained that her principal preferred lesson plans to be handwritten rather than on an electronic device to prove that the information was current and not repeated from the previous years, as well as making sure the teachers were reviewing the

curriculum. Rana believed that this process produced an unnecessary amount of paperwork that got easily lost and wasted valuable time. She described this situation as, "Lots and lots of papers back and forth, from us to the principal." Rana's opinion was that all this paperwork provided no benefit to the teachers or the kids. Also, the principal expected quality instruction, but with 30 students in each classroom, Rana said that was nearly impossible. Although she tried her best to give every student all of her attention, she felt overwhelmed with this request of quality.

For one of the workshops that Rana attended, she reported that her principal required her to implement every single piece of information that she learned. She was not permitted to adapt the material or integrate any of the current practices as an intermediate step to ease the transition from the current practices to the new methods. Rana asked the principal if she could combine some of the similar aspects of the workshop but she was not allowed to do so. This situation did not always occur in Rana's profession; however, not being able to condense what she learned and being required to immediately implement all the new practices cut down on the time she could spend teaching. In this instance, Rana felt that there was no shared leadership. Her views on how to implement the new practices were not heard. "She told me that we cannot discuss this topic with her," Rana reported.

In contrast to Sara's requirement to stay strictly with the curriculum provided by Department of Education, Rana felt that she had some freedom in her teaching. She must follow that curriculum, but she was allowed to supplement the curriculum when she had creative ideas that she believed would be effective with her particular students. Her principal supported creativity in the classroom and even said, "Do not let the book limit you." Rana knew that this approach to the curriculum was not strongly supported by the regional Department of Education supervisor.

Both Sara and Rana were given the opportunity as part of their annual professional development to read books related to teaching and summarize them for their evaluation portfolio. In Sara's school, the teachers were given a list of suggested books, which were available in the school library. In Rana's school, they did not get a list, and no books were provided. Rana would have preferred to have more guidance from the leadership in this area, rather than the wide-open freedom to find their own books to read and summarize.

Shared values and vision.

Sara. Sara reported that the school's vision was hanging on the wall, but she was not familiar enough with it to be able to recite or paraphrase it. She said the teachers had no input in creating that vision, and she didn't know if any of the teachers worked to promote it. She could not remember any time when it was promoted to the teachers or referred to by the principal. It seemed to her that the actual vision of the school was to strictly follow the curriculum that was provided to them. If the curriculum was based on the vision, then she was promoting the vision because she was following the curriculum. "I apply the vision because I am forced to apply it," she explained.

Rana. Rana's response was similar to Sara's. "I will be honest with you. I don't know our vision. I also don't know who created the vision. I came to the school and found the vision there. I saw the vision on the wall at the beginning of the year and I forget what it was." She knew that she did not have a role in creating the vision and she did not feel that it was shared by the teachers and administration. Rana did remember an instance where the Assistant Principal mentioned that they would be redecorating at the school, and the vision statement that was hanging on the wall may be removed.

Rana stated that she had her own personal vision for her students. She wanted them to learn the things that would benefit them in the future, such as good values and the teachings of the Quran. She wanted them to learn that no one was better than someone else. Everyone was equal. It was her goal to teach them that value by treating all her students with equality, regardless of their academic ability.

Collective learning and application.

Sara. Sara felt that there were frequent conflicts between teachers when they tried to coordinate their lessons and learn together. She said that she was willing to voice her opinion and make suggestions, but she did not feel that those suggestions were accepted by her coworkers. She said that some teachers would respond to her suggestions by asking, "Why should we do this? Why should we change this? Let's just do what we have without changes or additions." Sara said that she preferred to make improvements and integrate her ideas, but frequently she would just go along with the other teachers because the changes she wanted to make were not essential.

Sara gave an example of how she shared her learning and application with her coworkers. She received a new responsibility this year, as the Department of Education added a requirement for physical education to be provided in the kindergarten classroom. Sara was given the responsibility for creating a physical education schedule and daily lessons for all the teachers to conduct in their classrooms. She provided the lessons to the other teachers, along with a form she created for them to provide her with daily feedback about each lesson. The form included questions such as "Was the activity too hard or too easy for the kids? Should we do the same activity again? What are your suggestions and feedback?" that Sara could use to evaluate each lesson and make changes for the next year.

One regular time for teachers to share learning and application in Sara's school was during break. Every day, half the teachers took the children outside, and the other half were able to take a break and informally discuss how things were going in their classrooms. Sara said that these breaks provided an opportunity for teachers to discuss issues and behaviors with each other. Teachers would give each other suggestions and ideas that had worked for them. They also used an app to communicate with each other about school activities when they were not at school.

In Sara's opinion, the atmosphere at Sara's school was one of collaboration rather than competition between teachers. She felt that everyone worked together. If one teacher needed help with an activity or program, the other teachers would all pitch in and help her. For example, Sara said she would ask her assistant teacher if it was all right for her to leave the classroom to help another teacher with a task. Another example that Sara gave to show collaboration between the teachers was when they agreed to combine a bit of each of their paychecks in order to create a salary to hire two more custodians for the school, so that the teachers would not have to clean their own classrooms.

When asked about collaborating with assessment data, Sara mentioned that she evaluated and observed her students' cognitive, emotional, physical, social, and language skills but that she never shared those with her colleagues; however, if needed, Sara was willing to share this data with the other teachers. All the teachers exchanged information and their knowledge on certain issues and behaviors but they never used academic materials to gain more perspective on how to solve these issues. Sara said, "We never sit and discuss a book that we have read." At home, Sara read professional and academic development books but never shared this information with her colleagues.

As a member of the Community Partnership Committee, Sara said she worked with her colleagues to build a bridge between the parents, the community, the school and the students. When the committee leader needed to schedule a meeting, the teachers were flexible and open to collaborating in order to discuss committee goals and the process of integrating the community with the school. Donations from local businesses and the general public helped support the children's learning environment as well as parent involvement in the classroom. The committee encouraged the parents to come to the school and interact with the students by leading certain activities or buying or bringing useful materials from home. For example, Sara's school had "Visiting Mother" days, where the moms of the students were able to come to the classroom and take part in the daily activities. Sara sent a schedule to the mothers and they could pick which activity in which they would like to help. Together they would talk about what tools and supplies they would need to accomplish the activity. If the mother wanted to bring resources for the activity, she was welcome to do so, or the teachers could provide the resources that the school supplied. These interactions were one example of collaboration between the parents and the teachers. Sara said that any idea that the parents had that improved the students' learning was welcomed and appreciated. The teachers often sent letters home to encourage the parents to visit the school and to explain how this benefited the kids; Sara also communicated daily via WhatsApp. Although the parents were open to communication between school and home, in Sara's opinion many of them did not want to hear the negative feedback such as behavior issues concerning their children. Sara explained that many of the kids in her school lacked discipline. When Sara and her colleagues tried to communicate these issues with the parents they replied, "Our kid is not like that at home." This was one of the difficulties that Sara described in regards to communication with the parents. The parents collaborated well with the teachers and school in

some aspects, but when it came to a child's struggles, Sara observed that many believed their child did not need help.

Rana. Rana felt like she and her colleagues agreed for the most part, due to their similar education training. When someone did disagree with her, Rana described her willingness to listen by saying, "I open my mind and heart to her." Due to different experiences, opinions, and backgrounds they sometimes would disagree on how to implement a subject, lesson plan, activity, assessment, and so on. Rana said that she was willing to collaborate with teachers of different experience levels and backgrounds. She explained to me how she would collaborate with the teachers who have a lot of teaching experience versus those who are right out of college. She said she would implement ideas from both ends. For example, the teachers who had been at the school for many years may have experienced something that Rana had not. Rana was willing to listen to these teachers and follow their strategies in order to improve her own teaching skills. In comparison, the new teachers may have more current ideas that Rana would implement into her own classroom.

Last year, Rana was a part of a committee and attended a workshop that was meant to improve the school's physical environment. She described that the information was overwhelming and stressful to implement. She wished that the facilitator of the workshop had done a better job summarizing the information so that she could more easily pass on the information to her colleagues. Even though the workshop was demanding, Rana created a brochure that covered the basics of the program. She made sure that all the teachers were collaborating properly in order to implement the environmental requirements that enhanced the students' learning. This year, Rana was responsible for organizing the classrooms and the hallways within the school. She divided tasks among teachers and supervised them to see how

the tasks were being implemented. She reported that the teachers were collaborating with her to make sure that the classrooms and hallways were being organized appropriately.

At the end of the school year, the teachers filled out a self-evaluation form given by the principal. There was a list of accomplishments on the form, and each teacher marked whether or not she had completed each one within the last school year. Rana said it was best to be honest when filling out this form. For example, if the form asked how many books you have read and you have not read any, then you should answer "zero." Each teacher had a file called the "accomplishment folder," where things like information from workshops and conferences attended, art projects, and more was placed. Rana said that collecting these materials made her feel like a journalist. Even with her assistant teacher, who helped and collaborated with her, Rana reported that the process of teaching the children as well as trying to document their progress could be overwhelming.

Both Sara and Rana talked about attending trainings for professional development, and they noted that they were required to share with their colleagues the information that they received. As a result of one of her trainings, Sara ended up creating a physical education schedule and activities, as well as feedback forms for the teachers to complete and return daily. As a result of her professional development training this year, Rana ended up creating a brochure of the information that she learned and passing it on to her colleagues so that they would know what was expected in the educational environment. Then she divided the tasks among the teachers and supervised their work in that area. Both Sara and Rana used the term "overwhelming" to describe the responsibilities and expectations that were attached to the professional development trainings they received.

Shared personal practice.

Sara. Sara reported that the teachers were willing to go to workshops and trainings, and they would have liked to have had more options for workshops at her school. She said that at her previous school, she had had many more workshops from which to choose. She said that she loved to attend workshops and share what she learned with other teachers. She felt that the training and the time spent sharing new ideas with other teachers contributed to a sense of excitement and motivated the teachers to work hard. She said that there was a high level of exchange between the teachers when they were excited and motivated, and they learned a lot that way. However, Sara believed that at her current school, the principal was concerned that too much time may be spent on attending workshops, and the time spent in training took away from the time spent teaching. That was one reason why Sara only attended one 3-day workshop this year. She found the workshop very interesting and helpful. The training covered many things that she already knew, but it provided a lot of ideas on how to incorporate what she knew into activities that would engage the children. It also provided information on how to schedule and organize the activities for maximum benefits. Sara felt that the teachers should be encouraged to participate in more trainings. She said, "In my opinion, the teachers are able to manage their time between their teaching and learning."

Sara noted that the teachers in her school exchange learning based on the teachers' needs, not based on the children's needs. If a teacher needed help, she took the initiative to seek out colleagues and get their advice informally. If Sara saw a teacher doing something that was not as efficient or effective as the way Sara did that same thing, then Sara would talk with the teacher and suggest a better way to do it. She followed that by asking the teacher what she thought of Sara's suggested approach. Sara mentioned that she had seen in other schools that some teachers

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were competitive with each other; they did not share ideas to help their colleagues improve their practice because they were in a competition with them.

According to Sara, some of the shared personal practice was informal, such as giving ideas or suggestions to someone when she saw them struggling. Other shared personal practice was more formal. For example, after a visit from the Department of Education regional supervisor, which resulted in documentation of many mistakes, Sara's principal agreed to let teachers observe each other. However, after each observation, the teachers were required to fill out a form providing feedback about the observation. Both teachers had to complete the form. Sara believed that the observations were very helpful, because the experienced teachers were able to serve as models and guides for the less-experienced teachers. Before the principal expanded the teachers' permissions for observations, the rule was that only new teachers were able to do observations, just to see how more experienced teachers worked. Sara believed that it was equally helpful for more-experienced teachers to observe the newer teachers. She said, "The teachers who have experience can observe the new teachers and the new teachers can observe the teachers who have experience, and they can learn from each other."

The observations resulted in shared personal practice, according to Sara. She made notes during her observation. Some were notes of things that she liked and she planned to use in her own classroom. Another set of notes was a list of suggestions for the teacher, based on what Sara saw in the classroom and what she thought might be helpful for the observed teacher to try. When she gave feedback to the teacher, Sara said she was careful how she presented her feedback. She believed that how feedback is received is dependent on how gently the feedback is given. Sara said that she was careful to give the feedback in terms of advice, opinion, and suggestion and she avoided sounding critical or judgmental. She made sure she connected with

the teacher, telling little stories of her experience and using wording like, "What you did was really great, but if you do this, it will be even better." Sara said that one of the teachers she observed still did not respond well to her feedback. She seemed to feel that Sara did not have the right to give her suggestions because she had more experience than Sara.

Sara said that the teachers all communicated about each other's students, especially when the children were playing outside or in a combined group. While they recognized that the responsibility for each child was assigned to a specific teacher, they also recognized the shared responsibility they had as teachers. For example, Sara said if she saw a child who was behaving badly, she would find the child's teacher and let her know about it. Other teachers did the same for Sara. They did not say, "That's Sara's kid. I'm not responsible for that child, so I'm not going to say or do anything about that." Sara felt that this attitude showed that all the teachers cared about all the students in the school.

At Sara's school, the teachers met formally once a week, unless there were new decisions passed down from the Department of Education or from the principal that required an extra meeting. They also met informally during break time every day. For these informal meetings, only half of the staff met at one time, while the other half watched the children. Sara said that the teachers shared personal practice during these breaks, discussing lesson plans and what they wanted to do next. They also discussed any difficulties they were having with specific children. Occasionally, Sara said, the teachers would use break time to discuss non-school related topics.

Rana. Rana said that her principal was very supportive of sending her teachers to professional development workshops and allowing teachers to observe one another. Rana attended three workshops this year and she reported that she really learned a lot from the workshops. She gave an example of one workshop that she attended. When she registered for it,

she had had a lot of questions about the purpose of the workshop, what would be covered in the sessions, what would be expected of the teachers as a result of what they were learning, and what direction the Department of Education was taking. She said she had been both curious and concerned. At the workshop, Rana received answers to her questions and felt that what she learned would help her to grow as a teacher and help her to instill good values, ethics, and skills in her students. However, the workshop covered so many skills that it was overwhelming, and after the training she was informed that she must implement everything she learned immediately.

Even though every workshop presenter encouraged the participants to share what they had learned with their colleagues, Rana admitted that she did not have enough time to share with her coworkers. She said, "I don't have time to eat my breakfast. I don't have the extra time to tell others, 'Come listen to me. This is the workshop I attended and this is what I learned.'" She said this lack of time negatively affected her ability to transfer her learning and experience from the training. Rana explained that the other teachers didn't have time to listen, either. If she was very excited about something she had learned and she wanted to tell them about it, they would say, "Oh, please … please … we are done," at the end of the day because they had very little time to do their lesson plans and prepare for tomorrow.

Rana mentioned that she had never formally observed another teacher or had another teacher formally observe her. She said that in general, it was expected that if you were going to observe a teacher, you should observe a teacher who had been identified as a model teacher, one of the best in a neighboring school, for example. Although this was permitted, Rana wasn't sure that it would be beneficial to her. "In my opinion here in this situation, there will be lots of perspectives. I mean, this teacher might like the teacher that she observes and her style of teaching, but another teacher might not like that style . . . and she might say, 'This is my way of

teaching and I don't like to change.'" Rana said that she didn't believe there was only one correct way of teaching. However, Rana felt that informal observations and conversations were helpful, because the teachers initiated the interactions and discussed an isolated approach or skill that interested them. For example, if a teacher saw a game that Rana was teaching to the children, she might notice that Rana's children played it a different way from the way the teacher's children played it. She might ask Rana to explain how and why she had taught the game differently, and they shared their practice in that way. Rana said that she was approached by a teacher this year who had asked her, "What is your best way of introducing a new letter?" Rana had explained her storytelling approach, and the teacher had said that she had never done it that way, but she would try it next time. Rana said that she would appreciate any constructive feedback from other teachers who have watched her and who might have suggestions for better ways to do things.

Like Sara, Rana mentioned that the most helpful sharing took place during break time. She gave an example of a time when she was unable to attend a workshop, but one of her colleagues had attended it. She met with her colleague during break time and asked her what she had learned at the workshop. The other teacher was very open to sharing what she had learned. They met during a second break time, and the teacher shared her notes and training materials with Rana. The other useful time for shared professional practice that Rana mentioned was also an informal time. Rana's assistant teacher attended a workshop called "The Environment of the Classroom" and returned with very helpful material and ideas. She told Rana, "I have made a lot of mistakes with the children," based on what she had learned in the workshop. Together, she and Rana examined their words and actions in the classroom based on the training, and together they changed how they interacted with the children. Rana pointed out that again, this was very informal sharing of practice; the two teachers were just sharing information and observations and

talking with each other throughout the day, and that helped them to incorporate what they were

learning into their practice.

Supportive condit*ions – Relationships.*

*Sara***.** Sara felt that the teachers and the principal at her school have a supportive

relationship. She said they collaborate willingly and everyone is willing to help when someone

needs something. Her principal pays attention to the work of each individual teacher, considering

the teacher's lesson plans, methods of teaching, tools used, and accomplishments. If the principal

feels that a specific teacher has done exceptional work, she will acknowledge that teacher's

efforts and accomplishments publicly, such as at the school's annual event where the parents are

present. The acknowledgement is not lavish--there is no certificate of appreciation or big

celebration. Sometimes the principal will say "thank you" to a teacher through the app that the

teachers use for communication with each other and with parents.

Sara said that the principal speaks positively about her staff, usually focusing on

character traits such as ethical and courteous behavior more than professional accomplishments.

"When our principal talks about a teacher, she always talks about her ethical behavior and how

she treats other teachers nicely before she talks about her educational accomplishments." The

administration frequently reminds staff to be respectful of each other, and they demonstrate that

respect. Sara said that there was a certain level of trust between the teachers and the principal,

but it was limited. She gave an example of the principal requiring all the teachers to sign a

statement saying they would strictly follow the curriculum that was supplied to them by the

Department of Education.

The administration sends a clear message to the teachers that they want teachers to grow

professionally. However, if the teacher does not make any effort to participate in professional

development, but otherwise she does her job well, then she will receive an acceptable evaluation. The principal will mention the need for professional development and try to encourage the teacher to participate, but nonparticipation will not result in a lower evaluation. "If the teacher does not do any professional development, nothing will happen to her. She will be like any teacher who did her job and that's it. The principal will encourage her verbally by saying 'We need to improve, we need to change.'" Sara does not think that this is a good policy, because then teachers are not motivated to work harder and grow professionally. Sara did note that teachers who work hard and try to grow professionally do receive specific thanks from the principal for their efforts.

Sara felt confident that she could implement new ways of teaching and said that she always discussed her ideas with her principal. She explained that she has studied educational approaches from other countries, and she has incorporated some other methods into her classroom activities as a result of her studies. She felt that the activities that she has learned made her lessons better.

Rana. Rana believed that the teachers and the principal at her school worked together to support teaching and learning. She gave an example of the workshop that she attended, after which she had two weeks to implement what she had learned. Implementation required her to make a large number of changes in her classroom, but she felt that the principal was supportive of her while she worked to make those changes.

Rana stated that the principal at her school paid attention to individual teachers, noting the students' accomplishments and the teacher's work on extracurricular activities. She said the principal is able to discern which teachers are average and which ones are above average. Rana felt confident that she could implement any new teaching method successfully, and she

welcomed any new ideas or methods that would help her students to be more successful. She gave an example of a workshop that she attended that taught a new method of evaluation. "One of the workshops that I attended with my colleagues was about how we can evaluate the students for the whole semester. It was a big evaluation. I did it with all my colleagues. This shows that we implement any new strategy that we learn."

According to Rana, teachers at Rana's school respected each other, and they respected the principal. Rana felt that the principal set a good example for them in that area. It was clear that mutual respect was expected in her school. "About respect. Thank God, we respect each other. The principal enhances that for us."

The administration at Rana's school strongly supported professional development for teachers, and Rana felt that she had a good variety of professional development activities to choose from. She gave an example of a workshop that she attended that was presented by undergraduate students at a local school. "I enjoyed them, and I learned a lot. It was one of the best days." Rana reported that she learned a lot of activities that she could incorporate into her teaching. She also appreciated the fact that her school supported the teachers' attendance at conferences.

At the end of the year evaluations, Rana said, the teachers would be rated partly on their participation in professional development. "They send us to conferences. There was one in Riyadh that they encouraged us to attend . . . They said we should go to at least 2 or 3 . . . So the principal evaluates us on that, and they will ask us at the end of the year how many workshops and conferences we attended."

Sometimes the teacher would be asked to choose which workshop or conference she would like to attend, and sometimes the principal would notify the teachers of a required training

from the Department of Education. Occasionally a workshop would be so popular that not everyone who wanted to attend could register because it would fill up. The required workshops would be offered multiple times over a series of weeks so that everyone could take those. Some of the workshops were paid for by the school, while others had to be paid for by the teachers themselves. In addition, some conferences and workshops would be approved for the teachers to attend, but they would have to use their personal ("emergency") leave in order to go.

Rana felt that she had some freedom to implement new ways of teaching and adapt the curriculum as needed for her students. She felt that her principal was supportive of her decision to supplement her teaching to meet her students' needs. Even though she was following the curriculum supplied by the Department of Education, she felt that it made sense to add to it for her students who have already completed KG2 (the kindergarten program for 2-3 year olds). Since kindergarten was not mandatory in Saudi Arabia, some students began the program in KG2, while others stayed home that year and began the program in KG3 (3-4 year olds). As a KG3 teacher, she recognized that some of her students had already had some of the lessons that were in her curriculum, and she did not want those students to be bored in her class. "Without any supplementation, the KG3 kid will be bothering his/her classmates and making noises to distract the others." In order to increase student engagement, Rana liked to use stories frequently in her classroom, saying, "Who does not like a story? Even the adults love stories."

Supportive conditions – Structures.

Sara. At Sara's school, there was a scheduled time at the end of the school day, after the students left, when the teachers were still at work and they could choose to share what they had learned. While they did not have a daily meeting, if a teacher had something she would like to share with the group, she could speak with the committee leader and let her know. The

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committee leader would then schedule a meeting for teachers to share what they have learned. This could take place over one day or two, depending on how much material the teachers brought to share. However, most of the time, the teachers were anxious to finish the meeting and get back to their classrooms to prepare for the next day's lesson. "So actually, the formal meeting between us and the principal, we need it to finish really fast, because we need the time to prepare our classroom for the next day." Teachers were required to be at school by 7:20 each morning and began teaching at 7:30.

The teachers had a less formal time for sharing every day, when they were on break. They were free to discuss whatever they wished at that time; it may be personal life or school-related. Sometimes a teacher brought up a topic and they all discussed it. The teachers also communicated with each other and with the principal through an instant messaging app. Sara said that the teachers did not have the time to read books and discuss them. "About exchanging the learning and experience, we do it, but reading a book and telling the other teachers about it, we never did that. Actually, we do not have time to do that."

The element of time was a concern for Sara. She noted that the students were supposed to be dismissed by 11:30, but some of them were staying in the classroom with the teacher until 12:00. Any children who were still present at 12:00 went outside for supervised play, so that the teachers could prepare for the next day. Sara used that time to gather stories for her lessons and change the materials in the classroom. Sara was not convinced that the students needed the additional hour of preschool that the Education Department had planned for the next year. The teachers would be required to prepare an additional hour of activities every day. Sara believed that an extra hour per week might be helpful, but she did not see a need for five additional hours of instruction per week. She felt that this was an unnecessary additional time burden on the

teachers. "An extra hour every day is too much for us as teachers."

Sara felt that her school's physical environment was good. She said they had several large playgrounds, with bikes and swings and other things for children to play on. She said the teachers had access to any tool or material they needed for instruction. "Our school has everything: tools, materials . . . I just grab a little bit of stuff from the school . . . About technology, we do have laptops in each classroom. And in some of the classrooms, we have i-Pads."

Sara reported that if a teacher would like to read a book for her professional development, there were appropriate books in the school library that she could check out and read. The library was close to the classrooms and easily accessible. Sara said she never took advantage of that resource because she did not have time to read, and if she did, she would read the books that she already had at home. The teachers shared the responsibility for cleaning the building. There were three people who cleaned it every day, and two of them were paid by the teachers. The administration paid for one person to clean the common areas of the building, and the teachers then hired two other people to clean the classrooms. If a teacher did not want to pay someone to clean her classroom, then she could clean it herself, but the administration did not hire someone to clean it.

The instant messaging app that the teachers and administrators used was very convenient, according to Sara. She said she could quickly and easily communicate with any other teacher or with the principal, either as individuals or as a group.

Rana. Rana's school day started earlier than Sara's. Rana sometimes had to be at school for morning latchkey, taking care of students who arrived as early at 6:30. Other days, Rana's day began at 7:15. The students were dismissed at 11:45, and the teachers stayed until 12:30. The

last 45 minutes of the day were generally used to prepare for the next day's lessons, but occasionally the teachers had meetings at this time. The meetings usually only lasted about 20 minutes, so that the teachers could get back to their classrooms and finish planning.

Rana did not feel that her school's physical environment included enough supplies. She said that sometimes she had to purchase materials for her lessons with her own money, or bring in items that she had at home. She felt that if the school had a budget for materials, they would spend it properly, but she was not sure there was such a budget. "Unfortunately, there is no budget, for example, for the kids' tools. And everything takes money, such as papers, markers, and printing." She said that she felt that there were not enough supplies for her classroom, so she would purchase more on her own. For example, she and her assistant teacher purchased an extra printer for their own use, rather than having to use the printer in the office. They put the extra printer in the assistant principal's office. Rana also reported that the teachers did not have computers in their classrooms; the only computers at the school were in the offices. If a teacher wished to use technology in the classroom, she could bring in her laptop or iPad, according to Rana.

The teachers at Rana's school collaborated by putting their own money together to purchase extra paper, markers, and other classroom supplies. Rana noted that the teachers were not able to order supplies using school funds; any furniture or materials that were made available to the teachers were delivered to them, without the teachers' input as to what they needed or how much they needed. The school did not have a budget for maintenance of furniture and tools, so when something broke, there was no one to fix it. There was, however, a budget for general maintenance of the building. Rana said that the teachers worked cooperatively with the cleaning lady to keep the building clean. "The school is very clean. They have just one person who is

responsible for the cleaning, but the teachers are helping her to clean." Rana explained that the teachers were responsible for the cleanliness of their own classrooms, including taking out the trash and keeping the materials organized and activity stations clean.

When asked if the school's physical environment encouraged collaboration, Rana reported that the school provided a small break room for the teachers to use when they were on break. However, the room had very little seating, with only one sofa. The teachers felt that there was not enough seating, so they put their own money together and purchased another sofa for the break room. In contrast, Rana stated that the school building itself was huge and the classrooms were big.

Rana's school also used the same instant messaging app as Sara's school. The administration and teachers used the app to communicate with each other individually and as a group. This was the preferred electronic mode of communication, rather than e-mail. The administration generally used the app to inform the teachers of decisions made by the Department of Education, news of activities at the school, or about workshops or conferences that they could attend. The school had a separate group on the instant messaging app that was specifically designated for publishing news of school events. In this group, the teachers and administration posted pictures of field trip activities and other special activities that the students did (for example, Tree Week activities) and shared information on accomplishments with the parents and other stakeholders. Rana said that the principal's contributions to the communication on the instant messaging app provided support for the teachers and enhanced the level of communication between all the staff. The teachers did not use the app to discuss issues at the school, such as children's behavior.

The school library had books for the children, but it did not have books for the teachers to

use for professional development. Rana does not see that as a problem. She said that the teachers don't have time to read professional development books. In contrast, Rana observed that all the teachers enjoyed participating in workshops. "Look. In my opinion, I see that the only way to improve us is to attend the workshops. I don't think if we had a library that would benefit us. It would be spending money for nothing. There are some teachers who love to read, but there are some who don't. But if you ask her to go to a workshop, she will say YES." Rana said that workshops and videos have a much greater potential to help teachers improve their practice than just reading books. Rana explained, "I enjoy watching YouTube education videos sometimes. There are lots of educators who are summarizing some of the big concepts. You don't have to read books. You can listen to those educators and implement their ideas."

Like Sara, Rana reported that the teachers did not have time for sharing their experiences and exchanging ideas during the school day. She mentioned that sometimes she does not have enough time just to eat her breakfast. She said, "I don't have that extra time to say to my colleagues, 'Come on. Listen to me. The workshop that I attended is about...'"

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the quantitative data analysis and details on the qualitative data analysis. The responses to demographic questions from the survey were presented, with information concerning presence of PLCs, teacher education level, teacher experience level, age of teacher, number of teachers in the school, and number of students in the classroom. The presentation of quantitative results also includes an examination of the participants' responses to the survey, with statistics for each question on the survey, grouped by PLC condition. The qualitative data was presented with a summary of the demographic information on the two interview participants, plus a breakdown of each participant's responses

as they relate to the conditions necessary for PLCs. Chapter Five will present a summary of the

study; discussion and interpretation of findings; conclusions; recommendations for future

practice; and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5 - Summary and Discussion

This chapter includes the following sections: summary of the study; discussion and interpretation of findings; conclusions; recommendations for future practice; and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

Symbolic interactionism is a way of examining and explaining social interaction (Denzin, 2003). According to this framework, the participants in my study interpreted their experiences and the conditions at their schools based on their own personal experiences and interactions with the people and things in their environment. This study investigated the perceptions of kindergarten teachers in Dammam, Saudi Arabia as they relate to the conditions necessary for successful PLCs. The research questions were used to guide the development of the study and the analysis of the data. The concepts of symbolic interactionism provided the framework I needed when examining the qualitative data for themes (Teo and Osbourne, 2012). This was a mixed-methods study. Quantitative data was collected using demographic questions as well as a survey. Qualitative data was collected through multiple internet-based interviews with two of the participants.

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the conditions needed for implementing PLCs in their schools by analyzing their responses to a survey and several interviews. The survey was selected in order to collect quantitative data from a much larger sample than I could have used if I had collected only qualitative data through interviews. The qualitative data collected through interviews provided additional details that were useful to me as I worked to interpret the responses of all the participants, including the survey responses.

My participants were selected on the basis of three qualifications. First, they had to be currently working in the teaching profession. Second, they needed to be teachers at the kindergarten level, which includes students between the ages of 3 and 6. Third, they needed to be teaching at a kindergarten in the region of Dammam, Saudi Arabia. The requirement that they be kindergarten teachers in Saudi Arabia guaranteed that all the participants would be female, due to government policies regarding gender of teachers in different teaching assignments. To obtain participants with these qualifications, I worked closely with the Director of the Saudi Arabian Department of Education for kindergarten in that region. This government official received the surveys and other information that I provided and then forwarded those materials to the principals of every public kindergarten school in the region. The principals then distributed the survey information to the kindergarten teachers, who responded to the online survey. The responses were then delivered electronically to me for analysis. A total of 266 complete survey responses were collected and analyzed for the quantitative section of this research.

When I spoke with the Director of the Department of Education for the kindergarten section, I explained my research proposal. She welcomed my interest and offered to be the one to distribute the survey to the teachers. She also acted as a liaison for me with the teachers, asking them if they would volunteer to participate in the interview process for the qualitative part of the research. She collected the contact information from the five or six teachers who volunteered to participate in the interviews, and I selected two of the teachers at random.

To collect the qualitative data, I contacted each participant by texting them through the Whats Up app that they use for school business. We arranged for three interviews with each participant. I conducted the interviews using the Whats Up app to place the phone calls. These calls were audio only, no video, out of respect for the privacy of my female Muslim participants.

With the participants' permission, all phone calls were recorded to allow me to listen later and create transcripts that would be used for analyzing themes. I used the six conditions for PLCs and my research questions as my guideline for the interviews and those conditions and questions provided structure as I identified themes in the transcripts.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

A look at the demographic data that was collected by the survey shows that twelve participants indicated that they have doctoral degrees. While it is not impossible that there could be twelve women with doctorates in Dammam who have chosen to become kindergarten teachers, it is unlikely. In general, women with doctoral degrees seek positions working in post-secondary positions, not kindergartens. I discussed this data with the Director of the Department of Education in Saudi Arabia, and she also questioned this result. The format of the survey question about level of education was multiple-choice, asking, "What is your highest level of education?" and giving the options of "Associates," "Bachelors," "Masters," and "Doctorate." The Director of the Department of Education concluded that it is more likely that the participants had an education beyond a master's degree, and not seeing a more appropriate category, selected the "Doctorate" option.

Presence of a PLC

The data comparing the responses of teachers who are in schools with PLCs and teachers who are in schools that do not have PLCs indicates that there were significant differences. Teachers from schools that had PLCs tended to rate the conditions at their schools slightly higher than teachers from schools that did not have PLCs. These results were not surprising. The fact that a school administration has established PLCs in a school demonstrates their commitment to improving those conditions. It is to be expected that those conditions would be better than in a

school without PLCs. Also, teachers in schools with PLCs are provided more experiences that encourage them to improve those conditions. The only characteristic that did not show a significant difference between teachers at schools with PLCs and teachers at schools without PLCs was the Shared Personal Practice. This is unexpected, especially in light of the qualitative data. The two participants that I interviewed were eager to share their personal practice with their colleagues and wished their schools had more structured time for that sharing. I am not sure what circumstances would result in that sharing not taking place at schools that have PLCs already established.

Teacher Level of Education

The results for teachers level of education variable were surprising. The teachers with the bachelor's degree consistently gave the lowest scores for every condition, with one exception. It is possible that these teachers felt that earning a bachelor's degree would improve their working conditions by increasing the level of respect and responsibility they receive at work. Maybe they were disappointed to find that having a bachelor's degree did not result in more shared leadership, more collaboration, etc. at their schools. The exception to this result was for the characteristic of Shared Leadership, which received the lowest score from the teachers with advanced degrees. I would assume that these participants began working as kindergarten teachers before they earned their advanced degrees, and they expected to get more leadership opportunities and responsibilities as a result of their higher education level.

Teacher Experience Level

There was a significant difference in the responses of teachers based on their experience level. With one exception, the lowest mean score for each characteristic was given by the teachers with 6-10 years of experience. The only characteristic that did not receive its lowest

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score from this group was "Shared Values and Vision." However, this was still very close. The participants with 6-10 years had a mean score of 2.98, while the participants with less than 5 years' experience had a mean score of 2.97. I do not know why teachers in this group would be more likely to feel that their schools are not ready for PLCs. However, it is interesting to note that this is also the largest group of participants; there were 110 teachers with 6-10 years of experience, which represents almost 50% of my sample of 266.

Age of Teacher

The descriptive statistics for the participants' responses based on the age of the teacher indicated that there were significant differences based the age of the teachers. There was a direct, positive relationship between age and rating. The older teachers were more likely to rate a condition higher than the younger teachers. I would assume that this is because the older teachers have more teaching experience and have developed more collaborative skills than the younger teachers, who are focusing more on developing classroom management and lesson planning skills.

Number of Teachers on Staff

It was surprising to find that the responses of teachers on larger staffs and smaller staffs were more positive than the responses of teachers on moderately-sized staffs. Perhaps the smaller schools feel more collaborative, more like a family than the moderately-sized schools. With a smaller staff, it can be easier to stay in contact with your coworkers and stay connected. On the other end of the spectrum, it could be that larger schools are more like to recognize their need for structured interactions in order to keep the teachers from feeling isolated. The larger schools may pay more attention to that dynamic and work more intentionally to build collaboration into their schools' structure.

Number of Students in the Classroom

The results of this analysis suggest that the number of students in a teacher's class did not have any effect on that teacher's responses. This seems to make sense. The conditions related to PLCs are more concerned with how teachers interact with each other, and less with how they interact with their students.

Shared and Supportive Leadership

This condition was neither very strong nor very weak, based on the responses of the two teachers who were interviewed. Both Sara and Rana gave instances where they felt that the leadership was shared and supportive, as well as instances where they felt the leadership was more authoritarian. For example, both teachers were allowed to observe other teachers as a way of collaborating, and they had the freedom to choose which teachers they observed. They both were required to get the principal's approval before doing the observation. Rana had a greater sense of shared leadership at her school than Sara did. They both appreciated the opportunities that they had when they were given the chance to make shared leadership decisions, but those opportunities were very rare. Rana expressed this appreciation and said this made her more "comfortable."

Both participants felt that their principals were supportive of them, and they felt that they had a lot of opportunity and support for professional development. While they felt that the principals required teacher leadership in specific areas, such as leading the implementation of changes as a result of professional development, they did not feel that they were empowered with shared leadership in general. For example, while they had a variety of options for professional development, they did not have the authority to choose what to implement or how to implement it. They were not able to work together to decide what would be best for their particular students.

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The schools were working to incorporate parents and the community into the activities of the school. Both participants mentioned events where the parents were asked to participate or attend. Sara made a point of asking parents, when she contacted them, to take an active part in the Mothers' Visit Day by asking what they would like to contribute to the event.

Shared Vision

One of the points that came out during the interviews is that the condition referred to as "Shared Vision" appears to be weak. Neither of the interviewed participants was able to verbalize the school vision. It appears that the leadership is not investing time in helping the teachers understand or "buy in" to the vision of the school. The school vision is determined by the national Department of Education, so every kindergarten teacher in the country should know what the vision is. So all schools are sharing the same national vision. When a group of people who are working together (such as in a PLC) don't share the same vision, they are not going to be as effective. It is the responsibility of the school leadership to promote that vision and encourage the teachers to share in promoting that vision to the other stakeholders.

Collective Learning and Application

It seems that both Sara and Rana were working collaboratively with the other teachers. They were willing to learn, and willing to share what they were learning. They were both willing to listen to their colleagues, even if they disagreed with the other teachers' opinions or views. They respected their colleagues and were willing to keep an open mind and try someone else's suggestions. Rana explained this by specifically noting that teachers who have more experience than her were a good resource due to their experience, while the teachers who had less experience were a good resource due to their more recent training.

Their schools both required them to put in writing what they learned from professional development trainings, and they both had to share with their colleagues what they learned and implement what they learned. This implementation included formal means for feedback that resulted in continued learning. This provided a formal way for the teachers to participate in collective learning and application. They also had a less formal way, where the teachers would just mention to each other or talk with each other about problems they were experiencing in the classroom. They discussed these problems amongst themselves (such as bad behavior) and then decided how to resolve the problems (such as contacting the parents). The teachers then informed each other of the parents' responses or other possible solutions so that they could work together to find solutions.

The condition of Collective Learning and Application appears to be moderately strong. The teachers had a collaborative mindset, willing to share what they have learned and willing to apply it. The schools had put into place policies that required the teachers to share and implement what they learned from professional development, and the teachers added a method of collecting feedback. The staff members and parents were working together to learn how each group could do things to benefit the students. The schools provided a variety of opportunities for teachers to learn, such as reading books about teaching, attending trainings, and observing other teachers and meeting with them afterward for feedback.

However, the teachers did not seem to have experience with some of the important activities that support collective learning and application for PLCs. A successful PLC must collect and share assessment data that is gathered about student performance. This data should be used to make decisions concerning how the classroom is run and how the instruction is

conducted. Neither of the participants in the interviews had experience with learning from assessment data or sharing that data with their colleagues.

Shared Personal Practice

The information that Sara and Rana presented about shared personal practice suggests that their schools are relatively strong in this area. Sara reported that her school has begun conducting teacher observations of each other, with feedback following the observation. Rana's school has not established that procedure yet, although the teachers occasionally observe each other informally when their children are in combined groups. Rana noted that she would be open to receiving input from other teachers, but she did not think most teachers would make changes based on feedback from observations. Both women recounted examples of exchanges between teachers that occurred informally, where they shared their ideas and their learning. This sharing usually took place during break. Neither woman spoke about exchanging specific assessments or portfolios or other examples of students' work in order to share ideas with their colleagues. Both teachers acknowledged that they had the opportunity to attend workshops and conferences to gain information, and they had the opportunity to implement what they had learned. However, they did not have an equal opportunity to share that information with their colleagues due to time constraints.

Supportive Conditions - Relationships

This condition appears to be relatively strong for both teachers. They report that the teachers are supportive of each other and the principal, and the principal is supportive of the teachers. The principal demonstrates respect for the teachers by how she speaks to them and about them, and this sets an example and expectation that the teachers will follow this lead. Both teachers felt confident that they could implement new practices and they were willing to try. Sara

noted that she is not permitted to try new things on her own; she has to have the principal's permission. This may show a weakness in the area of trust between principal and teachers. Rana has more freedom in this area. She can try new things, as long as she does not stray from the provided curriculum.

One subsection of this condition that may be weaker is the idea of celebrating teachers' successes. Sara noted that the only celebration that took place was a "thank you" through the teachers' app, or a verbal recognition in front of the parents at an annual event. However, both teachers acknowledged that it was clear that the principals recognized which teachers were hard workers and who put in more effort to become better and better.

Both teachers indicated that the teachers in their schools supported a culture of change in their schools. They discussed how teachers worked together to implement changes as a result of professional development. They also both talked about the ongoing communication between teachers and parents, inviting the parents to partner with the school for the benefit of the students.

The only clear weakness in this condition is in the area of teachers working together to analyze data. Neither teacher had any notable experience working with their colleagues to share assessment data or student work. They did not have regular meetings where they examined each other's results and helped to analyze them, supporting each other in making changes that would improve student achievement.

Supportive Conditions - Structures

Both Sara and Rana reported that there is a specific time at the end of the day that is available for teachers to meet. This is good. This type of schedule could promote collaborative activities. Sara's school appears to have more materials available for the teacher to use in

instruction, while Rana said that she purchases necessary items for her classroom out of her own pocket. Both schools have libraries for the children, with some professional development resources for teachers, but the teachers do not use them for their own professional development. Sara's school has more technology available to the students and teachers, while the technology at Rana's school is in the offices unless the teachers bring in their own devices. Both teachers were satisfied with the cleanliness of their schools. The instant messaging app that both schools use seems to enhance communication between the teachers and with the administration. The teachers seem to communicate with the parents regularly using the social media app.

Recommendations for Practice

Shared and Supportive Leadership

Teachers need to be given more opportunities for shared leadership. This was the condition with the lowest score on the survey, with an overall mean score of 2.88. The participants who were interviewed expressed concerns about this area, as well. Both Sara and Rana felt that they rarely had any influence on any decisions that were made at the school, even when those decisions strongly affected them. Principals should not only consider the teachers' views and ask for their input when making decisions, but should actually allow the teachers to share in the decision-making process. It may be helpful for the school leadership to look closely at the task descriptions of the administrators in order to see which functions, responsibilities, and decisions could be shared with teachers. Administrators and teachers may need some incentives or other motivation in order to make the changes that are needed to accomplish this objective.

Shared Values and Vision

This condition also received one of the lowest overall mean scores (3.07) in the survey. This is not surprising, given the fact that neither of the teachers who were interviewed could

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verbalize the school's vision. I would recommend that schools in Dammam (and perhaps throughout Saudi Arabia) work to clarify and communicate the school vision for all stakeholders. In order to build a new culture of effective learning, the leadership needs to promote the schools' vision and values. This needs to be done in an encouraging way, so that the teachers appreciate and share those values and vision.

Collective Learning and Application

This condition received an overall mean score of 3.12 on the survey, and the comments from the two interview participants seem to support this score. The lowest item in this section, scoring only 2.97, was "School staff members and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems." This suggests that the schools may need to organize meetings for teachers and administration to participate together in professional development, rather than the current practice described by Sara and Rana of encouraging teachers to engage in individual professional development practices, then reporting back to other teachers on what they learned. The practice of requiring teachers to participate in professional development, but not providing an organized time for them to share their learning (without taking time away from their planning period) may lead to a feeling of professional isolation. It is also important to note that these results are also consistent with Morrow's (2010) study, which showed that the critical knowledge and skills of the education process are not available in books and references, but in the teachers' experiences and daily practices, and cooperation in the use of new strategies. These results are also consistent with Wong 's (2010) study, which stressed the need for open participation between teachers aimed at improving their professional competence and eliminating the culture of individuality and isolation of teachers, which stand in the way of the development of professional learning and collective cooperation among kindergarten teachers.

I would strongly recommend that the administration implement procedures for teachers to share assessment data and analyze that data to learn what works best for the students in each school. The teachers should then be encouraged to follow up on their collective analysis of the data and make changes to instruction based on that analysis, collecting new data and examining it again, in a cycle that should result in improvement for both teachers and students.

Shared Personal Practice

Shared personal practice leads to improved professional competence and improved learning outcomes (Wong, 2010). To improve their shared personal practice, the teachers need time to share what they are learning in their professional development. I would also recommend that the administration encourage teachers to observe others in their own school, rather than observing model teachers from other schools in their area. They should be encouraged to provide feedback to each other and to share their experiences, especially sharing the results that they experience when they incorporate new trainings or recommendations from each other. The lowest mean score in this condition was "Staff members collaboratively review student work to share and improve instructional practice," with a mean score of 3.06. To improve student learning outcomes, teachers need to share with each other samples of their students' work, so they can discuss what is positive and negative about the outcomes and get feedback and ideas for ways to improve their own teaching practices.

Supportive Conditions - Relationships

The weakness in this area, according to the qualitative data, points to the need for teachers to present data to each other and analyze it together. The administration should provide opportunities and encouragement for teachers to share student performance data and get feedback from colleagues. In the survey, the need to examine data together was the second-

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lowest scoring item, with a mean of 3.06. The lowest scoring item in the survey was "Relationships among staff members support honest and respectful examination of data to enhance teaching and learning," with a mean of 3.04. To improve the scores in this condition, the administration should stress and encourage collaborative learning from student data and help to create teams with a climate of trust and mutual respect.

Supportive Conditions - Structures

Both teachers repeatedly stressed that they did not have enough time in the day for collaborating with their colleagues. They said that they enjoyed the professional development, but they did not have structured time to share what they learned. If they wanted to share with each other, they either had to discuss it during their break time or take time out of their lesson planning at the end of the day. This concern is echoed in the survey results. Seven of the 10 items received a mean score below 3.0, bringing the overall mean score for this condition to 2.91. It was the second-lowest scoring condition in the survey.

It is interesting to note that the women who participated in the interviews did not seem to have a concern about funding for professional development. They both indicated that their schools paid for their professional development activities. However, the survey responses seem to suggest that their experience is not shared by many other kindergarten teachers in their area. For this condition, the survey item receiving the lowest score was, "Fiscal resources are available for professional development," with a mean score of 2.64. Sara and Rana both talked about needing to spend their own money to purchase items for the school. Perhaps some schools spend more on providing supplies while others spend more on professional development.

Huber (2011) found that teachers' daily practices change as a result of participating in a professional learning community and taking collective action based on cooperation. I would

recommend that the administration consider scheduling days when the teachers are present but the students are not. Perhaps one day a month would be effective. During that day, the teachers would share what they have learned from their own data assessment and analysis, as well as what they have learned from professional development.

I also recommend that the school library provide the books that the teachers are expected to read for professional development. Alternatively, the schools should allow for teachers to take a short time off to go to the public library to get a book during school hours. This would allow for even more freedom of choice, as the public library is likely offer many more books than a school library can afford.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is a lot of research on PLCs in the United States, but very little research on PLCs in Saudi Arabia. I would recommend that researchers focus on the conditions for PLCs in Saudi Arabia in order to fill in the gaps in the research. It would be interesting to examine whether the interview medium (online, through the internet with audio only) affected the results. I would like to conduct in-person interviews in Saudi Arabia, because that would increase the interpersonal interaction by adding a nonverbal body language component that was not present in my interviews. I would also recommend publishing the results in Arabic so that there is nothing lost in translation and the Arabic readers can more readily access the research and the results. Another change I would recommend concerns the demographic data section of the survey. I would suggest revising the "level of education" options to include something beyond a master's degree, but not a doctorate.

Another interesting angle would be to have the researcher contact the potential participants directly, rather than making contact with them through the regional Department of

Education. I explained in my consent form and my e-mail that all responses would be confidential; however, there may still have been some concern in the teachers' minds that their principals could see their results. This concern may have made them more reluctant to answer honestly if they felt that the administration was not doing a good job of creating the conditions that were being examined in this study.

Conclusion

Burnette (2002) describes a school with a healthy PLC as "a school where people are united by a common purpose, shared vision, collective commitments, and specific, measurable goals; where collaborative teams engage in action research and collective inquiry into the big question of teaching and learning; where continuous improvement cycles are built into the routine practices of the school; and where gathering evidence of student learning is a constant focus" (p. 52). However, there are several challenges to establishing healthy PLCs. One of the primary challenges is the extra time that it takes to plan, collect data, and analyze the effects of a given instructional practice. It also takes time to hold PLC meetings and discuss the data. This time issue is partly affected by the structure of the educational setting. For example, teachers in Shanghai only teach for less than 10 hours per week. Teachers in Singapore, on the other hand, teach for an average of 15 hours per week, in addition to extra-curricular tasks. One way to compensate teachers for the additional time spent is to pay them for that time. Teachers in Shanghai receives supplemental pay for the extra time spent being a teaching-research group leader (Hairon & Tan, 2017).

Another potential hindrance to establishing effective PLCs is culture. While American culture places a high value on individual creativity and initiative, some other countries do not. In many Asian countries, cultural values favor people who follow the hierarchy of the government.

Many of the teachers in Asian countries may be reluctant to participate fully in a PLC due to their discomfort with taking initiative, speaking out, and accepting shared responsibility for data collection and outcomes (Hairon & Tan, 2017).

In a similar vein, people who are used to being told what to do and how to do it may be very uncomfortable in a PLC where they are being asked to brainstorm ideas and give feedback. The idea of shared leadership may be difficult to grasp, especially if the wider culture of the region or country is one of strict hierarchical leadership. These teachers may not understand the instructions for how to participate in a PLC or what the goals of a PLC are. Lack of understand may result in teachers not fully participating in the PLC, which would reduce the PLC's effectiveness.

"A professional learning community transforms professional development into what teachers and administrators have always wished it would be: a vibrant and relevant system of instruction for maximum benefit to the teachers" (Gamble, 2008, p. 7). If the conditions that support a PLC are present, then there are four steps that can be followed to develop an effective PLC: "pull interested, willing people together; engage them in constructing a shared vision; develop trust and relationships; and nurture a program of continuous learning" (Hord, 1997, p. 1). As this effort to improve student learning moves forward, it is important to continue research into its effectiveness. According to Hairon, Goh, Chua, and Wang (2017), there are not enough high quality empirical studies in this area.

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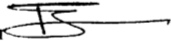
Appendix A - IRB Approval Letter

KANSAS STATE | University Research Compliance Office
U N I V E R S I T Y

TO: Dr. Debbie Mercer   Proposal Number: 9116
        Dean of Education
        006 Bluemont Hall

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
        Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 01/24/2018

RE: Proposal Entitled, "PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES AT DAMMAM"

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written – and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §46.101, paragraph b, category: 2, subsection: ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

203 Fairchild Hall, Lower Mezzanine, 1601 Vattier St., Manhattan, KS 66506-1103 | 785-532-3224 | fax: 785-532-3278
comply@k-state.edu | k-state.edu/research/comply

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Appendix B - Professional Learning Communities Survey

Demographic Questions

Do you have a PLC in your school?
     Yes
     No

What is your degree field in your academic career?

What is your highest level of education?
     Associates
     Bachelors
     Masters
     Doctorate

How many years have you taught?
     5 years or less
     6-10 years
     11-15 years
     16-20 years
     21+ years

What is your age?
     20 years or less
     21-25 years
     26-30 years
     31-35 years
     36-40 years
     41-45 years
     46+ years

How many teachers are in the school?
     5 or less
     6-10
     11-15
     More than 16

How many students are in your class?
     5 or less
     6-10
     11-15
     16-20
     21-25
     More than 25

Directions:

This questionnaire assesses your perceptions about your principal, staff, and stakeholders based on the five dimensions of a professional learning community (PLC) and related attributes. There are no right or wrong responses. This questionnaire contains a number of statements about practices, which occur in some schools. Read each statement and then use the scale below to select the scale point that best reflects your personal degree of agreement with the statement. Shade the appropriate oval provided to the right of each statement. Be certain to select only one response for each statement.

Key Terms:
\#   Principal = Principal, not Associate or Assistant Principal
\#   Staff = All adult staff directly associated with curriculum, instruction, and assessment of students
\#   Stakeholders = Parents and community members

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)
        2 = Disagree (D)
        3 = Agree (A)
        4 = Strongly Agree (SA)

STATEMENTS	SCALE			
Shared and Supportive Leadership	S D	D	A	S A
1 Staff members are consistently involved in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.	0	0	0	0
2 The principal incorporates advice from staff members to make decisions.	0	0	0	0
3 Staff members have accessibility to key information.	0	0	0	0
4 The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed.	0	0	0	0
5 Opportunities are provided for staff members to initiate change.	0	0	0	0
6 The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.	0	0	0	0
7 The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority.	0	0	0	0
8 Leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff members.	0	0	0	0
9 Decision-making takes place through committees and communication across grade and subject areas.	0	0	0	0
10 Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.	0	0	0	0
11 Staff members use multiple sources of data to make decisions about teaching and learning.	0	0	0	0

COMMENTS:

STATEMENTS	SCALE			
Shared Values and Vision	S D	D	A	S A

12	A collaborative process exists for developing a shared sense of values among staff.	0	0	0	0
13	Shared values support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning.	0	0	0	0
14	Staff members share visions for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning.	0	0	0	0
15	Decisions are made in alignment with the school's values and vision.	0	0	0	0
16	A collaborative process exists for developing a shared vision among staff.	0	0	0	0
17	School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and grades.	0	0	0	0
18	Policies and programs are aligned to the school's vision.	0	0	0	0
19	Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to increase student achievement.	0	0	0	0
20	Data are used to prioritize actions to reach a shared vision.	0	0	0	0

COMMENTS:

STATEMENTS		SCALE			
Collective Learning and Application		S D	D	A	S A
21	Staff members work together to seek knowledge, skills and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.	0	0	0	0
22	Collegial relationships exist among staff members that reflect commitment to school improvement efforts.	0	0	0	0
23	Staff members plan and work together to search for solutions to address diverse student needs.	0	0	0	0
24	A variety of opportunities and structures exist for collective learning through open dialogue.	0	0	0	0

25	Staff members engage in dialogue that reflects a respect for diverse ideas that lead to continued inquiry.	0	0	0	0
26	Professional development focuses on teaching and learning.	0	0	0	0
27	School staff members and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems.	0	0	0	0
28	School staff members are committed to programs that enhance learning.	0	0	0	0
29	Staff members collaboratively analyze multiple sources of data to assess the effectiveness of instructional practices.	0	0	0	0
30	Staff members collaboratively analyze student work to improve teaching and learning.	0	0	0	0
COMMENTS:					

STATEMENTS	SCALE			
Shared Personal Practice	SD	D	A	SA
31	Opportunities exist for staff members to observe peers and offer encouragement.	0	0	0	0
32	Staff members provide feedback to peers related to instructional practices.	0	0	0	0
33	Staff members informally share ideas and suggestions for improving student learning.	0	0	0	0
34	Staff members collaboratively review student work to share and improve instructional practices.	0	0	0	0
35	Opportunities exist for coaching and mentoring.	0	0	0	0
36	Individuals and teams have the opportunity to apply learning and share the results of their practices.	0	0	0	0
37		0	0	0	0

	Staff members regularly share student work to guide overall school improvement.				

COMMENTS:

	STATEMENTS	SCALE			
	Supportive Conditions - Relationships	S D	D	A	S A
38	Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect.	0	0	0	0
39	A culture of trust and respect exists for taking risks.	0	0	0	0
40	Outstanding achievement is recognized and celebrated regularly in our school.	0	0	0	0
41	School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed change into the culture of the school.	0	0	0	0
42	Relationships among staff members support honest and respectful examination of data to enhance teaching and learning.	0	0	0	0

COMMENTS:

	STATEMENTS	SCALE			
	Supportive Conditions - Structures	S D	D	A	S A
43	Time is provided to facilitate collaborative work.	0	0	0	0
44	The school schedule promotes collective learning and shared practice.	0	0	0	0

45	Fiscal resources are available for professional development.	0	0	0	0
46	Appropriate technology and instructional materials are available to staff.	0	0	0	0
47	Resource people provide expertise and support for continuous learning.	0	0	0	0
48	The school facility is clean, attractive and inviting.	0	0	0	0
49	The proximity of grade level and department personnel allows for ease in collaborating with colleagues.	0	0	0	0
50	Communication systems promote a flow of information among staff members.	0	0	0	0
51	Communication systems promote a flow of information across the entire school community including: central office personnel, parents, and community members.	0	0	0	0
52	Data are organized and made available to provide easy access to staff members.	0	0	0	0

COMMENTS:

Source: Olivier, D. F., Hipp, K. K., & Huffman, J. B. (2010). Assessing and analyzing schools. In K. K. Hipp & J. B. Huffman (Eds.). *Demystifying professional learning communities: Leadership at its Best.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

استبيان لبحث علمي **Appendix C-**

إلى معلمة رياض الأطفال

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

انا طالبة دكتوراه أسماء محمد العتيق ولدي مشروع رسالة الدكتوراه الذي يتطلب منك تعبئة هذا الاستبيان. بمشاركتك في هذا الاستطلاع سيتسنى لك الاطلاع على بعض الأفكار في التطوير المهني لك ولزميلاتك
يأتي هذا المقياس في إطار إجراءات بحث علمي، وإذ أقدر لك حسن تعاونك، فإنني أتعهد بأن هذه البيانات تحظى بسرية تامة، ولا تستخدم إلا لأغراض البحث العلمي فقط

من فضلك
يرجى قراءة كل عبارة بدقة وتحديد درجة حدوثها في الواقع طبقا لتقييمك الموضوعي لها من خلال وضع علامة في المكان المناسب
أجيبي عن جميع العبارات
لا تضعي أكثر من علامة للعبارة نفسها
لا توجد إجابات صحيحة أو خاطئة والأمر يتوقف على تقديرك بأمانة

حول هذا الاستطلاع لا تترددي إذا كانت لديك أي أسئلة
في الاتصال بي على البريد الالكتروني او واتس اب على رقم الهاتف المرفق
binateeq@ksu.edu
+14158899152

اشكرك على مشاركتك في هذا الاستبيان
وللبدء في المشاركة الرجاء الضغط على السهم في الاسفل

البيانات الأساسية

هل مدرستك تطبق مجتمع التعلم المهني؟
إذا كان هذا المصطلح غير معروف لديك اختاري لا
نعم
لا

ما هو تخصصك الأكاديمي؟
مثلا تربية في الطفولة المبكرة-الآداب في الجغرافيا-دراسات اسلامية- اللغة العربية- إدارة أعمال-العلوم- الخ

ماهي أعلى درجة علمية حصلت عليها؟
دبلوم
بكالوريوس
ماجستير
دكتوراه

كم عدد سنوات الخبرة في التدريس؟
٦ إلى ١٠
١١الى١٥
١٦ إلى ٢٠
٢١ الى سنة فما فوق

كم عمرك؟
٢٠ او اقل
٢١ إلى ٢٥
٢٦ إلى ٣٠
٣١ إلى ٣٥
٣٦ إلى ٤٠
٤١ الى ٤٥
٤٦ فما فوق

كم عدد المعلمات في مدرستك؟
أقل من ٥
٦الى١٠
١١الى ١٥
أكثر من ١٦

كم عدد الاطفال في فصلك؟
أقل من ٥
٦ إلى ١٠
١١ إلى ١٥
١٦ إلى ٢٠
٢١ إلى ٢٥
٢٦او اكثر

	القياس			العبارات
غير موافق بشدة	غير موافق	موافق	موافق بشدة	القيادة الداعمة والمشتركة
O	O	O	O	يتم إشراك المعلمات في المناقشات وصنع القرارات المتعلقة بقضايا المدرسة بصورة منتظمة	1
O	O	O	O	تأخذ إدارة المدرسة آراء المعلمات بعين الاعتبار عند اتخاذ القرارات	2
O	O	O	O	تستطيع المعلمات الوصول للمعلومات الأساسية المتعلقة بالمدرسة	3
O	O	O	O	تبادر إدارة المدرسة بتقديم الدعم حيثما تدعو الحاجة	4
O	O	O	O	تتوافر الفرص للمعلمات للمبادرة بإحداث التغيير	5
O	O	O	O	توزع إدارة المدرسة المهام وتكافئ على الأعمال المبتكرة	6
O	O	O	O	تتعامل إدارة المدرسة مع المعلمات بديمقراطية وتشاركهم السلطة والصلاحيات	7
O	O	O	O	تشجع إدارة المدرسة الروح القيادية بين المعلمات	8
O	O	O	O	تتم عملية صنع القرار من خلال لجان المدرسة والتواصل عبر الأقسام المختلفة	9
				يتحمل جميع المستفيدين والمهتمين داخل المدرسة وخارجها مسئولية مشتركة نحو تحسين عملية التعلم بالمدرسة	10
O	O	O	O	تستخدم المعلمات مصادر متعددة من البيانات لاتخاذ قرارات حول التدريس والتعلم	11
هل لديك اي اضافة او تعليق تودين المشاركة بها بخصوص القيادة التشاركية الداعمة؟				

غير موافق بشدة	غير موافق	موافق	موافق بشدة	القيم والرؤى المشتركة
O	O	O	O	توجد منهجية تعاونية لتنمية الاحساس بالقيم المشتركة بين المعلمات	12
O	O	O	O	تدعم القيم المشتركة السلوكيات والقرارات المتعلقة بعمليتي التدريس والتعلم	13
O	O	O	O	يمتلك المعلمات رؤية مشتركة لتحسين الأداء بالمدرسة والتي تركز بشكل أساسي على تعلم الطلبة	14
O	O	O	O	يتم اتخاذ القرارات التي تتسق مع قيم المدرسة ورؤيتها	15
O	O	O	O	هناك عمل تعاوني بالمدرسة لتطوير رؤية مشتركة بين المعلمات	16
O	O	O	O	تركز أهداف المدرسة على تعلم الطلاب وليس مجرد الاعتماد على نتائج الاختبارات فقط	17
O	O	O	O	تتسق السياسات والبرامج مع رؤية المدرسة	18
O	O	O	O	يشارك أطرف المجتمع المعنيين والمهتمين بشكل فعال في أنشطة تعمل على زيادة التحصيل العلمي لطلاب المدرسة	19
O	O	O	O	تستخدم البيانات لتحديد الاجراءات اللازمة للوصول إلى الرؤية المشتركة	20
هل لديك اي اضافة او تعليق تودين المشاركة بها بخصوص الرؤية والقيم والقناعات المشتركة؟				

غير موافق بشدة	غير موافق	موافق	موافق بشدة	التعلم الجماعي وتطبيقاته
O	O	O	O	تعمل المعلمات معا للبحث عن المعارف والمهارات والاستراتيجيات الحديثة وتطبيقها في عملهم	21
O	O	O	O	توجد علاقات زمالة بين المعلمات تعكس التزامهن بالتحسين المستمر للأداء	22
O	O	O	O	تعمل المعلمات معا وتخططن لإيجاد حلول لمعالجة احتياجات الطلبة المختلفة	23
O	O	O	O	تتوافر فرص متنوعة للتعلم الجماعي من خلال الحوار المفتوح	24
O	O	O	O	تنخرط المعلمات في حوارات تعكس احترامهن للأفكار المتنوعة وتؤدي إلى استمرارية التقصي والبحث	25
O	O	O	O	تركز التنمية المهنية للمعلمات على التدريس والتعلم	26
O	O	O	O	تقوم المعلمات وذوي الاحتياجات في المجتمع بالتعلم معا و يعملون معا بتطبيق المعرفة الجديدة لحل المشكلات	27
O	O	O	O	تلتزم المعلمات بالبرامج التي تعزز التعلم	28

غير موافق بشدة	غير موافق	موافق	موافق بشدة		
O	O	O	O	تتعاون المعلمات في تحليل مصادر البيانات المتعددة لتقييم فعالية الممارسات التعليمية	29
O	O	O	O	تتعاون المعلمات معا في تحليل أعمال الاطفال لتحسين عمليتي التعليم والتعلم	30

هل لديك اي اضافة او تعليق تودين المشاركة بها بخصوص التعلم الجماعي لدعم تعلم الاطفال؟

غير موافق بشدة	غير موافق	موافق	موافق بشدة	الممارسات الشخصية المشتركة	
O	O	O	O	تتاح الفرص للمعلمات لمشاهدة زميلاتهن أثناء شرح الدروس وتقديم الدعم لهن	31
O	O	O	O	تزود المعلمات زميلاتهن بالتغذية الراجعة المتعلقة بالممارسات التعليمية	32
O	O	O	O	تتشارك المعلمات خلال النقاشات الغير الرسمية الأفكار والمقترحات لتحسين تعلم الاطفال	33
O	O	O	O	تراجع المعلمات أعمال الاطفال بشكل جماعي تعاوني لتحسين الممارسات التعليمية وتبادلها	34
O	O	O	O	تتوفر الفرص للتدريب والإرشاد ونقل الخبرات الوظيفية بين المعلمات	35
O	O	O	O	تتاح الفرص للأفراد والجماعات لتطبيق المعرفة ومشاركة نتائجها مع الآخرين	36
O	O	O	O	تتشارك المعلمات باستمرار أعمال الطلبة والطالبات لتوجيه وتحسين المستوى العام للمدرسة	37

هل لديك اي اضافة او تعليق تودين المشاركة بها بخصوص مشاركة الممارسات والخبرات الشخصية المشتركة بين المعلمات في مدرستك؟

غير موافق بشدة	غير موافق	موافق	موافق بشدة	الظروف المساندة / العلاقات	
O	O	O	O	توجد علاقات ودية بين المعلمات والاطفال مبنية على الثقة والاحترام المتبادل	38
O	O	O	O	تسود ثقافة الثقة والاحترام بما يشجع على خوض التجارب الجديدة	39
O	O	O	O	يتم تقدير وتكريم الانجازات المتميزة في المدرسة بانتظام	40
O	O	O	O	يبذل المعلمات والمهتمين من المجتمع جهودا متواصلة وموحدة لتعزيز ثقافة التجديد في المدرسة	41
O	O	O	O	تدعم العلاقات بين المعلمات الفحص الدقيق والصادق للبيانات وذلك لتحسين عمليتي التعليم والتعلم	42

هل لديك اي اضافة او تعليق تودين المشاركة بها بخصوص العلاقات بين المعلمات في مدرستك؟

غير موافق بشدة	غير موافق	موافق	موافق بشدة	الظروف المساندة / الهيكل	
O	O	O	O	توفر المدرسة الوقت لتسهيل العمل الجماعي والتعاوني	43
O	O	O	O	يراعى في توزيع الجدول الدراسي ايجاد فرص للتعلم الجماعي ومشاركة الممارسات التعليمية	44
O	O	O	O	تتوافر الموارد المالية للتنمية المهنية بالمدرسة	45
O	O	O	O	تتوفر التكنولوجيا المناسبة والموارد التعليمية للمعلمات	46
O	O	O	O	يوفر القائمون على المصادر الخبرات والدعم اللازم للتعلم المستمر	47
O	O	O	O	مرافق المدرسة نظيفة وجذابة ومشجعة على العمل والإبداع	48
O	O	O	O	يتيح التقارب الوظيفي بين المعلمات سهولة التعاون بينهم في العمل	49
O	O	O	O	تعزز أنظمة الاتصال بالمدرسة انتقال المعلومات بين المعلمات	50
O	O	O	O	تسهل أنظمة الاتصال انتقال المعلومات عبر المجتمع الأكاديمي والإداري وكذلك المجتمع المحلي	51
O	O	O	O	يتم تنظيم البيانات وتوفيرها بشكل يسهل على المعلمات استخدامها والرجوع إليها	52

هل لديك اي اضافة او تعليق تودين المشاركة بها بخصوص البيئة في مدرستك؟

Appendix D – Interview Guide

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore perceptions of kindergarten teachers broadly through the use of a survey and to further explore how two kindergarten teachers in Dammam describe their experiences of the conditions needed for implementing PLCs in their schools through personal interviews.

Research Questions and Sub-Questions

PLC conditions will vary as a function of

1. What is the perceived condition of PLCs for teachers who do or do not belong to schools with a PLC?

    a. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the teacher's level of education?

    b. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of years the teacher has taught?

    c. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the age of the teacher?

    d. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of students in the class?

    e. What is the reported condition of the PLCs based on the number of teachers in the school?

1. What are the teachers' experiences related to the conditions for PLCs in their schools?

    a. What are the teachers' experiences related to shared and supportive leadership in their schools?

b. What are the teachers' experiences related to shared beliefs, values, and vision in their schools?

c. What are the teachers' experiences related to collective learning and its application in their schools?

d. What are the teachers' experiences related to shared personal practice in their schools?

e. What are the teachers' experiences related to supportive conditions-relationships in their schools?

f. What are the teachers' experiences related to supportive conditions-structures in their schools?

Interview Protocol

Interviewer: Asma Bin Ateeq

Nature of relationship with interviewees: I have not met any of the participants in my research. I have no prior professional or social relationships with either of the participants who will be interviewed.

Process: I will get the informed consent of the participants through my contact in the Department of Education. The Department will provide me with the contact information for the two interview participants. I will text them individually to introduce myself and ask them for a suitable time to schedule the first interviews. During the interview, I will again introduce myself and I will review the purpose of my research and why I am interviewing them. I will take notes as well as make an audio recording.

As the interview progresses, I will ask follow-up questions. Although I have a list of questions that I intend to ask, I also will allow both myself and my participant to elaborate and "go deeper"

when the opportunity presents itself. At the end of the meeting, I will ask the participant when would be a good time for the next interview, and I will thank her for her participation. When I transcribe the interview, I will use a pseudonym for each participant to increase the confidentiality of the data.

Appendix E -Interview Questions

These interview questions comprise the second and third sections of my interviews. The questions allow for in-depth, open-ended conversation that is rooted in a comfortable and trusting relationship built from the first interviews. The third interview will be more phenomenological, producing in-depth interview. The questions are adapted from Al-Taneiji (2009), the Assistant Professor of Educational Administration at the United Arab Emirates University, except for the post-interview question.

Shared Leadership
1. How does the school principal deal with you and your colleagues?
2. Does the school principal support your professional development?
    a. If so, how?
3. How are decisions made in the school?

Shared Values
4. How were the school vision and mission statements created?
5. Do you apply the school vision and mission statements to your classroom teaching?
    a. If so, how?

Collective Learning and Application
6. How do you deal with a teacher who has a different opinion from yours?
7. What are the committees that you participate in?
8. What do you like about these committees?
9. What kinds of professional topics do you discuss with your colleagues during the school day?

Shared Personal Practice
10. Do you exchange knowledge and experience with other teachers in order to meet students' needs?
    a. If so, when do you do this?
    b. How do you exchange knowledge and experience with other teachers in order to meet students' needs?
    c. Have you observed your colleagues teaching in the classrooms?
    d. How often?
    e. Describe your experience as an observer or as one observed.
11. Describe your experience with giving and receiving feedback with your colleagues.

Supportive Conditions
12. How does your school recognize teaches who achieve outstanding results?
13. What do you feel is the level of trust between the principal and the teachers when a teacher wants to try a new method of teaching?
14. Describe how the administration fosters or discourages a culture of respect among teachers?
15. What types of professional development are available to you?
16. What happens if you do not undertake any professional development?
17. How well does your teaching schedule allow time for you to have discussions with your colleagues?
18. Describe the process of selecting your teaching methods in the classroom.
19. What are the teaching methods that you use in the classroom?

Post-Interview Question

    21. Describe your perceptions of the survey.

*Al-Taneiji, S. (2009). Professional learning communities in the United Arab Emirates schools: Realities and obstacles. *International Journal of Applied Educational Studies*, *6*(1), 16-29.

Appendix F - Letter of Consent

PROJECT TITLE: Kindergarten teachers' perceptions of conditions for professional learning communities in Dammam, Saudi Arabia

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE/EXPIRATION DATE: January 24, 2018/January 23, 2019

LENGTH OF STUDY: 3 months

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Debbie K. Mercer, Dean of Kansas State University's College of Education, Manhattan, Kansas, The United States of America.

CO-INVESTIGATOR: Asma Mohammed Bin Ateeq, Doctoral Candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at Kansas State University

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS: If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact:
- Asma Mohammed Bin Ateeq at binateeq@ksu.edu
- Dr. Debbie K. Mercer at ktaylor@ksu.edu

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION:
If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact
- Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66502, (785) 532-3224
- Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66502, (785) 532-3224

PROJECT SPONSOR: None.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of this study is to explore perceptions of kindergarten teachers broadly through the use of a survey and to further explore how two kindergarten teachers in Dammam describe their experiences of the conditions needed for implementing PLCs in their schools through personal interviews.

INTRODUCTION: You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Asma Mohammed Bin Ateeq for her doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Debbie K. Mercer. You are being asked to participate in three 30-40 minute interviews regarding your perceptions of the conditions of your school as they pertain to the readiness of your school for professional learning communities. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions of the researcher before agreeing to participate in the study. You may contact the researcher Asma Mohammed Bin Ateeq at binateeq@ksu.edu

PROCEDURES: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be contacted by email and asked to follow a link to complete an online survey. You may also be asked to participate in a series of three interviews through the Internet, with audio only (no video). The audio will be

recorded for research purposes, but you will not be identified specifically in the research. Once the interviews are complete, the audio will be transcribed and you will be given the opportunity to make comments or corrections to ensure the accuracy of the transcript.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT: You may choose to participate in the interviews with both audio and video if you prefer.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Participation in this study is voluntary. At any time during your participation, you may withdraw.

RISK/BENEFITS: Participating in this research poses no risks beyond those associated with everyday life. There are no direct benefits from participation but it is anticipated that the results from this study will contribute to the limited research on the conditions of kindergartens in Dammam, and their level of readiness for the development of professional learning communities.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: All identifying data will be confidential and only the researcher will have access to it. In the material that is made available to others, the identifying information will be removed. For example, the participants in the interviews will be given pseudonyms.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Witness to Signature (project staff): _____ **Date:** _____