INTRODUCING LESSON STUDY IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION:

A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN SAUDI ARABIA

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Key words: (Lesson Study, professional development, EFL, teaching, Saudi Arabia)

Literature suggests that despite the ambitious Vision 2030 roadmap for socio-economic development in Saudi Arabia, the existing professional development (PD) opportunities made available to women English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers are limited in their utility. They tend to be cascaded down to practitioners under the directives of educational authorities and to take the form of mandatory workshops with little connection to the classroom realities of the women EFL practitioners. Given the importance of the Vision 2030 roadmap which views the successful integration of Saudi women into the workforce and the development of English language proficiency amongst its citizenry as key imperatives, this study inquired into an alternative form of local PD, lesson study, as a mechanism for empowering Saudi EFL teachers to take charge of their own practice and professional learning. An allied objective was to help the teachers to improve their EFL pedagogy. Lesson Study is a Japanese type of PD in which teachers work together to develop, implement and modify a lesson plan through observations of the participants' classrooms (Fernandez, 2002; 2005). The present study inquired into lesson study as a PD tool within EFL studies at a Saudi public sector university. Adopting an illuminative evaluation approach that does not separate the actors from the setting (teachers from their work context), the study implemented lesson cycles with participating EFL teachers and collected data on their experiences and perceptions through several instruments. Applying the lens of CHAT to the data, the study found that the tools of the existing and new PD activity systems diverged considerably, in that while the existing system in the research setting comprised top-down PD characterised by workshop based training and evaluative observations, the lesson study (LS)-led PD implemented as part of the study featured collaborative and local teacher-led professional learning and experimentation. While the intended outcomes were identical in the two activity systems (achieving PD), the study revealed that the realised outcomes differed considerably in both, with the participating teachers finding motivation and relevance in engaging in local self-led PD through LS, in sharp contrast to the realised outcome under the top-down workshop based earlier PD (silo-based PD). Across the division of labour, community and rules within the systems, there were also significant shifts after the implementation of LS, with the teacher participants breaking through their earlier professional isolation and engaging actively in their professional learning and thus experiencing empowerment. These findings suggest that LS as a model of local self-led PD may prove efficacious in helping Saudi universities to dissipate the conflict at the interface of the existing PD system and the desired PD outcome. These findings have implications not only for how Saudi EFL teachers undertake PD and how the university authorities support them but also for the policy makers who make decisions as to how PD is provisioned in line with Vision 2030.

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this research to my father, who has always been there for me. He has been loving, caring, and supportive from the start of my scholarship to the end. I am grateful to everyone in my family; brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces and especially my mother. Her prayers, sweet texts and the home-cooked meals prepared by her when she came to visit, helped ease my pain. I am grateful for the many years they have waited for me to return home.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CHAT	Cultural–Historical Activity Theory
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DF	Degree of Freedom; the number of variables
DWR	Developmental Work Research
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
IE	Illuminative Evaluation
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LS	Lesson Study
M	Mean
MAX	Maximum
MIN	Minimum
MOE	Ministry of Education
N	Number of Participants
OTL	Observation for Teaching and Learning
PD	Professional Development
PII	Personal Identifiable Information
Q	Question
RQ	Research Question
SD	Standard Deviation
T	Teacher
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
UK	United Kingdom
UNI	University
USA	United States of America

PUBLICATIONS

The following papers have been published as a result of thesis research:

- Almutairi, J. (2018) Introducing Lesson Study in English as a foreign language education. Paper presented at BERA annual conference, Newcastle, 2018
- Almutairi, J. (2019) Introducing Lesson Study in English as a foreign language education. Paper presented at WALS conference, Amsterdam, 2019

Contributions:

- To the publication of two books by Brunel's Education department:
  - IT'S EDUCATION BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT
  - THE VOICE OF EDUCATORS AND EDUCATION STUDENTS

Rewards:

- One of only two spots to represent the department at the 5th NAFOL Conference (Norwegian research school of teacher education) in Norway, where I led a round-table discussion in Oct.2018
- The winner of the Brunel Vice-Travel Chancellor's Prize for Postgraduate Research in 2019.
- In 2019, the Saudi Cultural Bureau in London recognised me as one of the year's most outstanding Ph.D. students.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The study reported in this thesis explored the experiences of women EFL teachers participating in LS as an alternative approach to PD at a university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). This chapter provides the background to the study, including the increasing significance of EFL in the research setting tied to the Saudi government's vision for employability and internationalisation of its workforce as well as the greater integration of Saudi women into the workplace. Chapter 1 also provides the rationale for the study, outlines the research questions and methodology used in the research, and engages in preliminary justification for some of the structural choices, definitions and delineations made with the study.

1.1 Background to the study

1.1.1 Importance of EFL learning in KSA

Even though Arabic serves as the official language in the KSA, English has increasingly gained traction as the language of communication in the private sector (Al-Tamimi, 2019). Further, multiple researchers (for example, Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Al-Seghayer, 2005; Elyas & Picard, 2010) have also pointed to the growing role of English as the language of modernisation, science and technology within KSA government policies. Other research has found that 'the ability to communicate in English has a strong effect in promoting trade across the globe' (Ku & Zussman, 2010, p.250). The importance of English language proficiency in KSA is reinforced by the government's Vision 2030 which has three leitmotifs in particular. These include 'a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation' (p.13). The focus on a thriving economy foregrounds the government's focus on employability and its ambitions for internationalisation which can only be catalysed with better EFL proficiency amongst members of the workforce. Further, as Johnson (2009, p.133) observes, the knowledge of English serves 'as a powerful tool for development and advancement throughout the world, with fluency constituting a huge step forward in many peoples' and countries' struggles for self-sufficiency and success'.

In addition to being the language of science, technology and the global economy, English has a vital role to play in KSA's ambitions to transform into and compete as a leading destination for international students. In this regard, drawing upon Kirkgos (2019), Alsowat (2021, p.15) observes that as one of ‘the largest countries in the Middle East, KSA has an ambitious plan to internationalise the higher education system to enhance competitiveness nationally and internationally’. Within this plan, Alsowat (2021, p.15) adds that it is agreed by policymakers that effective English language education serves as an important means and instrument for transforming teaching as well as learning in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, as the language of international higher education is English, advancing EFL proficiency in the country is a key step in realising KSA’s ambition to become a global tertiary education destination of choice. In view of the wide-ranging developments discussed above, KSA has become subject to local and global imperatives for promoting English language proficiency amongst Saudi learners so that they can achieve better employability and participate more effectively in the international economy.

1.1.2 Reforms in EFL teacher education

In the wake of the growing importance of English described in the previous section, the KSA government has undertaken a range of reforms directed at compensating for the gaps of the past by initiating large-scale changes to materials and curricula as well as enabling teachers to implement innovative language pedagogies (Oudah & Altalhab, 2018). For instance, comprising some of the most recent set of reforms, the Tatweer project (King Abdullah’s Education Development) of 2007–2013 ‘has mandated an educational reform package, which focuses on a broad range of improvements, including enhancing schools’ teaching methods and strategies’ (Allmnakrah & Ever, 2020, p.340). Given similar imperatives transforming education within KSA, the need for reforms at the tertiary level is also indicated.

It is no surprise then that under the surge of these major transitions and transformations, the education and training of EFL teachers have assumed ‘core significance’ (Oudah & Altalhab, 2018, p.1407) amongst policymakers and educational managers.

At this juncture, it is important to turn to the KSA government's Vision 2030 (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2016) in order to understand the significance of English language proficiency. As mentioned earlier, Vision 2030 is built on three key themes, including a 'vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation' (p.13). The Vision 2030 document (p.13) states that a 'thriving economy provides opportunities for all by building an education system aligned with market needs and creating economic opportunities for stakeholders'. In this context, it has been highlighted that a critical aspect of preparing Saudis for the job market is finding ways to address English language proficiency amongst the learners (Bunaiyan, 2019, p.ii) who are future members of the Saudi workforce. As the Vision 2030 roadmap and the research discussed above suggest, the aspiration for effective EFL teaching and learning warrants efforts to ensure that Saudi EFL teachers experience positive and transformative PD designed to improve, strengthen and support their pedagogical competence.

1.1.3 Challenges of EFL teacher development in KSA

Before recent reforms, Saudi women were limited by a host of restrictions, ranging from exclusion from education and participation in the workforce as well as a prohibition on their right to vote, hold office or even drive (Alharbi, 2022). This effectively meant that Saudi women as recently as two decades ago were considered an extension of their male guardians with a woman's identity being presented in relation to her father's family's identity card and upon marriage concerning her husband's card or in the case of her father's death to that of her nearest male kin (Hamdan, 2005, p.46). Essentially, women's inequality was traditionally structured in Saudi society (Hamdan, 2005).

Amongst the slew of reforms launched by KSA in recent years, the National Transformation Programme encompassed initiatives and strategic objectives that were important to realise certain interim goals in 2020 (Alessa, Shalhoob & Almugarry, 2022, p.317), thus serving to pave the way to the successful implementation of Vision 2030 (Alessa, Shalhoob & Almugarry, 2022). Under the impetus of reforms underpinning KSA's Vision 2030, there is a clear focus on supporting women in KSA to contribute to the economy and participate in societal transformation as a result of which gender segregation regulations have begun to be relaxed (Ho, 2019). Essentially, the Vision 2030 roadmap acknowledges the value of women in KSA recognises Saudi women as under-utilised assets (Kasana, 2022). However, in order for this asset to be utilised optimally, enabling conditions must be created for women entering the workforce to thrive and grow as professionals. Research suggests that while the government's recent reforms have undisputedly helped Saudi women to enter the labour force, greater integration remains a challenge in view of obstacles such as a restrictive culture and entrenched conventions (Varshney, 2019). The role of these components in shaping the gender-focused nature of this study is considered more below, in section 1.2.1.

In other research, drawing upon Alghofaily (2019), Alotaibi (2020) observes that despite the positive improvements made by the government and policymakers over the last few years, women are still poorly empowered in Saudi Arabia. Alotaibi (2021) attributes this lack of empowerment to three key structural challenges, including the 1) lack of women participation in the formulation of strategies, 2) centralisation of the decision-making process and 3) lack of authority.

In view of the above, the focus of the present study was on investigating the PD experiences of women Saudi EFL teachers within the tertiary setting and the potential for a localised self-led PD approach that would support participants in the future to develop as agentive leaders in their workplace. Additionally, there was a need to take into account how the PD of Saudi women EFL teachers at the university level transpired under the influence of historical, societal and cultural factors. Such as an analysis was viewed as key to understanding how limiting culture, deeply embedded traditions, and related obstacles (Varshney, 2019, p.359) continue to prevent women from experiencing the kind of empowerment targeted by Vision 2030.

This section presents the rationale for the study and maps the existing landscape of teacher development in Saudi Arabia to show multiple variables shaping it at the social and institutional levels. Next, it takes into account how socially and culturally determined PD structures which are deemed suitable for women turn gender into another complicating factor for Saudi women EFL teachers, thus disempowering them from attaining their envisioned potential for growth and leadership under Vision 2030.

The insights offered by Ahmad and Shah (2022) who investigated teacher development and agency in the Arabian Gulf suggest that the conventional PD of language teachers tends to position teachers as passive technicians capable only of consuming theories produced by others but incapable of theorising from their own practice. Broadly speaking, this means that they tend to be subject to externally imposed pedagogies and find their beliefs and thinking about teaching overlooked in the processes of PD (Ahmad & Shah, 2022).

Research suggests that the teacher development of Saudi EFL teachers tends to be dominated by workshop-led and to be centred on in-service training (Alshaiki, 2018). Furthermore, the training needs of the EFL teachers and complementary activities are decided at a centralised level, and cascaded to the local level for dissemination to the trainees by local managers (Alshaiki, 2018, p.23). Such top-down teacher development activities are dominated by a lecture format and trainees are expected to implement their learnings accurately, without any provision for feedback from the EFL teachers on the effectiveness of what they have learned (Alshaiki, 2018, p.23). Research on in-service teacher development in the Saudi context also indicates that the programmes are less than successful on all counts, including the content provided and the structure and the management of the training (Albedaiwi, 2014). Another negative aspect of the training provision for the teachers is that it is very generic and is not designed to address teachers' differing needs (Alharbi, 2011). In addition, the training, which is delivered in the form of lectures/workshops, tends to focus on theory rather than address the needs of the EFL teachers emergent within their praxis (Alshaiki, 2018, p.27). Praxis may be understood as teachers' practice (Call-Cummings, M., Hauber-Özer, M., & Rainey, 2020).

According to Alsowat (2021, p.14), despite the key role of English in the Saudi educational context, most Saudi EFL learners face difficulties in developing English proficiency, and some of the causes for their low proficiency can be traced back to teacher-related factors such as teacher-centred instruction, teachers' traditional teaching methods. These are likely to be attributable not just to the centralised, top-down and generic nature of in-service teacher training but also the lack of hands-on, experiential and practical activities that can be directly linked to classroom reality which means that the teacher development opportunities available to Saudi EFL teachers are incompatible with the vision implied by the reform agenda pressing for a fundamental change in teachers' practice and the way they acquire knowledge (Alshaiki, 2020, p.1359). Another problem is the characteristics of the educational context within which the EFL teachers provide instruction. Summarising multiple researchers (Alnefaie, 2016; Assalahi, 2016; Al-Seghayer, 2011), Alsowat (2021, p.14) points out that a key challenge is that Saudi EFL teachers operate within a deterministic top-down educational policy that neither recognises teachers' voices, nor perceives teachers as real partners in the educational process. The disacknowledgement of teachers’ voices is an issue that has been remarked upon by Allmnakrah and Evers (2020, p.34) in the context of the weaknesses of the Tatweer project. They note that for education reform to succeed, teacher voices need to be heard, discussed, analysed critically, and acted upon. The danger of such exclusion is that the Saudi EFL teachers are likely to be pushed into a technical educational reality wherein their roles are circumscribed to serving as mere implementers of curriculum and non-agentive technicians (Alshaiki, 2020, p.1359).

Furthermore, in all likelihood, due to the top-down nature of in-service teacher training, Saudi EFL teachers have become trapped in silos at work which gives rise to an isolation practice whereby teachers conduct their lessons individually without significant supervision from other individuals or professionals (Alzahrani 2016, p. 70). Part of being part of such isolated practice stems from the fact that the centralised teacher training they have experienced has prevented them from viewing themselves as authentic epistemic sources on effective teaching in their local contexts. As a result, they tend not to turn to one another in seeking answers or solutions to the challenges they face systematically nor make attempts to theorise their practice. This ultimately means that opportunities for learning from colleagues at the local level are lost, even though their insights are likely to be most relevant rather than the generic training they receive which is disconnected from the realities of their classroom.

While this is particularly concerning from the perspective of Saudi EFL teachers in general, gender brings into play another complicating variable into the equation of reforms under Vision 2030 and the chances for their success under the present circumstances. As a reform package, Vision 2030 is not just about economic change but also about social change. It foresees Saudi women participating actively and effectively as part of the workforce. However, the top-down nature of PD cascaded to the Saudi women EFL teachers leads to the perpetuation of conservative societal and cultural patterns which do not acknowledge women professionals as being capable of leading their own professional growth and development. Instead, it traps them in silos at work with recourse only to Ministry of Education (MOE) led workshops and training for their development. Such a pattern of PD contravenes the aims of Vision 2030 reforms regarding women's empowerment. This is all the more pernicious given the key role of teachers in successful reform adoption and change.

A report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD, 2011, p.55) suggests that teacher engagement in the development and implementation of educational reform is crucial and that educational reform will not work unless it is supported from the bottom up which requires those responsible for change to both communicate their aims well and involve the stakeholders who are affected. The report urges that teachers must be engaged to contribute as the architects of change and not just its implementers (OECD, 2011, p.55). In a similar vein, arguing that educational reforms can only be successful if the right lead drivers for change are chosen, Fullan (2011, p.3) observes that the key to system-wide success is to situate the energy of educators as the central driving force. He elaborates that this means aligning the goals of educational reform with the internal motivation of the teachers who represent key stakeholders in the reform process. Fullan argues that intrinsic energy derives from doing something well that is important to you and to those with whom you are working. Thus, Fullan (2011) urges that the policies, as well as strategies, must create enabling conditions for such motivation to thrive.

What the foregoing discussion implies is that the success of educational reforms depends on the engagement and participation of teachers in the reform enactment process. With KSA investing heavily in education reforms over the years (see section

Reforms in EFL teacher education), there is a need to take into account the position of the EFL teachers within this process of educational, social and economic change underway in the Kingdom. The Saudi EFL teachers, particularly women teachers, represent, as described by Fullan (2011), one of the key drivers for ensuring the robustness of the envisioned change and reforms in tertiary settings. Yet research would seem to suggest that despite the centrality of their role, the EFL teachers happen to be marginalised stakeholders who are routinely excluded from decision-making and curricular development, given the prevalence of top-down models of PD in their workplace.

To elaborate, research within the Saudi context has shown that EFL teachers experience tend to experience marginalisation within their workplaces, resulting in exclusion from decision-making and curricular development processes (Alnefaie, 2016). In a critical study exploring male EFL teachers' marginalisation in KSA, Alnefaie (2016, p.1) found that the MOE tended to consider the teachers as mere implementers of the curriculum which not only negatively influenced their instructional performance but also hindered their creativity as teachers given that they were compelled to attend the rigidly designed MOE training programmes. A study by Althaqafi (2015, p.211) which explored the perceptions of 12 women Saudi EFL teachers in a university setting revealed similarly negative experiences due to the top-down approach taken by the Department to develop them. Althaqafi's (2015, p.212) participants reported that they lacked not only the opportunity to have a voice in curriculum formation or development but also access to programmes which could encourage teachers to come together, share their opinions, learn from each other's experience and develop themselves as professionals. Further, based on the findings of her study, Althaqafi (2015, p.214) pointed out that among the key challenges faced by women EFL teachers in a university setting was the prevalence of a cultural and professional adoption of the concept of empowerment which stereotypes the teachers as the implementer of a syllabus and constricts their teacher autonomy.

In view of the above, it is evident that Saudi women EFL teachers seek collaborative and collegial professional learning that involves learning from one another. The implications of such learning for educational reform have been summarised by

Scribner, Sawyer, Watson and Myers (2007) who argue that interacting and learning together are a key component of the educational reform equation. This is because educational leadership involves the practices of multiple individuals and occurs through the complex network of relationships and interactions among the teachers (Scribner, Sawyer, Watson & Myers, 2007, p. 68).

The theme of women empowerment is central to KSA’s Vision 2030. It represents a positive step forward in terms of empowering women and providing them with more chances for leadership roles. Thus, within this context, the current study aimed to provide women teachers with the opportunity to voice their opinions about PD and to seek their own development as teachers through the LS approach. In addition, the study sought to develop a historicised understanding of how history and culture influence the dynamics of Saudi women's work as EFL teachers as well as their PD in the higher education setting. LS as a PD approach was not viewed as a top-down imposition on the teachers because it was led by the teachers rather than by an external expert and addressed concerns in their classrooms at the local level.

To summarise the key points of the discussion above, the background of this study is characterised by an urgent need and pressing policy imperatives for Saudi EFL learners to develop English language proficiency in the interest of augmenting their employability and for the government to achieve its desired goal of internationalisation. In this scenario, the PD of teachers assumes great significance, given that it is ultimately the EFL teachers who can design and deliver an effective learning experience to their learners. Due to a prevailing view of teacher learning as something passive and technical targeted through top-down, one size fits all channels such as lectures and workshops and the exclusion of teachers’ voices in educational reform, EFL teacher learning and development in the Saudi context is circumscribed and limited. The disabling structures within which such centralised PD transpires prevent the EFL teachers from exercising their agency and participating effectively in the reforms envisioned and cascaded under Vision 2030. Women EFL teachers in particular face additional challenges in their PD, given the entrenchment of limiting societal and cultural patterns in their work setting which prevent them from leading their own PD, an ultimately empowering act reflecting the intended essence and the spirit of Vision 2030 reforms pertaining to Saudi women.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

A review of literature on PD of university-level Saudi EFL teachers revealed that the topic is generally understudied. Some recent empirical studies with topic relevance were located, although none of these had been conducted within the tertiary setting which is the focus of the present study. These studies may be considered recent as they have been carried out within the time frame of the last five years. A detailed explication of the gap is presented in the literature review. These studies are discussed below. For instance, studying school-level Saudi EFL teachers, Alshaiki (2018) inquired into the participants' perceptions and experiences of teacher PD. The participants were found to be critical of the institutional training received and to express a preference for self-led TPD relevant to their needs and context.

In another school level study, Aldhafiri (2020) explored the influence of teacher PD on participating Saudi women EFL teachers employed at intermediate and secondary schools in Riyadh. The study found that the participants did not perceive the TPDs to address their training needs or to connect with the realities of their teaching and wider context. In another study investigating the perceptions and attitudes of public school Saudi EFL teachers towards their PD, Alzahrani (2020) found that the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the training they received and felt that it did not address their PD needs.

Although the findings of the studies confirm dissatisifaction with existing training provisions and the need for more contextualised and, in some cases, self-directed TPD, the present study differs from these in several aspects. First of all, it goes beyond examining the Saudi EFL teachers' perceptions of teacher development experiences. It does this by inquiring into participants' experiences as they use LS as a PD tool. Further, it examines the PD in the tertiary setting. Most significantly, it reports on the results of an actual intervention (LS approach to PD) designed to enable teachers to reflect on their own practice and develop solutions appropriate to local needs. As literature discussed earlier has called for, the chosen PD approach also provides a space for teachers to express their voices and engage in collegial collaboration, thus building their agency as practitioners. This gap in literature also suggests a dearth of research on the viability of an LS approach for the PD of tertiary EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. This gap is elaborated below to demonstrate the need for a study such as the present investigation in which LS was implemented with the participants to examine whether it was suitable to the teachers' needs.

Allmnakrah and Evers (2020, p.34) call for structures within education reform wherein teacher voices will be heard, discussed, analysed critically, and acted upon. In their critique of the Tatweer project, Allmnakrah and Evers (2020, p. 34) have called for creating structures that enable the expression of Saudi EFL teachers' voices on the educational reform they are being subjected to. Allmnakrah and Evers (2020, p. 34) urge that stakeholders including experts, principals as well as teachers should be consulted to provide insights into curricula development and the actual training needs of the teachers. Above all, Allmnakrah and Evers (2020, p. 34) contend that teachers need hands-on practical training and the opportunity to discuss and review their progress because without this, how can they possibly pass anything on to their students? Unpacking these recommendations, what becomes apparent is the need to provide Saudi EFL teachers with opportunities to engage in professional conversations and exchanges to discuss their practice and student learning as well as PD. These are the very opportunities that are not available within the conventional in-service training experienced by Saudi EFL teachers.

However, there are approaches to PD which offer precisely the kind of conditions and mechanisms for such enabling opportunities to emerge. For instance, LS has emerged as a popular form of PD for teachers, re-establishing the classroom as a site for professional research, creating a collaborative space in which teachers can explore pedagogical approaches, and promoting critical, reflexive pedagogy. Notably, there is only limited research on the use of LS in the Saudi context. Fernandez and Yoshida (2004, p.7) explain that LS is a direct translation of the Japanese term jugyokenkyu, which is composed of two words: jugyo, which means lesson, and kenkyu, which means study or research.

In line with this, LS takes the lesson plan as the unit of study and then engages participating teachers in the collaborative process of lesson planning in which they collectively identify a learning issue, devise innovative strategies to address this issue, and then trial their ideas in research lessons. These lessons are then observed by the rest of the group. Post-lesson collective reflections on the lesson then lead to revisions, if needed, and reteaching of the revised lesson (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004, p.7). This approach to ongoing teacher education and PD has become part of standard practice in Japan and is used to produce professional knowledge that may be shared beyond individual institutions, to the wider professional community. The success of these approaches has stimulated research into LS outside Japan in recent years, as a means to contribute to teachers' PD.

LS inaugurates an alternative approach to PD, by recasting the teacher as an active investigator rather than the object of PD activity. This echoes the concerns highlighted in earlier discussions over the exclusion of Saudi EFL teachers' voices from the process of education reform. Hence, using LS marks an important distinction, as it provides a space in which teachers do not feel evaluated, but rather are able to critically approach their own pedagogy without judgement. This factor is extremely important in contexts where PD processes are limited by teachers' fear that they are to be sanctioned or evaluated. There is a need to develop and promote diverse avenues for PD for teachers in Saudi Arabia, which will encourage collaborative and reflective approaches, and foster a community of practice, particularly for women teachers.

This study viewed LS as providing an effective and promising avenue for encouraging PD opportunities for women EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. The study was motivated by the need, identified in the literature, to create opportunities for PD among women Saudi teachers.

In view of the idea that encouraging collaborative and critical approaches to problem-solving for learner issues in the classroom would produce beneficial outcomes for both students and teachers in Saudi Arabia, this study engaged in setting up LS as a PD tool with a group of EFL teachers at a Saudi university. An LS programme was designed in which four currently practicing EFL teachers took part. This exploratory study served to provide critical insights into the potential challenges and opportunities posed by the introduction of LS among EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia.

1.2.1 Rationale for focusing on the experiences of women teachers

The complex and pervasive role of gender and its impact on the way that phenomena, events and practices are experienced by individuals (and groups) is an increasingly recognised element of intersectional research (Coote et al, 2022). It can be tempting to identify that this is ‘all the truer’ in contexts where gender roles are openly and concretely delineated, and where segregation of the sexes is enforced – such as is found in Saudi Arabia, but this is not entirely accurate. Understanding of the impact of gender on lived experience is *as* important in contexts where ostensibly gender roles have been homogenised and equalised (at least formally), precisely because sometimes enduring inequalities and differences become more subtly entrenched and veiled, but are nonetheless present, and thus in need of more insightful critical research to render them apparent. In this sense then, it is submitted that *all* contemporary research on the lived experience of subjects should be cognizant of gender impacts, even when they do not constitute the main focus of the study (Tannembaum, 2016).

Similarly, though, contexts where gendered segregation occurs *also* require nuanced and careful attention from researchers in relation to the impact of gender. Just as it can be tempting for researchers to dismiss the relevance of gender in ‘equal’ societies because it ostensibly ‘doesn’t exist’, there can be a similar instinct for researchers in ‘unequal’ societies to believe that the gendered distinction is so established and accepted and its impacts so readily apparent that it needs only cursory consideration (Al-Bakr, 2017, Alsubaie and Jones, 2017). This is not the case: gender continues to constitute a crucial component of lived experience in *all* societies that should not be accepted as rigid, fixed or taken for granted, regardless of how outwardly and formally it manifests – and thus would constitute a part of this research regardless of the specific research context.

However, in this case, the research context - namely, that of educational delivery in Saudi Arabia – calls for a more specifically gendered focus in approach, both conceptually and logistically. From a logistical standpoint, as a woman researcher who initially proposed and commenced this study in 2019, I initially only had access to women-centred educational delivery, and thus had no option but to focus my research on women's experiences, and to recognise that this single-sided gendered approach would have an integral effect on the results gathered, but not in a way that could be comparatively assessed.

Since the commencement of the research, there have been rapid changes in Saudi Arabia in relation to gender; particularly women's access to domains that were previously exclusively male, and the ability of the sexes to more freely interact. Thus, for instance, Reema bint Bandar Al Saud was appointed as the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the United States, becoming the first women envoy in the country's history. Rayyanah Barnawi achieved the accolade of becoming the first Saudi woman set to go on a space trip (she will be launching in May 2023), and in the educational and language sector specifically, Dr. Tahany Albaiz – a professor in EFL – has been appointed as Cultural Attaché' in Italy and Greece.

Far from reducing the significance of gender to this study though, these developments increase it – as the subjects of the study will be navigating a rapidly changing social, professional, cultural, political and even legal background throughout the course of the intervention (Alansi et al, 2023). The role that the evolving gendered context of their practices will play will constitute a formative part of their experiences, and thus an important component of the analysis. It is this that justifies the gender-specific nature of the research undertaken. But it should be noted that gender is not treated within this study as an individual component for examination; it does not receive its own section within the result or analysis, but instead represents a dimension inherent in the wider analytical framework, which is discussed further in section 4.8.

1.2.2 A note on terminology

Two preliminary notes must be made regarding the terminological choices made within this study – relating to the use of the words ‘women’ and ‘teachers’.

‘Scientific’ literature has traditionally used the term ‘female’ both as a noun and an adjective preceding a noun; for instance, a ‘female doctor’, a ‘female firefighter’, etc. This may occur particularly in contexts where the noun (particularly job role nouns) would be conventionally ‘male’ – see for instance that it is more common to write ‘male nurse’, with ‘female nurse’ being treated as a tautology. Grammatically, the use of ‘male’ and ‘female’ as adjectives has also been accepted as the ‘correct’ standard. But in recent years, an ideological battle over the term has grown, with recognition that certain subsections of society adopt the term ‘female’ (particularly as a noun) to dehumanise and other a particular gender, and also to create exclusionary lines which delineate biological sex from gender. Resultantly, there have been social, cultural and academic movements to move language towards the use of ‘woman’ or ‘women’ as both noun and adjective (if indeed, any meaningful delineation of the gender of the role is contextually required – otherwise, gendered description of the role should be considered irrelevant). This would thus see a move towards the terms ‘woman doctor’, ‘woman firefighter’ and, specifically relevant to this study ‘woman teacher’ (or ‘women teachers’ as a collective). In line with this movement, the study here makes use of the term ‘woman’ or ‘women’ as both adjective and noun, and avoids the use of the term ‘female’. It is recognised that the solution appears grammatically inelegant, though Stanley (1978) recognises that this very concept of grammatical correctness can serve to indoctrinate and entrench gendered attitudes on the basis of arbitrary ‘traditions’ which, although seeming disassociated from the issue of gender, are actually deeply intertwined with it.

However, it is recognised that the ‘politicisation’ of this grammar point is by no means clear-cut either. Commentators such as Newton-Small (2016) argue that – as with many linguistic otherings for minority groups – there are arguments to be made in ‘reclaiming’ the legitimacy of the term ‘female’, as has been undertaken by queer and gay groups for those particular terms.

As such, the choice of terminology in this field – whilst influenced by wider social, political and academic discourse – must ultimately constitute a personal one. The study thus uses the terms ‘woman/women’ as both adjective and noun and avoids use of the term ‘female’.

The use of the word ‘language teachers’ (as opposed to ‘language instructors’) also represents an important ideological choice. As identified within section 1.1, EFL teachers tend to experience marginalisation within their workplaces – often treated as existing outside of or supplementary to core teaching. This is in part because language learning holds a wide and enduring appeal for students in a way that many other subjects to not, and is accessed in a broader range of formal and informal learning contexts. Similarly, in terms of teaching provision, tracks to becoming a formal provider of language education are more diverse than others, and are often considered more accessible and less demanding – with TEFL accreditation achievable in ‘just’ 120 online hours.

Whether a conceptual delineation – particularly through the use of differing terminology – is needed to mark providers of language education in different contexts (such as private language schools) is needed is outside of the scope of consideration within this study. But a term must be chosen for reference to the subjects *within* this study, teaching in a university environment, whom themselves differ in terms of their specific qualification and titles, and include "assistant professor," "lecturer," and "language instructor”.

The term ‘teacher’ is often delineated from ‘instructor’ based on job role, course load and responsibilities, but these formalistic elements are not used to aid in definitional clarity here; instead, the two are delineated – and the term ‘teacher’ employed – on more conceptual grounds. ‘Instructor’ here is understood as inherently communicating a distance between the instructor and learner, and a paired-back scope in terms of how knowledge is communicated to the learner: merely ‘instructional’ on the formal application of the language, as opposed to holistically engaged with the *exploration* of language – not just its rules and application, but its contextual meaning, creative and expressive potential, and wider socio-cultural implications. The use of the term ‘teacher’ further implies a closer relationship between student and teacher, not necessarily in a pastoral sense, but in the idea of breaking down a hierarchical distance between instructor and receiver of knowledge, and instead facilitating a collaborative learning environment based on mutual respect and exploration. Since this reflects both the researcher's own position on an 'ideal learning environment', and reflects the culture already present in the classroom environments that form the base of this study (see further Section Five), the term 'teacher' is seen as most appropriate to describe the various actors involved in the language teaching process. Furthermore, in light of the concepts expressed regarding the fact that language teaching is sometimes 'othered' by professionals – even those operating in the same educational environment – then the term 'teacher' is also applied to give due respect to the equal role of language teachers with their peers in humanities, STEM and other disciplines.

1.3 Research Questions

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the experiences of the participants using LS as an alternative PD approach. Further, the study sought to inquire into the cultural context of professional development in Saudi universities affected and whether it was possible to use LS as a PD tool in the target setting.

In order to guide and frame the investigation, the following research questions were devised:

1. What opportunities are offered by LS as a tool for PD among EFL women teachers in Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the perceptions of Saudi EFL women teachers towards LS as a means of PD?
3. What, if any, cultural barriers hinder the use of LS in the context of EFL women teacher education in Saudi Arabia?
4. What are the PD experiences and goals/ambitions of the participating women teachers and is LS able to support this?

While cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) was adopted as an analytical lens in the present study, it is essential to point out at the outset that the current research was not designed around CHAT concepts. The primary use of CHAT was to provide an analytical lens for interpreting the data collected in the study. As an analytical lens, CHAT allows the examination of how people go about their work, how they build organisations, and how organisations interact with each other greatly affects the outcomes of the work, by providing a practice-based approach underpinned by a robust framework for analysing professional work practices (Foot, 2014, p.12). In the case of conducting this study with women EFL teachers belonging to a conservative male-dominated society, the lens of CHAT allowed me to look at data generated in my research in relation to its cultural and historical context and significance. Thus, it allowed me to identify possible constraints upon the PD of teachers originating from the institution (in terms of provision of opportunities for PD) and their culture.

The lens of CHAT enabled me to gain holistic insights into the motives of the participants and the tools used by them, in addition to learning about the dynamics of power, money, culture, and history which exercise influence upon complex and evolving professional practices. I designed the research questions to address the problems and issues I had identified within the research setting in relation to the participants. Although CHAT did not necessarily determine these, what it did was to provide me with a theoretical lens which was relevant to the research context, aims and question and through which I could analyse the data effectively.

RQ 1 inquired into the opportunities PD offered by LS to the participating teachers, whereas RQ2 examined the participants' perceptions of the approach as a tool of PD. RQ2 was formulated, in line with CHAT's focus on motives, to enable the participants to examine how they felt about using LS for their PD. Refracting CHAT's concern with the influence of culture on professional practices, RQ3 was specifically designed to identify the cultural barriers that can obstruct the introduction of LS as a PD tool in the Saudi EFL context. This was particularly relevant given the fact that the target research setting is culturally different from the context of Japan wherein LS originated. RQ 4, was aimed at identifying the PD experiences and goals/ambitions reported by the participants.

1.4 Methodology used in the study

This study adopted an illuminative evaluation (IE) approach to research. IE is a flexible research strategy aimed at examining a problem or phenomenon in its naturalistic setting without any 'attempt to manipulate, control, or eliminate situational variables' but to take as a given ‘the complex scene [the researcher] encounters’ (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972, p.17-18). A key characteristic of illuminative evaluation is that choice of data collection methods within IE is not led by ‘research doctrine’; rather ‘the problem defines the methods used’ and ‘different techniques are combined to throw light on a common problem’ (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972, p.17-18). The adoption of IE allows researchers to identify notable characteristics of the learning milieu, to identify cycles of causal relationships and to understand connections between beliefs and what is practiced as well as between institutional patterns and individuals’ responses (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972, p.17-18). Thus, against this backdrop, the present study deployed quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews) methods of data collection. The use of LS as a PD tool was integrated into the research design, with four LS cycles (plan, revise, deliver, reflect) being implemented over the course of the research. The study was located in the KSA. The research was conducted at an English-language institution in KSA. The participants were selected based on their profession and place of employment. I focused on recruiting women participants who were working as EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select participants that met these criteria. This participant sample was considered suitable based on the considerable demands in terms of participation placed on each participant. A total of four women EFL teachers participated in the LS process and 25 participants responded to the survey.

My original research plan was to undertake participatory action research. I emailed the participants for their consent to take part in the LS experiment which led to a statement of willingness to participate in the study by five teachers, one of whom soon thereafter had to withdraw due to the birth of her first child. At this preliminary stage, I showed the four participants a video of LS in action within a classroom and set up a WhatsApp group chat for them to share the LS handbook by Peter Duddly.

In the first phase of data collection, I conducted semi-structured interviews prior to and following the LS implementation. In this phase, I worked with the participating teachers for nearly 4 months, completing lesson study cycles with the understanding that they would maintain reflective journals as they completed the LS cycles. However, due to the Covid pandemic, I had to return to the UK, and the participants had to deliver their classes remotely. I maintained online contact with the participants. However, as the participants did not share their journals with me, the implementation yielded limited data results.

In the second phase, I planned for an online focus group discussion on Zoom to explore their reflections on the use of LS as a tool for PD. I had to wait nearly 10 months to conduct a reflective focus group discussion via Zoom to get their feedback. Surprisingly, this online discussion lasted more than an hour, and the participants provided insightful reflections on their experiences of LS and its impact on their practice.

Moving onto the third phase, in consultation with my supervisors, I created a fourth research question to gain insights into the PD experiences of other teachers at the university and their view of LS as a PD approach. To collect data in relation to the fourth research question, I created a survey based on three reviewed survey instruments. The survey was sent out to all 116 faculty members at the research site to inquire about their PD experiences. 25 of the target participants responded to the survey.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided the background to the study, covering topics such as the importance of EFL learning in KSA, EFL-related reforms undertaken in the Kingdom as well as the challenges experienced by women EFL teachers in developing as professionals within a higher education setting circumscribed by exclusionary, top-down and deterministic training and PD which positions them as mere implementers of curricular reform. The chapter also presented the rationale for the study and outlined the methodology followed in the research. It also explicated the links between the adopted analytical lens of Cultural History Activity Theory (CHAT) and the research questions. In the next chapter, Historic and Cultural Background, there will be a review of the literature on the themes that are addressed in the research questions that frame the study. This will include topics such as EFL teacher development in the KSA context, with a focus on how women EFL teachers are marginalised by institutions and culture in the KSA context. Chapter 4 outlines the paradigm, research approach, details of the sample, data collection methods, analytical approaches used in the study, in addition to the ethical considerations underpinning the study. Chapter 5 presents the results of the study and provides a discussion of the results in relation to the literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 6 concludes the study, presenting a summary of the key findings, recommendations, limitations of the research and future research trajectories.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

As outlined in the introduction chapter, this study examines the PD experiences of teachers at Kingdom University (pseudonym adopted)– located in the KSA. In doing so, it implements a specific method of PD – namely that of LS – and analyses it using a CHAT analytical framework.

This section seeks to set out the justification for such an approach, identifying perspectives which see PD as mediated not only by the management, PD organisers and EFL teachers, but also by these stakeholders' histories and cultures, in addition to the culture of the university and the country itself. The many variables that thus influence PD provision, therefore, warrant an analytic lens which provides insights into how existing PD transpires, to implement a situated PD approach that is responsive to the teaching and learning contexts of the teachers, along with the wider cultural and historical contexts. The combination of LS PD implementation as an activity combined with a CHAT analytical lens thus facilitates the dual aspects of research understanding *and* participant-driven empowerment and change which - as the methodology chapter (Chapter 4) explores in more depth - are core objectives of the study.

There are therefore three distinct but interrelated concepts which require further investigation and elaboration within the literature review. The first section (Educational Policies and Culture) seeks to present a broad overview of the Saudi Arabian PD content in general, with a focus on understanding how the professional learning of teachers has been shaped by the imperatives of 21st-century learning. This section begins with an overview of policy on a global and national scale, and then draws these wider findings down into an examination of the specifics of PD practice within the urban university, In relation to the Cultural dimension in the chapter, literature pertaining to concepts of gender in Saudi Arabian society are examined, with a particular focus on how this impact the PD experiences of women teachers in the Kingdom.

2.1 Examining Educational Policies and Culture in the research setting: Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia maintains a broad framework of policies and laws which govern the way that education is administered, and the practice of teachers' PD undertaken. In many areas, these policies have seen increasing levels of modification. These institutional elements are both informed by and supplemented with cultural, social, economic and religious concerns, all of which shape the overall Saudi educational environment. This section outlines first the educational policies governing education in KSA (and the cultural elements that inform them), before examining in more depth the influence of culture on the concept of gender particular, and the impact of this on wider educational practice.

2.1.1 Overarching Policy Frameworks

2.1.1.1 Saudi Vision 2030

Saudi Vision 2030 is a strategic framework that is designed to develop the country's public sectors, which include its health, infrastructure, and education sectors, among many others (Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2018). As part of the framework, the education system in Saudi Arabia is set to be transformed and improved to match the standards of Western nations, something that Saudi Arabia has lacked behind for many years (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). The education system in Saudi Arabia was previously criticised for being weak and suffering from significant skill gaps, which affected the growth and development of the country as a whole (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). In addition, there was – and remains - a growing debate about women's rights and the exclusion of women from education and learning opportunities, something that has since begun to slowly change since 2019 (Al-Qahtani et al., 2020).

The Vision 2030 framework, therefore, aims to adapt to the changing needs of students and teachers alike and offer a more flexible learning environment for all (Al-Qahtani et al., 2020). At the same time, the framework is expected to help Saudi Arabia adapt to new trends in the global education sector, such as developing new curricula or utilising new practices in teaching (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). These innovations are designed to place Saudi Arabia on a map of high demand and make the country more sustainable and prosperous.

The framework is set to introduce some revolutionary changes to the existing Saudi education system. One of the main objectives of the framework includes improving the recruitment and training opportunities for teachers, which includes women teachers

(Al-Qahtani et al., 2020). Previously, women were not allowed to have classes in the same physical space as men, a stipulation which was lifted as of early 2017 (Saleh & Malibari, 2021). Despite that, the Saudi education system has ‘lacked’ behind other Western countries with respect to its teaching methods and learning environments. Although it must be recognised that the inherent assumption of Western superiority is potentially a socio-political construct based on geopolitical attitudes, rather than any objective measure of student outcomes. However, despite this, it remains the ‘aspirational’ goal of the Kingdom. This point is discussed in more detail in the sections below. The framework is set to improve the learning environment, existing curricula and teaching methods in Saudi schools, which are designed to improve students’ core skills and knowledge (Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2018). At the same time, as part of the Vision, a national strategy will be developed to upgrade the professional level of teachers, improve the quality of services provided to teachers, and improve the educational ecosystem.

2.1.1.2 Strategic partnership with the United Kingdom

As part of the Saudi Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom have formed a partnership that is designed to enhance their mutual interests, including its economic, political, social, and security pillars (UK Government, 2021). As a result, the UK-KSA Education Partnership has been developed, which focuses primarily on sharing resources and expertise to improve the training and development of teachers and allow the Kingdom to meet ‘global’ education standards (UK Government, 2021). One way in which the two countries have decided to share resources and expertise is through implementation of a government scholarship programme designed to send Saudi students to Western universities to complete their undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (ICEF Monitor, 3 May 2022). Students can complete their studies in countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, France, Germany, or Switzerland (ICEF Monitor, 3 May 2022.). As part of the programme, Saudi students receive tuition and living expense funds for a period of a maximum four years (Government of Saudi Arabia). This means that nationals of Saudi Arabia have the opportunity to complete their degrees entirely abroad, while being exposed to Western teaching practices and techniques. This is revolutionary for a country such as Saudi Arabia, which for many years promoted only its internal education system, which was substantially different from that of its Western counterpart (Peterson, 2018). Since the launch of the programme, thousands of Saudi students have completed their studies in the United Kingdom, either in person or virtually. I am one of the students participating in this programme by undertaking doctoral research at a UK university. Hence, my interest in PD is not only organic, building up from my own experiences as a university teacher in KSA, but also linked to the impetus provided by the KSA and UK partnership to help Saudi teachers achieve global standards in education through PD and training.

2.1.1.3 Educational policy in the United Kingdom and the implications of emulating alternative global models: cultural colonialism?

The UK government has recently launched its own International Education Strategy (Gov UK, 2021), which is designed to increase the country's education exports, meaning that the country is open to hosting more than 600,000 international students by 2030, which coincides with Saudi Arabia's vision for 2030 (UK Government, 2021). As part of the policy, the United Kingdom aims to boost its economic development and academic prospects. The goal behind the policy is to boost the number of international students in UK universities by 30%, which is set to increase the country's education industry by £35bn annually (UK Government, 2021). As part of the policy, the United Kingdom decided to focus on "priority countries" in the first instance, which include Indonesia, Vietnam, Nigeria, India, and Saudi Arabia (UK Government, 2021). By increasing the number of international exports from these countries, the government hopes to address existing barriers in the global education market. It states explicitly as its goals the aim to improve education standards within these priority countries to help them reach 'global standards', and also, in turn, improve its own education system through sharing resources and knowledge with other countries.

There are readily apparent issues with the assumption on the part of the UK that they have an educational model worth exporting, and on the part of Saudi Arabia regarding the desirability of emulating 'global' (by that it is largely understood Western) educational models. Rhee (2009), focusing on examples of the US and Korea, identifies how perceptions of educational superiority in Western countries – and particularly the perception of the US 'as the most dominant and thus desired model of international education' operate at 'levels of discursive practice - national, educational, and individual' (Rhee, 2009, p55). At each layer, ideas about the value of a given system become internalised, to the point that they are not held with any reference to objective measurements. Schubring (2021) states that this is a common hangover of Western Imperialism, which assumed its superiority, imposed that superiority, and then by virtue of this cycle, maintained apparent superiority and dominance even in cases where the actual underpinning practices might have stagnated or been subpar from the very start.

Even if one moves away from concepts of ‘cultural reputation’ and seeks to assess whether the UK genuinely maintains an objectively ‘better’ system worth exporting globally, one comes up against the inevitable issue of the fact that statistics and data cannot offer any truly objective insight into the issue, because a) the definition of ‘better’ and ‘best’ is entirely nebulous and variously defined, and b) educational statistics can be manipulated to show the picture desired (Goldstein & Spiegelhalter, 1996). For instance, a study conducted by the US News & World Report (2019) finds the UK to be the second in provision of the ‘best education’. This is however based on a ‘perception-based global survey, which used a compilation of scores from three equally weighted country attributes: having a well-developed public education system, whether people would consider attending university there and if that country provides a top quality education’ (US News and World Report, 2021). Although metric, these findings merely represent the quantification of subjective assessment, and thus clearly entrench the dominant hegemonic rhetoric that Western countries have managed to sustain even in the post-colonial era. Alternatively, Andrews (2021) cites an unnamed study that places the UK 11th on the list. His data seeks to use more organically quantitative measures, including primary and secondary enrolment rates, Government Expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP%, Population with tertiary schooling and average QS world university rankings (themselves a metric drawn up by predominantly Western institutions using a varied number of different calculation methods). The study adds to this the mean PISA score– a standardised measure of literacy, numeracy and science (though note again criticisms such as those by Stewart (2016) who suggest cultural skew may impact the scores generated by these tests). Under Andrews’ (2021) ranking, the UK is judged to be the 11th best educational provider, but what contributes to that score is founded on the *quantity* of education – the number of people in education, time spent there, and funding which represents only one measure and does little to speak to the quality of education.

Ultimately, efforts to emulate the UK system (and indeed, the use of the term 'UK system' should be undertaken with some caution, given the devolved nature of educational policy in Wales and Scotland is tied far more to historical, socioeconomic and geopolitical concerns than it is any particular inherent quality in the standards of education being delivered). Indeed, the policies being pursued by both the UK and Saudi Arabia should be addressed through a critical lens.

2.1.1.4 Exporting PD as a key component of educational policy

However, setting aside colonialist readings of the UK/KSA relationship for the moment, it is possible to see that one clear focus of the UK system which until recently has been lacking is that of Teacher Development. Teacher development constitutes a core ideal of the UK education system, though as Sellen (2016) identifies, the extent to which these ideals are achieved in practice – and the extent to which the theoretical models and frameworks adopted to pursue the ideal are appropriate for purpose – both remain contested. There are a range of policy frameworks which guide teaching professionals – and the authorities and structures which provide for them. These include an updated range of Teachers' Standards; the Early Career Framework ECF); National Professional Qualifications (NPQs); and the new National Institute of Teaching (NIoT). As with many state functions within the UK, there has also been a move to outsource some elements of education – notably that of PD – to private providers, and recent winning tenders include those awarded to Ambition, Oak National and the School Led Development Trust.

Across these policy frameworks, there is an ongoing emphasis on the need for teachers' constant development and progression. As part of the development, teachers are encouraged not only to improve their knowledge and skills, but also to engage in self-critical reflection. Teachers are also encouraged to respond to advice and feedback from peers and to actively engage in collaborative activities that promote PD.

This differs substantially from practices in Saudi Arabia, particularly with respect to promoting more collaborative teaching practices and proactive involvement of the teachers in the education system. For instance, the Saudi education system has been heavily criticised for not providing enough PD opportunities for teachers (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). Moreover, women teachers are a recent development in Saudi schools, as women were not permitted to attain higher education in the past (Alhareth et al., 2015). This means that they have – relative to their male counterparts – much lower-developed systems of informal and formal mentorship, and less of an established practice-base to tap into, either tacitly or explicitly. Culture is also an important aspect that distinguishes Saudi Arabia, as Saudi teachers have been shown to stifle critical and reflective approaches to pedagogy and tend to be afraid to show 'weaknesses' in front of their managers and peers, which could be viewed as opportunities for development by UK teachers (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020) (discussed further below). There is a need to develop and promote diverse avenues for PD for teachers in Saudi Arabia, which will encourage collaborative and reflective approaches, similar to those promoted by the UK education system. Forming a strategic partnership with the UK could be one of the ways that Saudi Arabia is able to achieve that. However, in light of the aforementioned discussion regarding the inaccurate assumption of UK education as a globally leading model, some caution must be urged in automatically assuming the value and benefit of partnership and learning across these specific international dimensions.

2.1.1.5 Potential implications of international educational collaboration for Saudi Arabia

The education system in Saudi Arabia consists of three types of institutions: public, private, and international. At first, only public and private institutions were available to Saudi students, but these did not offer Saudi students enough internationalisation or English language proficiency (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Elyas & Picard, 2010). Due to the discrepancy in performance between Saudi students attending public and private institutions and those exposed to international education, the Saudi government introduced international schools in 2010 (Habbash, 2011). For the first time in Saudi Arabia's history, students now had access to international resources and teaching practices, constituting an initial step in revolutionising the education system in the country.

The education system in Saudi Arabia has been under ongoing pressure from the West to reform a number of its social and political structures, aligning them more with 'Western' standards - relating to liberal values, personal freedoms and equality, and supported by institutions that are more transparent and follow due process (Dekmejian, 2003). This is potentially problematic, because although such reforms are frequently couched as being for the benefit of students, they in reality represent a symptom of wider power wranglings and competing values, principles and ideologies. The motivations for these demands (or perhaps more accurately, influences) across all social, legal and political structures – and the motivation for compliance with them – pertains to complex, nuanced and fluctuating global geopolitical and economic wranglings, which in an ideal world, educational practice would be largely free off (Bernawi, 2017).

Nonetheless, as a result of these global political influences, the Saudi government has slowly started to open its institutions to adopt more Western curricula and pedagogy to increase the level of education received by students (Siddiqui, 2014). This gave rise to international schools, which became an avenue wherein Saudi Arabia had an opportunity to exchange ideas and resources with Western institutions and implement these into their own teaching practices (Elyas & Picard, 2010). This process of assimilation is viewed variously as a positive step forward for the Kingdom in relation to the promotion of 'better' educational standards, liberal values and global integration or as a weakening of cultural heritage and religious values, and as an effort to pander to Western values to maintain economic connections with an overall effect of rendering the country 'less Islam' (Elyas & Picard, 2010, p. 140). At the same time, to respond to the growing demands of English fluency in the global job market, Saudi institutions have responded by developing more competitive English language instruction and English language curricula (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). Although previously teaching and speaking English was viewed as a direct threat to Saudi culture and values, the realities of an international job market – even outside of any direct pressure being exerted upon the Kingdom by the West – mean this linguistic expansion is generally seen as beneficial in terms of the global opportunities it opens to students.

International schools were as far advanced with respect to utilising Western teaching practices as it was possible for Saudi students. The reason for that is that international schools in Saudi Arabia do not have to strictly follow the same curriculum as public and private institutions. Thus, international schools offered Saudi students additional curriculum options as well as longer instructional time for students. At the same time, international schools in Saudi Arabia were considered a first step in responding to pressures from American institutions to offer more liberal learning environments for students (Habbash, 2011). This meant that all teachers had to be proficient in their delivery of educational content in English, and preferably possess qualifications and credentials for teaching in English (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Differences between international schools and public and private institutions meant that the Saudi education system lacked consistency in curriculum, student support, and teacher preparation. However, despite the apparent benefits for students, international schools did not offer any more value in terms of PD for teachers.

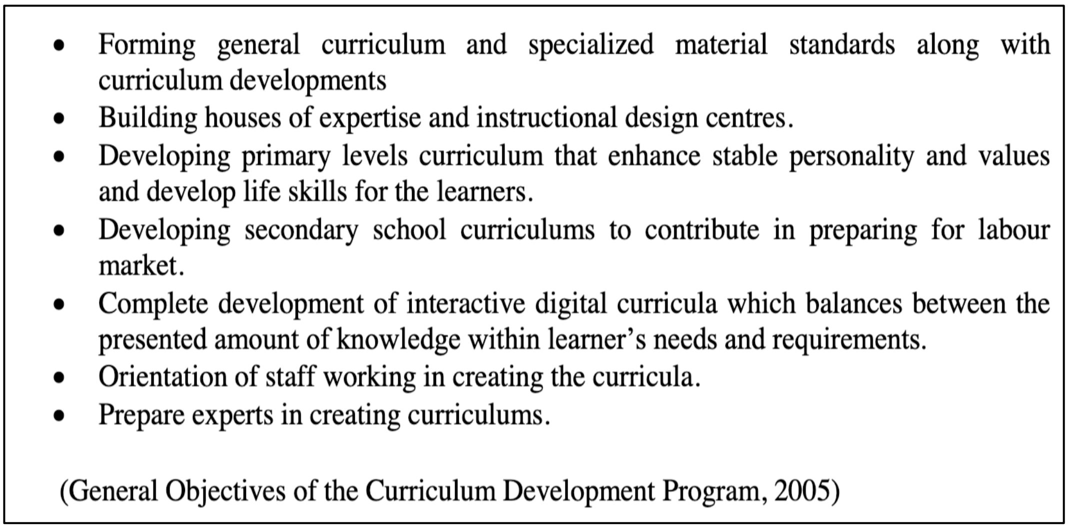
With greater accessibility to international institutions due to a variety of scholarship programmes, some students now had the opportunity to experience the British or American curricula for teaching core disciplines, such as English, humanities, sciences, or mathematics. For the first time, Saudi students were given an opportunity to complete their degrees entirely in English, thus opening them up to more global career opportunities than were previously possible with a degree from a Saudi institution (MOE, 2010).

However, these opportunities for access to international institutions remain limited for the majority of the population as a result of a variety of logistical and economic reasons, and despite the increasing provision of scholarship funding. For state institutions, the curriculum remains taught in Arabic, and students tend to leave with limited proficiency in English, or knowledge about Western teaching practices (Habbash, 2011). Bridging the gap between state and international institutions, private institutions in Saudi Arabia maintain more autonomy than public institutions, which means that teachers can exercise a greater degree of freedom in designing their curricula (Habbash, 2011).

Increasingly, partnerships with foreign institutions can help to change the standards to which the curricula are taught in both public and private institutions in Saudi Arabia. It further has a knock-on, ‘snowball’ impact, as Saudi students who complete their studies abroad are likely to go on to become teachers in their home country (Habbash, 2011). Thus, students who were exposed to international teaching standards or international teaching training are more likely to start implementing these practices within the Saudi education system as they progress to teach in it.

2.1.1.6 Imperatives of 21st-century learning and educational policy shifts in Saudi Arabia

This naturally evolving condition of increased focus on English as a language and ‘Westernised teaching practices’ as an educational mechanism, resulting from pervasive extra-cultural influences and market forces that have encouraged a rise in the influence of International and Private higher education institutions has resulted in the creation of more direct influences, in the form of policy directives issued by the MOE. In the context of KSA, policy documents produced by the MOE serve as a useful index for understanding how the aims and objectives of language education have shifted in accordance with the imperatives of globalisation and a growing emphasis on modernisation. In their analysis of MOE policy documents pertaining to language education, Elyas and Badawood (2016) show how earlier policies (MOE Policy of English, 2002) position English as being ‘directly linked to “the faith of Islam” (الدين الإسلامي)’, also implying the ‘subjugation of the subject English to the demands of the state and religion’. However, in the wake of the 9/11 incident and the growing calls for curricular reform (ICRD, 2012), KSA instituted the King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Project for Developing Public Education, which saw the development of 50 ‘Tatweer’ schools; the name for a multi-phase project which would introduce ‘smart’ education based around several core principles and the continued integration of educational technology. The Tatweer project aspired to ‘take education to new horizons to cope with transformations around the world’ (Elyas & Badawood, 2016, p.76). Subsequently, the MOE’s Ten-Year Plan spanning 2004-2014 (Fig.1) reflected a shift from the dominance of the Islamic perspective to a call for ‘legitimacy and national balanced vision’ with equal attention to Islamic as well as ‘global identities’, alongside an emphasis on the ‘digital curriculum’, ‘self-learning’ and ‘problem-solving skills’ for work in the global economy (Elyas & Badawood, 2016, p.75).



- Forming general curriculum and specialized material standards along with curriculum developments
- Building houses of expertise and instructional design centres.
- Developing primary levels curriculum that enhance stable personality and values and develop life skills for the learners.
- Developing secondary school curriculums to contribute in preparing for labour market.
- Complete development of interactive digital curricula which balances between the presented amount of knowledge within learner's needs and requirements.
- Orientation of staff working in creating the curricula.
- Prepare experts in creating curriculums.

(General Objectives of the Curriculum Development Program, 2005)

Figure 1: MOE Ten-Year Plan (Source Elyas & Badawood, 2016)

2.1.1.7 Twenty-first-century learning, curricular reform and PD challenges faced by Saudi EFL teachers

Highlighting that 'the 21st century demands the explicit integration of learning strategies, digital competencies and career abilities', Fandiño-Parra (2013, p.190) observes that these imperatives have created expectations for educational institutions and more specifically EFL classrooms to foster practices and processes that promote learner 'creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, self-direction, and cross-cultural skills'. The provenance of these skills can be traced back to the framework presented by Partnership for 21st Century Skills which calls for designing education around challenging content of relevance to the real world and promoting the development of life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, and information, media, and technology skills' (Fandiño-Parra, 2013, p.194). In the globalised knowledge economy, such skills are of key importance as they allow individuals to access, integrate and communicate information, undertake problem-solving by working together and build up new knowledge by using different technologies innovatively (Fandiño-Parra, 2013, p.193). As a caveat, it is worth noting here that the focus being put on these skills has drawn criticism in recent years. For instance, while the skill-based discourse is accepted to be effective as a practical interpretation of broader functions of education, it is perceived to reflect the 'neoliberal commodification of learners' (Howard, 2018) and viewed by critics as marginalising knowledge and preventing learners from gaining 'the liberal education they need' (A Challenge to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, in Cavanagh, 2009).

2.1.1.8 Examining the PD and teaching context of the specific research school: Kingdom University

The previous subsections have addressed the country-wide context of educational practice – examining both the intangible geopolitical, cultural and economic forces which have influenced change, and the direct, overt policy frameworks which have further promoted change – both in terms of the teaching of English as a language, and the use of Western-centric models of educational development. This section will examine on a micro-level the influence of these elements thus far on the specific research setting being used within this as the base for empirical investigation: Kingdom University.

Under the impetus of the call for curricular reform in KSA and the need for 21st-century skills, the KSA MOE educational policies have translated into curriculum revision, the adoption of new textbooks and materials and teacher retraining at an individual institutional level. This study maintains at its core on focus on the practices of a leading university in KSA (the aforementioned Kingdom University) which caters to women learners, and as such, in line with the imperatives and policies discussed above, has adopted the National Geographic Learning (NGL) *Life* textbook series for use in the Foundation year programme – designed to develop the learners' EFL skills for academic study. The publisher description of the textbook on the Blackwell website highlights that NGL's *Life* - an integrated-skills resource aimed at developing fluency in English – 'brings the world to [the] classroom' by exploring 'real world content' that will 'strengthen [learners'] existing global connections while learning the English skills needed for communication in the 21st century' (National Geographic Learning, 2022). Informed decision-making and critical thinking in technology-infused environments are built-in aims of teaching EFL through the *Life* series.

2.2.2 Culture and its impact on Gender Dimensions in Saudi Arabia

The above sections have examined both geopolitical influences and direct policy development within Saudi Arabia, and identified particularly the influence of this on the teaching of English and the implementation of more 'progressive' standards of education delivery, particularly through the use of PD. However, an issue that has also been touched upon throughout the above-mentioned examination is the way these components have introduced (or attempted to introduce) 'liberal' values more generally into the country as a whole and the educational system specifically. Of these, the concept of gender equality and the empowerment of women is perhaps most pertinent. This is an area that requires its own focus of investigation, particularly as it ties directly into the research goals of this study.

Gender refers to the behavioural, physiological and/or psychological traits which are associated with a gender (Light & Kirk 2000, p. 163). Gender-coded relations refer to relations that society expects different people to have with one another due to sex (Light & Kirk 2000, p. 163). In some settings such as Scandinavia expectations may be more subtle (Lund, 2013, p. 907). In my proposed setting of Saudi Arabia, the extent the relations are gender-coded is extreme. Investigations have been conducted on the ways gender-coded patterns proliferate in school settings (Paechter, 2006). Previously, cultural norms and religious motivations prevented women from pursuing higher education. The succeeding sections explore these elements chronologically.

2.2.2.1 Women in Saudi Arabia: the beginning

Women have been, throughout the ages and on an almost universal level, viewed on unequal platforms within male-dominated patriarchal societies the pre-Islamic era was no different: women in the Arabian Peninsula were perceived as property to be bargained for marriage and divorced at will. With no choice in their marriage, they also had no say in their husbands' polygynous practices (AlMunajjed, 1997). Moreover, dowry money was received by the male relatives of women.

Despite how things are generally perceived in mainstream modern discourse, far from promulgating or even exacerbating the subjugation of women, early Islam actually rectified many of such practices to varying extents by ordaining the protection of women's financial rights; by allowing them to own property and to keep possession of the dowry money from their marriages, granting them exclusive control over their money and property, by limiting the number of wives in polygamous marriages to four, and granting a right to choose their marriage partners (Oxford Islamic Studies Online, n.d.). Islam's influence in social exchanges improved the plight of women at the time of its promulgation. Historical texts outline that before Islam, women lived in a state of "degradation" and "subjugation" (AlMunajjed, 1997). The Holy Quran gave women after the advent of Islam new social opportunities, such as joining in prayers with their male counterparts and participating in Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca. The Holy Quran also provided personal, economic and civil rights that were previously absent (Baki, 2004). The Prophet Muhammad often consulted women for counsel as did his followers, when it came to choosing his successor, for instance. Women were also appointed as officials to oversee markets during the caliphate of Umar bin al-Khattab (AlMunajjed, 1997).

2.2.2.2 Late and limited access to education for women: Marginalisation

Wahabism emphasised a house-bound role for women. Being a nurturing mother and diligent housewife were the so-called targets. In such a context, the education of women was heavily restricted (Baki, 2004). Women were denied access to an education, which in turn perpetuated social views and expectations. These were significant as it imprinted the vision that women should not have the same opportunities as men. While the formal schooling of women has occurred in most parts of the world for at least 150 years, it was only in the 1950s, that there was any serious consideration for starting schools for girls in Saudi Arabia (Baki, 2004).

The persons pushing for education for women were young educated middle-class men who did not believe in the decades of educational marginalisation that women faced. They maintained that educated wives would better supplement familial harmony. An onslaught of women into schools was observed thereafter, although pedagogic curriculum styling had been less extensive for women than for men. Women were also not initially allowed to become architects or engineers, and major treads into women's education were made after amendments by King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, who was more liberal pertaining to women's education than his predecessors, apart from judicial fairness, freedom of expression and religious tolerance. He implied women's invaluable contribution to economic and social development, allowing them entry into all the industrial fields that are occupied by males. He put a lax on rigid segregation, giving people the right to suggest judicial reforms to ensure better justice and transparency and to criticise the government (Alsuwaida, 2016, p.112-113). These advancements meant that the social views and expectations of women slowly began to shift in Saudi Arabia, long before real societal change took place.

As a result of these advancements, rapid development of schools ensued, and the number of women graduates has rapidly caught up with and surpassed the number of male graduates (Baki, 2004). Added support from men meant that women started to protest and demand their rights to education as that of men. Decade by decade, there has been a dramatic change in the proportion of women graduating from university or college. For instance, while in 1970, there were 13 women university graduates as opposed to 795 male graduates, by 1999 the number of women graduates had overtaken the number of male graduates (21,721 to 21,229 respectively) (Baki, 2004). Despite this, the patriarchal views in society continued to linger on for many decades to come, and many are still prevalent today (Baki, 2004). In what is known as the Women's Golden Era, King Abdullah established various educational institutions and scholarship programmes, such as the King Abdullah Sponsorship Programme (KASP), launched in 2005 to send the youth abroad for international studies. There have been established in 76 cities, a total of 494 colleges, 24 public universities and 8 private ones under his 10-year reign (Alsuwaida, 2016, p.113). However, despite these changes, Wahabism continued to impact women's education adversely. Transportation remained an issue; women still needed permission from a male guardian to travel freely to the physical locations of education providers.

2.2.2.3 Continuing challenges in women's rights and education in the 21st century

The above sections set out the historical context which influenced – and indeed remains an influence upon – the role of women in Saudi Arabia. But the modern context (from circa the year 2000 to 2015) – has seen some significant developments in terms of the rights and roles of women. One of the most significant influential factors for this was the introduction of the internet, which – despite late adoption (in 1999) as a result of various social repressions – acted to reduce the isolationism which had been a key aspect of Saudi culture (Sait, 2007), and brought wider exposure to international norms, values and cultural practices.

Along with opening up Saudi Arabian awareness of the wider global community, the internet also had the opportunity to facilitate new ways of accessing education, though not always necessary to apparent benefit. While there are strong advocates of the use of the Internet to support women's access to education, there are also equally salient criticisms that the use of online learning alone further limits women to learning at home only, thus continuing gender segregation in the country (Al Lily, 2011). In a questionnaire by Alhareth et al. (2013), women made either direct or indirect reference to their hesitancy towards e-learning, citing social and religious reasons as a key issue.

Thus, the internet has not only given rise to contradictions within Saudi attitudes to women but also to more complex relationships with other cultures and education systems. Videoconferencing was used in the 1990s to deal with the belief of separation and the need to provide women access to academic subject experts - who were almost always male. At once a force towards allowing women access to education that they had previously been denied, it also worked to ‘apparently liberalise’, whilst maintaining repressive isolating practices for women (Nakshabandi, 1993). Moreover, the wider criticisms which were voiced tended to focus on the impact on *men* and the fact that women’s education came at the expense of the educational experience of men. One criticism was often that women participating in classes via videoconferencing led to a reduction in the quality of the educational experience for the in-person male students, as they experienced time loss due to the questions asked by the women students by phone, which was then relayed by the professor to the male students. There were also wider general fears that women, unsupervised and unwatched, were free to do as they pleased (Nakshabandi, 1993). These remained popular perceptions of women students held by a majority of male students and teachers, and highlight the fact that many apparently liberalising practices have the potential to actually reinforce subjugation (Young, 2017).

On the face of it, by 2000 many political and legal reforms had granted women equal (or closer-to-equal) footing, but as identified above, a ‘hangover’ of socio-cultural laws often undermined the weight these apparent reforms carried. Under Saudi Universities Law, the Civil Service Law, the Labour and the Worker Law, treat women equally to men with regard to education, career, and salary. However, social stereotypes, traditions and principles have functioned much to hinder women from achieving their full potential. High dropout rates due to early marriages bolstered by the belief by some men that their women should receive little education and belong in homes are one of many pressing issues. A further wasting of human resources is seen through weak revisions of the educational system; curricula for women (which are different from those for men) had not been revised for 20 years since and physical education remains unavailable for them (Al Munajjed, 2017, p.9-12). Another issue is that societal and professional expectations have kept women in formal education longer than men due to the ongoing challenges and restrictions (Elyas & Picard, 2010). The curriculum is heavily curtailed for women when compared to men although they receive the same degree – meaning a lack of access to an important range of knowledge, but at the same time, women are expected to deliver the same quantity of output and study time as men, despite having significantly more household responsibilities (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

The central issue remains that despite formal efforts to equalise education ‘on the face of it’, in reality, social attitudes – and particularly those held by men – mean it still maintains a much lesser value (Joseph, 2000; Baki, 2004). Joseph (2000) likens the educational situation to the situation in Saudi courts where a women’s testimony is considered as having half the probative value of a man’s testimony, even today. In addition to less prestige being bestowed on women's academic achievements, there are also claims that an easier marking regime exists for women, which means that women are marked less harshly than their male counterparts for the same quality of work. This may be another example of how quality in education is overlooked (Joseph, 2000).

There are also more systemic issues. The women's curriculum is more conservative. Even the wording of controversial topics such as Darwin’s theory of evolution tends to be more protected in the classroom for women to preserve their purity and innocence (Baki, 2004), with the effect of further cementing the patriarchy views held in Saudi society. Highly educated women have a limited range of options for contributing productively and previously had not been allowed to attain certain degrees. Dropout rates – linked to many of the factors presented above, particularly relating to household pressures, poor perception of women’s education and socio-cultural norms – remained high for women.

However, the issue of education undertaken in the Kingdom – particularly for women – has gained considerable momentum. What contributes to this is the fact that the public education system increasingly needs to compete internationally for student flow, resource mobilisation, education structure and teaching capacity, which means it needs to emulate a range of international practices, including opening up more doors for women to enter academic programmes, where previously they were denied (Al Munajjed, 2017, p.11). There is also the fact that English was initially not given much import, with the formal education in English starting from grade seven, but again, through global influence, this was increasingly recognised as an important component of education – for both men and women. However, even now, appropriate language proficiency has not been reached due to deficit resources, quality methodologies and instructors, like the system of teacher-centred learning and learning by rote when compared to student-centred education that focuses on developing skills (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013, p. 113-115)

2.2.2.4 Applying these literature findings to the specifics of the research study

As has been traced through the historical context outlined in the sections above, although formal education in Saudi Arabia took off with a late start, women were further delayed in that capacity due to the fear of competition from the education sector on the country's political system, which is based on religious fundamentalism of Wahhabism. Education is segregated, not only physically, but also through presentation of more degree opportunities for men than women (Alyami, 2016). Gender discrimination had faced Saudi women in their struggle for equality.

Gender strikes as an interesting issue in the proposed study due to reports of limitations of access to equitable PD for women teachers in Saudi Arabia. As outlined in more detail within the methodology, the study involves four women professors at the Kingdom University in Saudi Arabia and the goal of the study is to provide women teachers with the opportunity to voice their opinions about PD. In addition, the study seeks to develop a historicised understanding of how history and culture influence the dynamics of the Saudi women EFL teachers' work as well as their PD in the higher education setting. This is undertaken through the implementation of a LS initiative that is then explored through a CHAT analytic lens - both of which are explored in more detail in further sections of this literature review.

2.3 Conclusion

In bringing this chapter to a close, it is important to point out that women in KSA continue to face constant changes in their social and cultural realities. For instance, the recent appointment of Princess Reema Bint Bandar as the first Saudi woman to take on the position of an ambassadorial representative of KSA to the US is in many ways a landmark shift, signalling as it does the opening up of avenues for Saudi women's growth in times to come. This adds to the impetus for Saudi educational systems and practitioners to change, develop and gain empowerment in tune with the progressive changes transpiring in the wider Saudi society. The next chapter will present details of LS, as it involves a collaborative process of lesson planning in which teachers collectively identify a learning issue, devise innovative strategies to address this issue, and then trial their ideas in 'research lessons' (Fernandez, Cannon & Chockshi, 2003).

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section turns to an examination of the professional development tool that is implemented as an ‘activity’ around which a CHAT analysis of PD practice can be structured, namely LS. It outlines the concepts and elements of LS before moving on to dissect the theoretical benefits and drawbacks of the practice as a PD tool and to examine the empirical studies supporting these ideas. It also traces the application of LS across the world, identifying the extent to which and efficacy with which it has transferred into other cultural practices from its original Japanese roots.

The literature review turns to an examination of CHAT as a theoretical lens for the analysis of the PD experiences gained by participants as a result of the LS activity. It examines the relevance of CHAT in the context of effective educational PD at large, the core tenets of the theory and their evolution over time, and then the applicability of the CHAT model to the context of the study specifically. It addresses the theoretical strengths and weaknesses of the model, before reviewing studies in which CHAT has been deployed as an analytical lens in the extant literature.

Finally, the study addresses the combination of CHAT and LS together, identifying the precedent for this combination whereby LS serves as the ‘activity’ that CHAT exploratory investigation is conducted around. Herein, both serve as a mechanism of active participatory engagement, rather than as a passive outcome-oriented ‘intervention’ undertaken only for the benefit of researcher understanding.

The foundational tenets of both CHAT and LS are also analysed with reference to their implications for researcher practice, in relation to reflexivity, critical analysis and ethical engagement.

3.1 Literature review strategy: Search, inclusion and exclusion criteria

The nature of this literature review is supportive of the main empirical study, rather than a systematic review in itself. As such, the search method and inclusion/exclusion criteria were used only to guide the literature identification/selection process and ensure it was as robust and extensive as possible, they were not however used as strict criteria to facilitate replicability. Exceptions were made based on the researcher's judgement where appropriate.

A range of search terms was developed in line with both the research aims and the identified needs of each section chapter, Educational Policy and Culture in Saudi Arabia, LS and CHAT. An initial search was undertaken using the broadest terms, and the first twenty results were reviewed to identify refinement search terms which would facilitate more accurate and relevant outputs from a second-pass search.

The refined list of search terms was used in three academic databases, along with Google and Google Scholar, using Boolean operators to combine them. Limits of the first 50 hits in each database were set, and the abstracts were assessed for relevance. Papers were colour coded according to their area of focus.

A range of inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to the search for empirical studies reviewed for the literature review, but these were not applied to texts which covered theoretical discussion of the subject matter or which were chapter specific (such as those examining Saudi educational policy). Exceptions were also made where pertinent; thus, as is seen in section 2.3.6, only one paper has ever examined LS in the Saudi Arabian context, and this used an all-male sample set, but was nonetheless marked for inclusion because of its cultural relevance (and potentially useful positional insight and findings).

The inclusion criteria for empirical studies was thus:

- Must contain LS
- Any study including LS as a PD tool
- Must contain concepts PD
- Any study including cultural perception and challenges toward education
- Any study including education policy, strategy, new Vision 2030

Studies were also refined and prioritised if they:

- Contained EFL -Teaching English as a foreign language
- Contained reference to women’s education/women-only teaching settings
- Maintained Higher education as the intervention setting
- Were conducted in Saudi Arabia or other Gulf States.

Studies were excluded if:

- They pertained to male-only environments (see exceptions)
- Related to student-based outcomes achieved as a result of LS
- Maintained a focus on students or on dialogic learning
- Not in the English language
- Were conducted before 2005

Additionally, the reference lists for the top twenty papers from each search were cross-referenced. Where a particular author or paper received multiple citations, these were prioritised for examination. Though this practice has the potential to entrench dominant thoughts and modes of thinking in the field, it is judged to be important so long as an equally critical attitude is taken to assessment of the paper, with no assumption of authority, and that texts expressing dissenting or minority views were given equal weighting when assessed.

3.2 LS

The purpose of this study is to investigate the participants' responses to using LS as an alternative PD approach. How the cultural context of PD in Saudi Arabia affected, and whether LS could be used. Using a CHAT lens to understand particularly how their own cultural and historical contexts inform their reaction to the experience – particularly in relation to their experience of gender.

It is, therefore, crucial to understand the PD method being used – LS – in more detail, and the succeeding sections of the literature review will thus outline its key tenants and critically analyse its value as an educational PD tool.

3.2.1 What is LS?

LS is a process that is aimed at improving teaching, founded on a Japanese practice that was developed to facilitate PD among educators on an elementary education level (Fernandez, 2002). Teachers work in small groups and collaborate with each other in order to discuss the learning goals that should be met and test the effectiveness of the selected teaching approach, in a process called ‘team-teaching’ (Lewis, 1995). This process differs slightly from co-planning, which is a process that involves collaborative planning and combining instructional content. Instead, team-teaching focuses more on a long-term collaboration between teachers designed to improve the students' learning experience (Fernandez, 2002). Previously, this approach has been largely utilised in the Japanese education system due to its effectiveness in enhancing the ability of teachers to examine, and learn from daily experiences and modify their teaching approaches to achieve better outcomes, but it has increasingly seen more widespread adoption in other countries, such as the United States, who are already beginning to adopt this framework in their education systems, increasingly by involving specialist external advisers the design of instructional programmes for schools (Fernandez 2002).

In his handbook on lesson study, Peter Dudley (2014, p.19) highlights the important role of expert advisers, consultants or teachers who can support the LS process in a variety of ways. These include demonstrating pedagogical techniques to other practitioners prior to the commencement of the LS cycle, participating in the LS group and providing suggestions and ideas on instructional techniques as the group members plan and research their selected lesson and taking on the role of observer to participate in post-lesson student interviews. In line with this, within the present study, I took on the dual role of researcher/expert in guiding the participating teachers in the LS process and cycles.

In recent years, LS has emerged as a popular form of PD for teachers, re-establishing the classroom as a site for professional research, creating a collaborative space in which teachers can explore pedagogical approaches, and promoting critical, reflexive pedagogy. The term LS is derived from two Japanese words – 'Jugyo' and 'Kenkyu', meaning 'lesson' and 'study' respectively (Fernandez, 2002). It is important to note though that the term 'LS' does not indicate the passive study of lessons through observation, as might be implied by the name. As Shimizu (in Earp, 2016) asserts in an interview:

> I have photos of one teacher, teaching 30 students, and they're just surrounded by hundreds of teachers. Some of them cannot even see the

> lesson itself, they're just listening to the voice of the teacher and the students to learn something
> (Earp, 2016, p. 1).

Shimizu outlines this example to stress what LS *is not.* Instead, LS involves a collaborative process of lesson *planning* and *trialling.* Whilst the trialling aspect will involve passive observation without contribution from those watching, the process as a whole involves continuous active engagement on the part of all participants.

This approach to ongoing teacher education and PD has become part of standard practice in Japan and is used to produce professional knowledge that may be shared beyond individual institutions, to the wider professional community. The success of these approaches has stimulated research into LS outside Japan in recent years, as a means to contribute to teachers' PD. The culturally and situationally adaptable nature of LS – which is not prescriptive but instead a mechanism to elicit the knowledge of teachers themselves – makes it a highly transferable method in its own right, but also a mechanism that can help to transfer education-specific knowledge across cultures. However, limitations on this transferability do exist, and this in part is what this study hopes to investigate in more detail, both empirically, and in section 3.2.5 the application of LS globally to date.

While Shimizu's recounting of LS shows its large-scale and popularity in Japan, the approach can be used with smaller groups (Earp, 2016, p. 1). In smaller groups, the approach involves a systematic inquiry into an identified learning issue whereby teachers come together and develop a lesson plan that is later observed by the participating teachers and improved to ensure expected outcomes are realised. The approach allows each participating teacher to contribute with their own experience towards what they found helped or hindered the achievement of learning goals. It also allows the teachers to consider and reflect on the lesson in order to improve it and provides a setting in which the different experiences of each participant can be accessed collaboratively in order to support one another and increase the effectiveness of the lesson plan.

LS represents an alternative approach to PD, by recasting the teacher as an active investigator rather than the object of PD activity. This marks an important distinction, as it provides a space in which teachers do not feel evaluated, but rather are able to critically approach their own pedagogy without judgement, and in this sense addresses one of the key barriers to effective mentoring – fear of judgement – which (Hobson and Malderez, 2013) identify as prohibitive to PD success.

This element has a significant bearing on why LS specifically was selected as the PD method which respondents to the study would utilise. The ‘gender’ section of this literature review (2.2.2) identified particularly that cultural attitudes within the teaching profession in Saudi Arabia that have been shown to stifle critical and reflective approaches to pedagogy, as teachers are afraid to show ‘weaknesses’ in front of their managers and peers (Abu Alsuood, 2018) – and cultural attitudes towards the role of women makes this particularly true for women teachers, particularly if they are operating in mixed-sex environments. The use of a PD tool which works in direct opposition to this – actively challenging this discomfort and if they can openly voiced and shared critical reflection – provides great scope for understanding in greater depth (through CHAT analysis) how existing cultural and historical norms maintain bearing on how PD is approached in Saudi Arabia. It allows particularly for examination of whether *challenging* these norms (i.e. through LS) - in order to promote collaborative and reflective ’community of practice’ approaches – is of benefit, or whether the process of ‘fighting against’ cultural norms in order to impose ‘Western-centric’ ideas of good practice is actually ultimately counterproductive.

3.2.2 The individual steps in LS

With the key principles, goals and ideological tenants of LS outlined, it is possible to examine in greater detail the logistical elements of the method, and the way in which they contribute to LS’s wider objectives.

The first step in successful LS implementation is defining the problem within the current educational setting (Stigler, & Hiebert, 1999). In the preparation of a traditional lesson, undertaken independently without LS, the first step is to identify the goal and purpose of the study plan in relation to educating students ‘effectively’ and ‘efficiently’ (Fernandez, 2002). In LS, a more critical approach is encouraged – asking teachers to examine exactly what is meant by the concept of ‘effectiveness’ and ‘efficiency’. Often, upon deeper analysis, teachers will realise that the goal of their lesson is also to enhance the ability of students to obtain taught skills, as well as concepts and specific knowledge. This can include effective research skills, structuring answers, identifying key issues in questions and the general ability to understand the intended purpose of any literature.

Planning a series of lessons to meet an overall learning objective is the second step (Stigler, & Hiebert, 1999). The resultant lesson plan is comprehensive and is focused on ensuring that the identified learning issue is effectively addressed (Fernandez, 2002). Teachers work together to address how the learning objectives might be best met and identify on a pre-emptive basis any ‘weaknesses’ (or simply misapplied or inappropriate-in-the-context elements) in the plan. Discussion, negotiation and the sharing of experience and knowledge are key elements in this stage – serving to provide not criticism, but rather constructive critique. This step is extensive because it relates not only to the development of the taught lesson (or lessons), but also relates to the development of the LS process as a whole; including how the lesson will be evaluated, how modifications will be established and integrated, and what will define an ‘optimal outcome’ to be reached at the end of the process.

Teaching the lesson is the third step (Stigler, & Hiebert, 1999). This third step is that once the lesson plan has been created, one teacher from the group teaches the lesson to their students and the other members of the group observe and take notes (Fernandez, 2002).

Evaluating the lesson is the fourth step (Stigler, & Hiebert, 1999). The teachers then reconvene in order to share the observations they made and express their reactions. As with the second stage, the focus is not on criticism, but on offering critique to develop understanding, sharing experience and knowledge, and engaging in collaborative exploration.

The fifth step is revising the lesson (Stigler, & Hiebert, 1999). If the feedback is positive, then few (if any) modifications are made to the original lesson plan. These modifications would be in the form of constructive criticism that assists in identifying the underlying issue and provides constructive advice that allows the lesson to be revised in accordance with the suggestions.

The sixth step is teaching the revised lesson (Stigler, & Hiebert, 1999). If the feedback is negative, the lesson plan is revised and another teacher is tasked with teaching their students while the original teacher and the members of the group observe and assess its effectiveness in addressing the learning issue. The original teacher also uses this opportunity to review their own performance in teaching the material. Further revisions are required so that the lessons are improved gradually as each improved version may highlight other weaknesses that need to be addressed. By revising the lesson plan multiple times, the content becomes tailored to the students and is easily digested and understood by them due to all of the issues being identified and resolved proficiently (Fernandez, 2002).

There are identified methodological and logistical issues which become apparent at this stage. From a methodological perspective, the fact that the lesson is delivered repeatedly to the same students necessarily impacts the way it is received each time (Murata, 2011). In particular, repetition may either artificially increase apparent understanding from the students (since they can grasp re-taught concepts more quickly than an untaught cohort), but at the same time, it may increase boredom and disengagement. Conversely though, if LS used new cohort student groups for each iterative implementation of the revised study, the highly contextual and specific observations made from one student group may not transpose with any relevance to a new group. This reduces the extent to which teachers would thus be encouraged – through LS – to learn to be responsively engaged with their specific class, setting and teaching context (Murphy,2017), though a converse interpretation is that it would increase the extent to which teaching groups would be able to develop more universalisable understandings that could be disseminated to the wider teaching profession (see below, stage eight) that could be devolved from context and rendered applicable in wider settings.

The final stages are the seventh step, reflecting on the revised lesson. It is an iterative process so teachers can return to the first or third steps. However, it is important regardless of the outcome for the teachers to ask themselves “what was learned” in a wider pedagogical sense, rather than treating it as a method to perfect the delivery of a specific lesson.

This leads to the eighth step: sharing the results. The eighth step may involve writing a report, submitting an academic article for a journal, presenting at a conference, or inviting other teachers to observe the lesson and so on (Stigler, & Hiebert, 1999). Regardless of the approach taken, adherence to this step is as core to the practice of LS’s objectives as any of those that have proceeded, because the method not only seeks to act as a tool to improve the performance of individuals in a group, but to allow that to iteratively contribute to the progress of the educational field as a whole. However, Whitney (2019) identifies that this is the step that is most likely to be overlooked. The author cites particularly the extensive workload that teachers face, and the already more resource-intensive nature of LS as it is. He also identifies though that culture impacts the likelihood of a cohort completing the final steps. He identifies that in certain cultures (such as Japan) the sense of collective membership within the profession, concepts of shared responsibility in each other’s development and welfare, and commitment to education ‘as a whole’ rather than the education ‘of one’s students specifically’ all contribute to a greater likelihood of disseminating LS findings.

3.2.3 The theoretical benefits of LS

The time pressures felt by teachers represent – on both an anecdotal and empirical level – an almost universal constant (OECD, 2022). With already burdensome pressures on their time and the complexity of scheduling, teachers resultantly have little time to learn from other members who work in their profession. Consequently, how they develop their knowledge through the experiences that they have individually in their classroom activities (Chokshi and Fernandez, 2005). LS is an approach that enables teachers to reap these experiences while they share and discuss common concerns as well as improve their existing knowledge. At the same time, students benefit from this approach as they learn better by practicing their skills and being tested through regular classroom activities that stimulate their knowledge (Fernandez, 2002). An LS gives the participating teachers a platform to build on the knowledge base they need as it requires the teachers to move beyond their tendency to isolate themselves and encourages collaborative effort towards developing improvements in teaching that impact both teachers and their students positively (Chokshi and Fernandez, 2005). LS can help time spent in class to be strategically invested whereby activities are planned in advance in a manner that saves time. It allows teachers to plan what will be taught through constant evaluation and observation of other teachers. LS can help teachers to recognise that students require different teaching strategies to ensure that they are engaged throughout the lesson and that their attention is maintained till the end of the lesson (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999).

The fundamental factor is that through an LS, the teachers create, test as well as share new ideas that reflect the significance of their role as professionals in the academic field (Chokshi and Fernandez, 2005). The value of a LS is that the ideas that are generated and shared are founded in a concrete context that addresses a specific learning issue in the classroom. PD is also developed because the process allows constructive criticism as well as revision to make improvements to the created lesson plan. The process also conforms to a formal process that is founded on professional principles in education which sometimes includes the publication of reports that document the findings of the LS hence enhancing access to the content by other teachers who will be able to integrate important concepts from the LS in their daily experiences (Chokshi and Fernandez 2005, p. 675).

3.2.4 The theoretical and empirical consideration of LS

A number of the sections above have already alluded to some of the issues inherent in the theoretical concept of LS. In particular, the fact that the method is deployed using the same lesson plan in the same class repeatedly has implications for how truly the efficacy of the lesson can be assessed, since students are gaining artificial familiarity with the taught content in a way that would not occur if they were being presented the lesson for the first time. Similarly, though, subbing in new classes for each iterative ‘improvement’ lessens the extent to which the adaptations made to the lesson by the LS group build upon the actual observations of each class and the individual experiences and dynamic of the students within that specific group (Dotger, 2017).

Criticisms are also levelled at the concept of LS on the basis that it has the potential to entrench mistaken or unsuitable practices by virtue of the fact that a group with common backgrounds may reinforce and perpetuate behaviours or ideas in each as a result of shared biases, knowledge gaps and experiences. Coe (2014) states that it risks becoming a situation of ‘the blind leading the blind’.

Cultural issues (discussed in more detail below as a potential reason for differing adoption rates across countries) also limit the extent to which LS might meet its intended goals– or, more accurately, work as a tool that is effective in helping teachers to meet their own self-defined goals (Skott and Moller, 2020). Further, the extent to which the values embedded in LS (i.e. those of collaboration, openness and critical engagement) are congruent with the culture of the place it is being adopted in raises questions of whether these represent ‘ideals’ that teachers should subvert their own cultural tendencies towards, or whether to do so would constitute a form of cultural colonialism that fails to recognise cultural relativity and the validity of ‘other’ ways of doing things (Chalmers, 2019).

Some studies yield empirical data which supports arguments that LS is not an exclusively positive method of PD in education. On a logistical level, Ogegbo et al. (2019) suggest that even if the underpinning ideology of LS is sound, it might be a methodology that is simply impractical for most to implement, with ‘challenges such as lack of time, lack of institutional support and insufficient instructional materials pose a threat to teachers' participation in LS’.

Even where studies support rather than critique the application of LS, Elliot (2016) notes that it is also important to be cognizant of the methodological issues present in studies that seek to evaluate its efficacy – these may include the common bias issues associated with qualitative research, a tendency towards constructivist rather than positivist research approaches, and generally small cohorts in the studies undertaken.

3.2.5 The Application of LS globally to date, and the state of research in the area

Duez (2018) identifies that although LS has been – in an evolving form – practiced in Japan for over a century, it only has only received wider global attention since 1999, with the publication by Stigler and Hiebert (1999) (cited throughout this work) which brought the concept into mainstream consciousness. Groves and Doig (2014) identified that in a period between 2000 and 2006, adoption of the tool was swift, with applications identified in Indonesia, United States, England, the Philippines, Australia, Sweden, and many African Nations.

The domination of English-speaking nations as appliers might be due to a range of factors. Firstly, it may be a linguistic issue – with the majority of literature on the subject published in English (Hervas, 2021), this makes both awareness of the concept and access to resources much easier for those from English-speaking nations.

However, cultural values and behaviours may also have a significant bearing. Alexander (2010) identifies in countries such as the UK and the US, dialogic teaching has a more established base within the schooling system (DOE, 2010), where children are empowered by the teacher to discuss a topic while thinking critically about it. This indicates a greater comfort culturally with concepts of discussion, debate, dialogue and critical engagement, which might in part be a result of the United Kingdom and the United States representing countries that maintain relatively low power distance, and hierarchical relationships, and operate in contexts where there is an expectation of being treated with equal respect and value regardless of formal status (Hofstede,1984), and where challenging ‘authority’ (i.e., thinking critically) is coded as acceptable from a young age. This can make people from these countries more comfortable with engaging in activities that involve questioning ideas and norms, sharing feedback and ‘critic’ (though note, practiced correctly LS should not involve criticism).

However, a converse interpretation is that the UK and the US also prioritise individualism and personal achievements as opposed to collaborative achievements, while Japanese culture focuses more on collaboration (Fernandez, 2002). This can result in a lesser perception of value when it comes to collaboratively oriented tools for PD (Duncombe and Armour, 2004).

Hadfield and Jopling (2016) find that a multitude of nuanced religious, traditional and social norms may affect the teaching process and as such, when an approach is introduced to a country's educational system, it may be altered in a way that ensures that it is acceptable and parallel with the traditions found there (Fernandez, 2002) – with the potential of fundamentally altering the nature of the practice in a way that may cause it to be a concept of 'LS' in name only (see also in the section 3.3.2, where factors regarding adherence to the 'dissemination' step are considered). Stirman et al. (2013) identify that such alterations – or 'modifications' – may be deliberate or unplanned and reactive and that they may sometimes serve to improve the outcomes of an intervention or evidence-based practice, and sometimes undermine it, with a number of factors influencing the impact of the modification on outcomes, including the extent of changes made, the coherence with/fidelity to the underlying values and ideologies. Reasons for changes on a deliberate level can include ease, desire to reduce resistance/achieve effective change management and availability of resources, but when occurring unconsciously, are likely to be a product of unconscious cultural bias, programming and habit, a psychological tendency towards the path of least resistance, and a lack of alternative knowledge reference (Purwanti and Hatmanto, 2019).

These factors will be discussed in the section below in relation to the Saudi Arabian context, and how they could potentially affect the implementation of LS in Saudi Arabia. However, in considering the application of LS to date, it is important to not only examine the instances of application in a practical setting, but also the extent to which it has received academic attention. Indeed, an examination of 'application to date' in terms of academic investigation constitutes, in effect, an identification of the research gap that justifies the study here.

Whilst LS as an educational PD method might have seen increased uptake over recent years, academic study of its application and outcomes have been scanter. It is thus easier to assert the *extent* of its uptake far more easily than it is to pass a comment on the *efficacy* of its uptake. Takahashi and McDougal (2015) identify that there has been very little investigation of the effects of lesson study on a quantitative basis, and when considering the application of LS in Higher Education especially, Hervas (2021) identified only 21 studies globally that engaged with the matter on an empirical basis – setting aside grey and theoretical literature, doctoral theses and non-English language texts (though it should be noted, the search strategy used within this study yielded remarkably more, though the quality of publications varied dramatically). These covered the US (more than half), Turkey, Indonesian, England, Ireland and Spain, with the first identified study in 2011. All of these studies were qualitative in nature. Evidence of LS's application in Saudi Arabia is almost zero, though, the one study which does exist in a specifically Saudi Arabian context is in fact quantitative rather than qualitative, undertaken by Alamri (2020) and discussed in further detail in the section below.

3.2.6 Applications of LS in the Saudi Arabian context: potential and actual

The above sections have identified a range of factors pertaining to the concepts, values and ideologies that underpin LS, the resources it demands, and the way that various contextual factors – particularly cultural – might impact the efficacy with which LS is deployed, and the results it achieves for both teachers and their students. How then can these factors be mapped onto the Saudi context?

The Saudi Arabian educational context is characterised by an 'isolation' practice whereby teachers conduct their lessons individually without significant supervision from other individuals or professionals (Alzahrani 2016, p. 70). However, LS introduces a new practice where the teacher is exposed to a situation in which their practices will be observed and analysed by their peers. Fernandez (2002, p. 397) explains that based on the research conducted, the adoption of a LS by a group that is accustomed to an 'individual' teaching approach creates a challenge with regards to poor coordination. As such, Saudi teachers who are not used to coordinating with others, both in terms of logistics and intangible communication components, may find it difficult to adjust behaviours, expectations and habits accordingly.

Aside from the 'isolationist' tendency of Saudi educational practice, problems also arise in terms of culture, which has been identified throughout the literature review.

Whilst LS stresses that the collective observation, analysis and feedback given on a lesson is not an ‘evaluation’, ‘assessment’ or ‘critique’, the way in which comments are delivered and received is significantly moderated by cultural forces (Molinsky, 2013): a statement that may seem mildly challenging in one culture could constitute a comment of deep offence in another. Saudi culture, which has been identified in the sections above as being high in terms of formality, codified behaviours and structured, hierarchical professional relationships, and low in terms of openness and critical engagement can have a tendency towards interpreting ‘unorthodox’ behaviours and modes of expression – such as those which are encouraged in LS – as more critical than they are intended (Chokshi and Fernandez 2004, p. 521). The corollary of this is that Saudi teachers may also be more reticent to share their perspectives and opinions, regardless of how mildly phrased they are. This not only has an impact on how effectively LS ‘will be perceived’ by Saudi educators, but in the case of the study specifically, it carries the risk of participants developing resentment and even exhibiting resistance towards the project.

Even if there is no outright resistance to the adoption of LS and the wider research study in which they are participating, since the potential participant teachers are not accustomed to making their teaching public, they may be nervous and self-conscious. This change in emotions has the potential to negatively influence both the LS process itself, as well as the wider outcomes of the study (Chokshi and Fernandez 2004, p. 521). In particular, Chokshi and Fernandez (2004, p. 521) identify that when observations in a classroom do occur, these proceedings occur as a part of performance evaluation, where a component of judgement (and potential consequence) is inherent. This increases the potential for nervousness and fear, and resultantly thus also increases the likelihood that Saudi teachers will approach the process with more reserve, caution and guardedness. This contrasts with the Japanese education system – which, although it also maintains high cultural values of power distance (hierarchy) and formality – has a cultural more comfortable with giving feedback, though this is moderated through a range of ‘high context’ (i.e. indirect) communication norms (Wilbur et al. 2017). In yet other countries where LS is implemented, such as the UK and US, observing and giving feedback is not viewed as unusual and can be conducted with a relative level of openness (though all cultures are of course subject to their own communicative norms), simply due to the fact that collaboration and discussion with others is considered as a positive and routine aspect of development, with a more developed history of practice that has allowed for the cultural norms of feedbacking to pervade practices on a more tacit basis (Urquhart, 2018).

Whilst there is the potential that LS might be undermined *by* the presence of these cultural norms in the Saudi context, there is also the possibility that it could in turn exert forces that help to change those norms. The idea that LS can operate as an ‘empowerment strategy’ is referred to often in the literature (Smith, 2008) and the context of Saudi Arabia, this might be said to be particularly true, because it facilitates the ability for women to seek feedback from other women teachers as a way of reaching PD in a safe space where they can share knowledge and opinions without judgement or discrimination from others, and away from ‘oppressive’ gender norms which are bound within the culture of the country. However, it must be recognised that such an assertion brings with it counter arguments regarding cultural capital and the validity of imposing external cultural values rather than recognising the potential relativity of cultural practices instead (Chalmers, 2019). Arguably, much turns on whether LS is *imposed* in order to *demand* change, or *offered* to *facilitate* change. In the context of this study, it must be introduced as the latter so that the CHAT analysis imposed thereon can be undertaken without preconception or expectation.

As identified, only one investigation has been undertaken to explore the application of LS in the Saudi context specifically, by Alamri (2020). Purposive sampling was used by the author to identify 149 teachers teaching primary school mathematics in the Kingdom. They were administered a quantitative questionnaire aimed at eliciting an understanding of how common LS was as a practice was, and how effective and useful it was found to be. This was further augmented by 15 follow-up qualitative interviews. The findings indicated that a significant majority of teachers implemented a LS plan at least once a month. Teachers also indicated highly positive benefits for their own practice and PD, with all 15 ‘benefit statements’ scoring high agreement; including the idea that LS increased self-efficacy and self-esteem, enhanced subject and pedagogic knowledge, enhanced classroom management and understanding of student needs, and made teachers feel overall that they were more connected, more reflective and critical, and ‘better’ as teachers.

These findings support the hypothesis gained from the examination of LS literature and examination of the Saudi context; namely, that lesson study has the potential to empower teachers. It also refutes some of the potential drawbacks which were postulated through a synthesis of Saudi cultural elements and the potential incongruence they hold with LS ideology and values, indicating that Saudi culture need not be seen as an absolute barrier to the effective deployment of LS, and indicating that in a general sense, educational PD in the Kingdom has the potential to operate more fluidly than cultural and historical context would, *prima facie,* seem to suggest.

However, some caveats should be noted. All of the participants were male, teaching a single subject and teaching at a primary school level. This has the potential to significantly impact the context of the respondent's experiences, particularly in relation to gender, the complexity of the LS undertaking, and the time resources available to deploy it. Whilst the study, therefore, provides an interesting context to the one undertaken herein, in reality, it yet further legitimises the research undertaking and accentuates the presence of the research gap seeking to be filled.

3.3 CHAT (Cultural–Historical Activity Theory)

At this point it must again be stressed that the study being undertaken does not position LS as an implementation to be assessed for efficacy, instead, it is an implementation that provides a framework for participants to structure their PD, which then forms the base of *exploratory* investigation, seeking to identify the attitudes, experiences and feelings of participants in response to this. Those attitudes, experiences and feelings will, within this study, be analysed through a CHAT lens, which seeks to link how people feel with what people do - an 'activity'. The introduction of a novel activity – namely, LS, which has notably different core concepts at its heart to those which are traditional in the current Saudi education context – provides strong scope for respondents to reflect deeply on the cultural and historical values which have informed their practice historically, and how these might continue to (or not continue to) inform their practice in the future.

3.3.1: Justification for the use of CHAT: the need for situated professional learning

The discussion throughout has identified that in the Saudi context, there is generally a lack of collaborative practice and inconsistent PD deployment, and this is particularly concerning given that ‘teacher professional learning is of increasing interest as one way to support the increasingly complex skills students need to learn in preparation for further education and work in the 21st century’ (Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017, p.3). Indeed, in their report titled ‘Effective Teacher PD’, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) highlight the need for PD that is embedded into the job. They argue that ‘professional learning that has shown an impact on student achievement is focused on the content that teachers teach’ and that effective PD should be ‘situated in teachers’ classrooms with their students, as opposed to generic PD delivered externally or divorced from teachers’ school…contexts’ (Darling-Hammond et al, 2017, p.5).

In this study, the research setting - and thus also the PD being undertaken - is shaped by multiple actors and stakeholders, including the management, PD organisers and teachers whose decisions and actions are mediated by their respective histories and cultures, as well as the institutional culture. Thus the nature of the ‘problem’ (insofar as ‘problems’ might be self-perceived by actors) is situated and shaped by social, cultural and historical factors that need to be taken into account for the problem to be understood and addressed. In order to understand the interaction of various variables which have given rise to PD that does not meet the need of teachers and has negative consequences for the attainment of university goals focused on materialising the development of 21st-century learner competences, it is important to adopt an analytic lens that provides insights into how existing PD transpires with a view to implementing a situated PD approach that is specific to the teaching and learning contexts of the teachers.

The foregoing discussion suggests that the PD of the teachers at Kingdom University is shaped by macro-level actors and agencies which then percolate to the institution for onward provision and implementation. This warrants the use of a theoretical lens that not only enables human activity to be analysed through the ‘development of practice' (Karen, 2018) but also enables the participants to interrogate the 'structural determinations' of what shapes PD in their educational settings (Roth & Lee, 2007, p.49).

Given the top-down nature of PD provision, it may be argued that the most appropriate analytic lens for investigating the issue of potentially unsatisfactory or generic PD is critical theory. Aronowitz (2015, p.106) notes that 'the task of critical theory, according to Horkheimer, is to penetrate the world of things to show the underlying relations between persons' and to act as a 'liberating influence' that helps to create a 'world which satisfies the needs and powers' of individual (Horkheimer, 1972, p.246 in Bohman, 2005). Critical theory seeks to emancipate individuals, groups or societies subjugated by 'self-imposed or externally imposed influences' by enabling them to critique oppressive 'personal, situational and historical forces' and to 'use their own insights as well as well as the work of researchers to understand and, ultimately, change reality' (Peca, 2000, p.3).

In line with the goal of empowerment, which is integral to critical theory, this study is 'explanatory, practical, and normative', insofar as it seeks to try and understand the social reality of EFL teachers' at Kingdom University, with a particular focus on elements which they might perceive as being potentially restrictive or negative to their practices. It will further pinpoint them as the actors who have the capacity to transform their reality as required, as well as furnishing 'clear norms' (situated PD) and achievable goals (Bohman, 2005). While the study aligns with the principles of emancipation inherent to critical theory (CT), it is more precisely located in critical pedagogy which draws upon CT to connect the educational context to the wider social context within which Kingdom University is embedded (AliAkbari & Faraji, 2011, p.77). Hence, under the impetus of critical pedagogy, this study proposes to emancipate the participating teachers by enabling them not only to think but also to act critically to transform their 'life conditions' presently constrained by institutional as well as cultural forces (Ali Akbari & Faraji, 2011, p.77).

Thus, to bring this transformation about in the professional lives of EFL teachers at Kingdom University the proposed study adopts the CHAT as a suitable theoretical framework. According to Foot (2014), CHAT is an approach based on praxis and is defined specifically as:

> ‘A multi-dimensional, systemic approach that includes both psychological motives and all kinds of tools, as well as the always-present dynamics of power, money, culture, and history’ (Foot, 2014, p.329)

As CHAT examines ‘individuals in their constitutive relations with the collective’ and their culture (Roth & Yew, 2009, p.1), it is suitable as a theoretical framework for the proposed research because the EFL teachers are not only a ‘product of culture at a particular point of history, but also…active constituent[s] of this same culture’ (Roth & Yew, 2009, p.1).

Hence in the suggested study, the use of CHAT is valuable because it ‘allows for a rich analysis of human activity through the development of practice’ (Karen, 2018) while enabling the interrogation of the ‘structural determinations of current education practices’ (Roth & Lee, 2007, p.49). CHAT (Fig.2) is presented as a triad of components which must be taken into account simultaneously and which present a holistic heuristic for analysing human activity (Postholm, 2015).

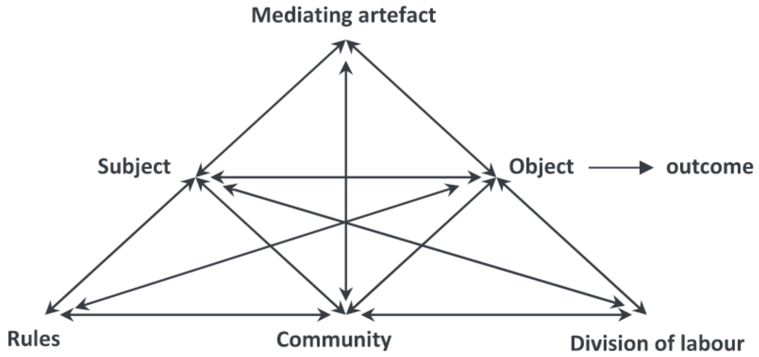


Figure 2: (Source: Postholm, M. B. (2015). Methodologies in Cultural–Historical Activity Theory: The example of school-based development. *Educational Research*, *57*(1), 43-58)

Within the framework of CHAT, an activity system is comprised of six key components with ‘cultural and historical dimensions’ which are used to model collaborative activity performed by actors who have a variety of ‘roles, positions, and perspectives’ (Foot, 2014, p.5). The system comprises not just ‘conscious actions’ but also ‘unconscious, routinised operation’ (Foot, 2014, p.5). Drawing upon Vygotsky (1978), Foot points out that CHAT is based on three main ideas, which pertain to how ‘humans act collectively, learn by doing, and communicate in and via their actions’. As such ‘humans make, employ, and adapt tools of all kinds to learn and communicate’, and operate within a ‘community [that] is central to the process of making and interpreting meaning’ (Foot, 2014, p.3). According to Foot (2014, p.3), the power of CHAT analysis is that it allows researchers to apprehend the ‘systemic whole of an activity’ rather than its discrete components alone, which allows them to analyse a ‘multitude of relations within an activity system’ at a single point in time and as it develops over a period of time.

In a CHAT activity system, the first three components are made up of the ‘subject (or actor), an object (a focal entity and/or a desired outcome), and the tool(s) employed by the subject to act on the focal object or pursue the desired outcome’ (Foot, 2014, p.5). The tools of an activity system - which can be material as well as conceptual - are formed by the cultural norms wherein they emerge (Foot, 2014). The fourth component comprises the community, which is made up of individuals who share interest in the object with the subject or actor, and the rules which govern the relationship between that subject and shared-interest community; with ‘rules’ seeking to determine both the objectives of the parties in relation to the shared object and the division of labour – particularly in relation to task division and resource and power allocation (Foot, 2014, p.6). The potential of CHAT can be best realised when the activity system is considered in its entirety, whereby the researcher moves beyond focusing on ‘dyad or triadic relations’ between the components discussed above to inquire into ‘how the other components influence the situation’ (Foot, 2014, p.6).

In this study, the EFL teachers at Kingdom University (subjects and/or actors) seek meaningful situated PD linked to their praxis (object/outcome) employing LS, which itself entails the use of ‘tools’ (e.g. observations or reflections). To clarify, the focus of the observations was on student learning rather than on the direct actions of the teachers. ‘Norms’ (e.g. institutional policies and institutional culture) obstruct or support the EFL teachers as they engage in interaction with the community (e.g. management, colleagues, students and parents). Contradictions which Engeström

(2001, p. 137) describes as 'historically accumulating structure tensions within and between activity systems' can only be resolved through collective and collaborative actions as opposed to solely individual actions (Engeström, 1987, p.16). According to Karen (2018), these contradictions power innovation in such activity systems. The planned adoption of CHAT in this research is viewed as useful not just because it facilitates insight into the intersecting relations within the activity system but also because CHAT interventions focus on arriving at a 'historicised understanding of how professional practices have been shaped' (Ellis, 2011, p.182-183).

Resultantly, the use of CHAT as a heuristic is useful on several counts. Firstly, it can help not only the researcher but also the participants to understand how professional practices have developed over a period of time under the influence of history and culture. Secondly, due to the activity system being supportive of 'practice development' (Ellis, Gower, Fredrick & Childs, 2015, p.45), there is space for a 'formative intervention' (Ellis et al, 2015, p.45) such as LS (the PD which will be implemented as the basis of this study) to address the problems of inadequate professional development identified in the research setting. As Ellis et al (2015) point out, this is a 'formative intervention' because 'the starting points for the specific problems of practice' are identified by 'teachers as practitioners, and the outcomes of the collaborative activity have to meet the tests of reliability and fitness-for-purpose of these practitioners rather than only the interventionists'.

However, it must also be recognised that CHAT-informed approaches to PD have been critiqued on account of a number of issues which are perceived to be problematic in implementing such research. The next section will present a discussion of key articles that shed light on methodological, positional and ethical issues of significance to CHAT interventions, with close reference to implemented empirical studies. These articles also discuss ways to address these issues, an understanding of which helps to ensure that the planned research is implemented effectively.

3.3.2 Origins of CHAT and its evolution over three generations

The origins of CHAT can be traced back to two convergent strands of research including ‘Russian cultural psychology which started with Vygotsky and North American and European interactionist psychology’ (Edwards, 2006). Both strands were concerned with the issue of the dualist bifurcation between the mind and the world (Edwards, 2006). Culturally located in post-revolutionary Russia, Vygotsky’s psychology was focused on enabling people to transform the conditions of their environment (Edwards, 2006). Viewing human consciousness as something communal rather than individual according to Russian tradition (Edwards, 2006), Vygotsky sought to address how the collective could be integrated with the individual. He did this by devising the concept of mediation whereby human beings were perceived as agentive beings who reacted to and acted upon ‘mediating objects of the environment (tools, signs and instruments) leading to an outcome’ (Nussbaumer, 2012, p.38). These ideas aligned with the theory of social constructivism which suggests that the relationship of individuals is mediated by others as well as by shared cultural and historical context, including language and other artefacts (Wilson, 2014, p.21).

To understand activity theory in a more nuanced way, it is important to distinguish between the Russian terms ‘povedenye’ (behaviour) and ‘deyatel’nost’ (activity). ‘Povedenye’ which refers to behaviour in the sense of American usage in comparative psychology is related to an ‘individual’s realisation of moral standards and requirements’ (Bedny & Karwowski, 2004, p.136). In contrast, ‘deyatel’nost’ refers to the ‘human mobilisation around conscious goals in a concrete, external world’ whereby ‘only humans can be the subjects of activity’ (Bedny & Karwowski, 2004, p.136). Hence, the centrality of conscious goals in activity theory suggests that activity stems ‘less from human biology’ and more from ‘human history and culture’ (Bedny & Karwowski, 2004, p.136)

The historical evolution of CHAT can be mapped over three generations, with each generation building upon the earlier one (Nussbaumer, 2012). While the first generation of CHAT presented the Vygotskian concept of mediation whereby individuals could regulate their actions by means of physical or psychological tools’, the unit of analysis was at the individual level (Spinuzzi, 2020, p.3). In the second generation, Leontiev shifted the focus from individual action to collective activity by means of focusing on a goal or objective (Spinuzzi, 2020, p. 3). In the third generation, Engeström expanded the model in order to create conceptual tools that would allow an understanding of the interaction between intersecting activity systems typical of institutions or organisations (Spinuzzi, 2020, p.3). As will be explored further and expanded upon in the methodology, this framework will be used to develop the coding and analysis which directly elicits from the data the cultural and historical factors which inform the practice of PD in Saudi Arabia.

3.3.2.1 First generation

As part of the first generation of theorists, Russian psychologists Vygotsky, Luria and Leontiev worked on activity theory (AT) in the '1920s as an alternative to the West's interest in psychoanalysis and behaviorism' (Nussbaumer, 2012, p.38). The Vygotskian model (Fig.3) drew upon the work of the first generation psychologists in child development (Vygotsky), the impact of formal schooling in literacy and mathematics on the human ability to assign environmental objects to categories (Luria) and the centrality of community and division of labour to AT (Nussbaumer, 2012, p.38). This Vygotksian model was encompassing because it addressed not just the historical-cultural experiences but also the cognitive processes of human activity.

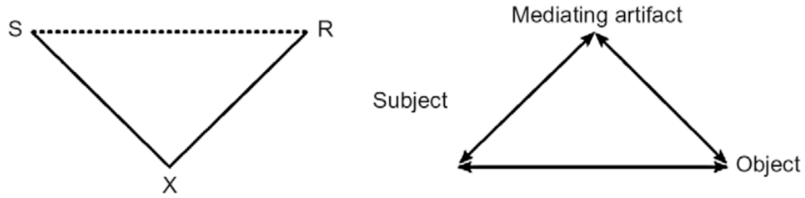


Figure 3: First generation CHAT - Vygotsky's triangles (Engeström, 2001, 134)

While Vygotsky conceptualised 'practical human labour activity as a general explanatory category of psychology', it was Leont'ev who transformed the 'historically evolving object-practical activity [into] the fundamental unit of analysis' explanation for determining 'the genesis, structure, and contents of the human mind' (Roth, 2007, p.189). The Vygotskian model (Fig.4) was expanded by Leont'ev who integrated different levels in order to show how activity was impelled by motive and how action was guided by a conscious goal, whereas 'conditions and tools' determined operations (Nussbaumer, 2012, p.38). According to Leontiev, while the action was individual and the operations were habituated behaviours, the activity was collective (Bakhurst, 2009, p.200). While the individual action could be carried out by individuals or groups to attain a specific goal, an activity was carried out at a community level, making use of 'a division of labour' and being driven by motive and directed towards motive (Bakhurst, 2009, p.200).

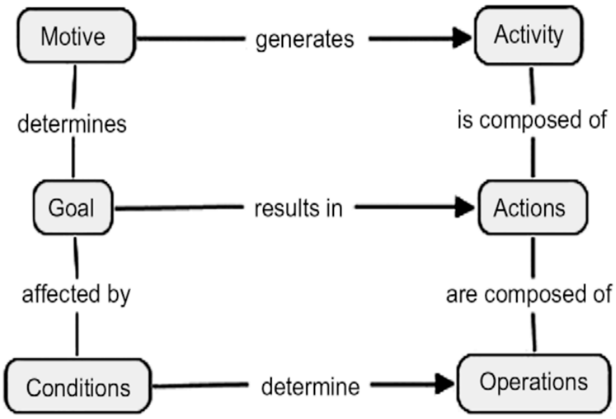


Figure 4: Activity, actions and operations (Wilson, 2006)

3.3.2.2 Second generation

The second generation of this theory was shaped by Engeström (1987 in Nussbaumer, 2012, p.38) who showed how the 'individual and the community, history, context, and interaction of the situation and activity' were connected while integrating the first generation of the CHAT theory into his concepts (Fig. 3) (Nussbaumer, 2012, p.38). In making these modifications to the first generation of AT, it was Engeström's intention 'to explain human thought processes…on the basis of the individual…[as well as] the wider context of the individual's interactions within the social world through artefacts, and specifically in situations where activities were being produced' (Batiibwe, 2019). This evolution of the theory is crucial for the context of this study, which deliberately uses a social, collective device (namely, that of LS) to explore not just the individual's relationship with the cultural and historical context of their practice area, but the way this is approached as and influenced by a collective group.

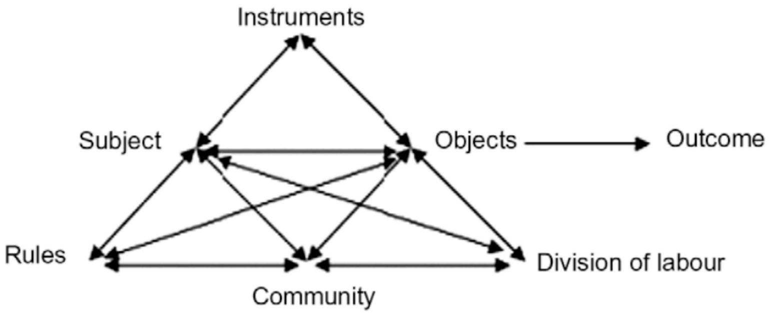


Figure 5: Second generation CHAT (Engeström, 1987, 78)

According to Engeström's ideas, the person/group (subject) work together to achieve an 'object' which leads to an 'outcome', and the object and the outcome are mediated or reciprocally influenced by 'instruments, rules, community, and division of labor' (Nussbaumer, 2012, p.39). Within the activity system envisioned by Engeström, an activity materialises by means of concrete actions which are discrete behaviour of individuals directed towards particular goals, (Olavarria, 2013, p.43-50). In the activity system, the subject comprises groups or individuals with a shared purpose for participating in the activity (in the case of this study, the participants), whereas the shared object is the focus of the activity (here, PD) and undergoes multiple changes (involving subjects, their experiences, artefacts and activity in focus) till it takes the form of an outcome (e.g. new practice or new community) (Olavarria, 2013, p.43-50). A community comprises the social groups to which the subjects, representing a plurality of views, conventions and interests, belong while they are participating in an activity (in the case of this study, the wider body of ESL teachers operating in Saudi Arabia, undertaking PD in a multitude of ways). Division of labour refers to how the tasks are distributed amongst community members of equal status and vertically along power divisions (Olavarria, 2013, p.43-50). Artefacts serve as the means for mobilising participants towards improving the shared activity (and in this study, the artefact is artificially introduced by the researcher in the form of LS). Rules will have bearing on the impact the artefact has; they connote power and constraints and take the form of member consensus over who does what and when and in which sequence (Olavarria, 2013, p.43-50). Within the activity system, there are disturbances (relating to personal/interpersonal challenges) which influence immediate individual actions as well as contradictions comprising structural tensions that have built up over time within an activity system and between interacting activity systems (Olavarria, 2013, p.43-50). Contradictions mould and transform how things are done and give rise to disturbances, conflicts as well as innovation (Kamanga, Alexander & Kanobe, 209, p.215). The resolution of the contradictions can lead to the attainment of the desired outcome (Olavarria, 2013, p.43-50).

3.3.2.3 Third generation

In the third-generation CHAT model, Yrjö Engeström 'extended and modified AT extensively to apply it to learning in organisations' (Spinuzzi, 2020., p.1). Evolving the model further, as Figure 3 shows, Engeström (2001 in Nussbaumer, 2012, p.39) theorised that the activity systems were made up of 'networks of interacting systems' which addressed the 'tensions and contradictions' promoting communal learning by means of transformation. Thus the third-generation CHAT model offered a heuristic for understanding the development of larger systems at the institutional and organisational levels. This third evolution is congruent with the aims of the study presented here; it does not merely seek to explore the specific feeling-action links of the specific group participating, but instead explore and extrapolate on a wider level to understand the operation of cultural and historical factors upon PD across Saudi Arabia as a whole.

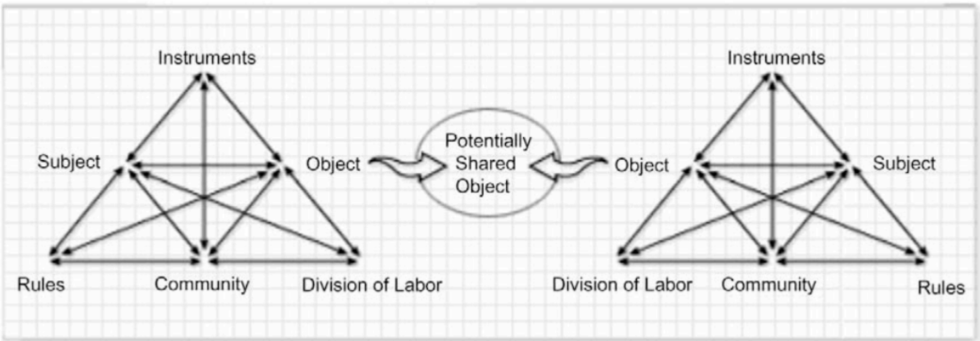


Figure 6: Third generation CHAT (Centre for Activity and Development Work, n.d.,3)

What the third generation CHAT model foregrounds is that no action of a subject (individual or group of individuals) whose actions influence the goal of the activity system can be understood without taking into account other aspects of the activity that influence all other relations (Roth, 2012, p.3). That is why the study here necessarily positions the participants as just one group of teachers engaging in PD operating alongside and amongst many other groups of teachers doing the same, all operating within the meta-cultural, political, economic and institutional frameworks which shape education as a whole in Saudi Arabia.

3.3.3 Connection between CHAT and the present study

The focus of the current study is on PD of university EFL teachers in the Saudi context which comprises a network of interacting activity systems the relations of which can only be understood when the activity systems are considered together. In order to understand the relevance of CHAT for analysing the learning and PD of teachers within this activity system, it is important to know that 'learning is not an isolated act' and that 'it is situated in time and space and influenced by the surrounding actors, resources and behavioural constraints' (Meyers, 2007). Further, through their actions, the agents in this process of learning shape the contexts wherein such learning transpires, thus positioning CHAT (a dynamic model) as being ideal for capturing the complexity of educational practice (Meyers, 2007).

In KSA, the PD of teachers takes place by means of top-down implementation of pre-service or in-service training (Sywelem & Witte, 2013, p.888). Sywelem and Witte add that such professional development is designed nationally and disseminated through the local education authorities (LEAs) with participation in the PD being decided and monitored by the school heads.

Hence, macro-level actors and bodies influence the design and implementation of PD of teachers. This would suggest that within the context of Kingdom University - which is the focus of this study - there is a need to consider multiple activity systems in order to understand how teacher learning in the setting transpires and how it is facilitated or hindered.

CHAT is an appropriate lens for this study because it facilitates the analysis of human activity by developing practice (Karen, 2018) and enabling stakeholders to understand how existing educational practices have been determined (Roth & Lee, 2007, p.47).

Critically, it provides stakeholders in the activity system with the opportunity to play a role in shaping their pedagogical and learning settings, affords them more control over facets of their life conditions and widens their action choices in ways that are personally useful for them (Roth & Lee, 2007, p.47). Further, as the activity system supports the development of practice (Ellis, Gower, Fredrick & Childs, 2015, p.45), CHAT offers a space for '*formative* intervention' (Ellis et al, 2015, p.45), because the EFL teachers themselves identify the issues in practice and the desired outcomes have to be relevant to them rather than the researcher/interventionist. Whilst not characterised as an 'intervention' (formative or otherwise) within this study CHAT (and indeed, LS) both represent activities which the participants are asked to *actively* engage with, rather than being passively subject. The gain of the study is therefore mutual; the researcher gains insight in this case, into the contextual factors that impact the transferability of LS and the cultural and historical factors which inform PD practice in Saudi Arabia), but the respondents are also granted tools, frameworks and supported opportunity to engage with, critically analyse and even shape their own experiences and practices, in a way that aligns strongly with concepts of CT (Aronowitz, 2016).

3.3.4 Limitations and strengths of CHAT

One of the key strengths of CHAT is that as the activity systems are dynamic and everchanging, it allows the researchers to focus on analysing the *process* or activity of engaging with a task rather than merely the outcome or product' (Ellis et al, 2010, p.95) (emphasis mine). Further, with its focus on activity systems, CHAT makes it possible for researchers to 'analyse human interactions and relationships within particular contexts' in all their complexity (Wilson, 2014,p.20). The analysis of the insights into the whole activity system also enables researchers to take into account the 'tensions, contradictions and different motives' characterising the former (Wilson, 2014, p.20). In addition to creating a space for researchers to reflect on their own assumptions and those held by others, thus paving the way towards the development of new learning, CHAT offers a methodological framework to researchers for analysing workplace practice (Wilson, 2014, p.20). The CHAT approach is also oriented to action/intervention which can help subjects to develop practice (Edwards & Daniels, 2004, p. 108). Highlighting that the third generation of CHAT enables the examination of human action as it transpires across multiple activity systems, Roth and Lee (2007) point out that this supports researchers in exploring the role played by dialogue, different perspectives and the dynamics of power when investigating networks of activity systems in interaction.

As CHAT has evolved over generations, gaps have been identified in each model. For instance, the main limitation of the first generation of CHAT was found to be its lack of ‘ social context, which can be represented in rules and collaboration with others’ (Montoro & Hampel, 2011 in Khayyat, 2016, p.2). This meant that analysis in this version of CHAT was ‘focused solely on the individual’ (p.43). In the second version of CHAT, Leontiev was able to progress Vygotsky’s model by introducing the notion of activity and thus moving it beyond ‘individual mediated action to a collective activity system’ (Olavarria, 2013, p.43). However, the second version of CHAT was perceived to be limited because ‘it does not consider more than one activity that shares the same objective’ (Khayyat, 2009, p.2). In sum, while the first and second-generation CHAT versions were ‘strong on mediation and entry into a culture’ they were not well-equipped to enable dealing ‘with problems that have not yet been encountered’(Edwards, 2006).

Overcoming earlier gaps, the third generation of CHAT is generally considered to be a useful model for understanding how networks of activity systems interact and how to help participants identify interventions and actions of usefulness to them (Spinuzzi & Guile, 2009). The third-generation model is useful because it allows the researcher to take a ‘participatory and interventionist role in the participants’ activity’ (Khayyat, 2009, p.2). With its stress on contestation (tensions) as well as externalisation of the object (into outcome), the model does allow the working out of culturally novel problems and solutions (Edwards, 2006). However, a significant limitation of the model is that the learning the model captures is at the system level and the emphasis on ‘multi-voicedness and contradiction as the engine of change’ attenuates the understanding of mediation in regard to the outcome (Edwards, 2006).

Further, McNicholl and Blake (2013) note while the model can be aligned with almost any activity, it tends to be most plausible when mapping linear approaches to identifiable and expected outcomes. However, this is arguably a valid critique of any analytical lens, which may find greater applicability in simple structures and will encounter more problems in complex ones. It is of course *the extent* to which it encounters problems in its explanatory/framing power which mark it as an effective or ineffective tool, not the fact that any problems are encountered at all. McNicholl and Blake (2013) nonetheless assert that this 'linear favourability' makes CHAT less a theory and more a generic schema for explaining activities undertaken by clearly self-identified subjects with a well-delineated object and awareness of appropriate tools to be used. Moreover, as AT tends to be suited for interpreting local practices, the broader socio-political structures tend to be overlooked in activity system analysis (McNicholl & Blake, 2013) – though as identified above in section 3.4.2.3, addressing the 'third generation' of the theory, this study will ensure that coding and analysis within the study aims to prompt response to the broadest levels of institutional context.

However, when applied without direct coding to accommodate macro contexts, CHAT can also be critiqued on the basis that the capacity for activity system analysis to bring about transformation may be negligible as it does not recognise the properties of human agency that arise apart from the system (McNicholl & Blake, 2013). Another limitation of this model is that it 'treats activity systems as reasonably well-bounded' and does not adequately address 'social production and peer production' or large groups of people working together wherein 'the boundaries and structures of activity systems' are less distinct (Engeström, 2009, p.9). In such a context, as the processes co-occur in multiple and frequently reciprocal directions, the intersections and depth of these processes make redundant the standard distinction between process and structure (Engeström, 2009, p.9) and perhaps dilute the model's analytic power.

3.3.5 The use of CHAT as a data analysis model: precedent in the literature

CHAT has an established basis as an analytical tool for examining cultural and historical influences on various educational practices, including the mentoring of student teachers (Edward & Protheroe, 2004), the existence of parallel activity systems and mediating artefact with dual objects in student-teacher learning (Ellis et al, 2011) and the implications of participating in two distinct activity systems for student teachers (Tsui & Law, 2007). Its applicability is thus readily established.

To examine these applications in more detail: In a year-long study carried out to identify what mentors focused on while mentoring primary school student teachers, Edwards and Protheroe (2004) used CHAT to analyse interview data from the mentors regarding their focus when providing feedback to the mentees as well as feedback conversations between mentors and the student teachers. They found that mentors were less attentive to what the student teachers were learning and more focused on making sure that mentees' pupils were making good curricular progress. Using CHAT, Edwards and Protheroe were able to show that the focus of the mentors could be traced back to the fact that 'individual acts are located within wider sets of relationships, histories and expectations' (Edwards & Protheroe, 2004, p.194). For instance, the mentors in their study 'were themselves located in schools as activity systems with urgent goals in a national system of highly public accountability' (Edwards & Protheroe, 2004, p.194). In this case, it appeared that while one of the identifiable communities was the university-school training partnership with the object of student teachers and their learning, the other community was the school/classroom with its focus (goals) on learners and curriculum coverage. The CHAT analysis in this educational setting thus revealed 'conflicts and tensions' between interacting activity systems (Edwards & Protheroe, 2004, p.195). This application of 'third generation' CHAT, macro-level institutional consideration is a key point that this study also seeks to emulate.

In another study on teacher learning, Ellis, McNicholl, Blake & McNally (2011) examined the use of artefacts observed in the work of teacher educators and student teachers in a school setting. Applying CHAT analysis, Ellis et al (2011) found that the use of lesson observation forms appeared to be directed at the attainment of two distinct objects. The first of these was to encourage the student teachers to reflect on practice (teacher learning), while the second was to make use of this artefact (form) to ensure compliance with the UK standards for Qualified Teacher Status (quality assurance) (Ellis et al, 2011). This suggests that the stakeholders in the school setting (teacher educators and student teachers) were taking part in two distinct activity systems at the same time (Ellis et al, 2011). In their research, Tsui and Law (2007) focused on the mentoring of student teachers at their host schools and the supervision of the same trainee teachers by their university supervisors in the Hong Kong context. The study found the existence of two parallel activity systems with two different objects. These included the learning of students in the first activity system (school-based mentoring) and the development of student teacher capacity to connect theory and practice (university supervision). The student teachers were found to face differing and conflicting advice from their mentors and supervisors. The studies discussed above show how CHAT enabled researchers to map the influences of historical, cultural and structural influences on teacher learning within activity systems. This study too aims to understand the overlapping activity systems within which each participant – and the wider collective participant group as a collective – is located, and how these may overlap, compliment, compete or conflict.

More specifically, other studies framed by CHAT have investigated the identity development of EFL student teachers including the challenge of juggling the demands of two different activity systems as part of their teaching practicum (He & Lin, 2013; Riyanti, 2017). Another study has examined the connection between teacher change and the teacher participants' wider context, including curriculum, teacher culture and educational policy (Cho, 2014). A survey of research shows limited intervention-based research adopting CHAT as an analytic lens. Of the two examples identified, one is a CHAT-framed interventionist study in which the researcher used LS to support an inquiry group of Arabic and Japanese teachers to use video recordings and classroom observations to gain insights into the learning of their students (Dillard, 2016). Classroom observations (mediating means) acted to disrupt the teachers' existing systems shaped by their respective cultures and histories. The teacher participants learnt to deal with inconsistent evidence and became more open and receptive to different views while addressing key questions. As the focus of the study was the development of the Japanese teachers and language programme, Dillard found that participation in the inquiry group promoted openness in the Japanese programme and fostered a relationship between instructor agency in regard to teaching, learning and curriculum as a stimulus for further development.

These studies thus either adopt CHAT as an explanatory device or an interventionist process and thus differ from this study, which seeks to deploy it as a lens through which to frame exploratory investigation (but which acknowledges that in the process, it might hold ‘formative intervention’ elements in the way it actively engages the subjects in critique of their own practices). While limited perception-based research in the Saudi context exists in regard to LS as a tool for PD in Saudi schools (Almadi, 2020; Alamri, 2020), it would appear that the present study is singular in applying CHAT analysis for understanding how LS can be used to mediate the PD of Saudi EFL teachers, while taking into account the power issues implicit in a conservative and constraining culture for women EFL teachers.

3.4 CHAT and LS together

3.4.1 Precedent for combined CHAT/LS investigation in the extant literature

In their paper titled ‘Formative interventions and practice development: A methodological perspective on teacher rounds’, Ellis, Gower, Fredricks and Childs (2015) present a literature-based comparative analysis of teacher rounds as a form of collaboration-based research, which attempts to create new insights that can develop a practice with developmental work research (DWR), a developmental intervention that is based on the idea of disrupting and developing practice by enabling practitioners to problematise and become critically conscious of discourses and practices in their work setting and their historical and cultural situatedness. Ellis et al (2015) observe that in rounds teachers experience socially situated development in their workplace settings by means of systematic teacher-led collegial collaboration, wherein teacher praxis is transformed via the creation of insights based on observational evidence: reflection as well as inquiry. Further, they note that what is distinctive about rounds is that it is an approach to developing teacher practice from the perspective of the practitioners rather than from the perspective of researchers. In this way, it shares many parallels with the combination of CHAT and LS which forms the basis of this study, and thus the lessons Ellis et al draw from their investigation have applicability here also. In particular, Ellis et al note that DWR - which itself is a CHAT-informed approach - also claims to enable participants to improve their practice by means of action research or by participating in a design experiment that is led by the researcher. The goal of DWR is to enhance participants' critical understanding of how the practices as well as discourses in their workplace are influenced by culture and histories, so that identified issues can be resolved at the stratum of the social system of the workplace. Ellis et al (2015) elaborate that such critical understanding is catalysed by the deployment of conceptual tools of AT (Fig.7) which enable participants to analyse the historicised nature of their professional practices. For instance, 'mirror data' help participants to comprehend the inconsistences and disruptions in the work they are attempting to do, and 'model/vision' enables them to analyse the data they are focusing theoretically, while 'ideas/tool' help to record important insights, concepts and or solutions. These displays can be thought of in terms of the 'past, now, future', whereby those participating in the intervention begin by reflecting on the existing problem, analyse the historical roots of the problem and then model how to reconfigure praxis.

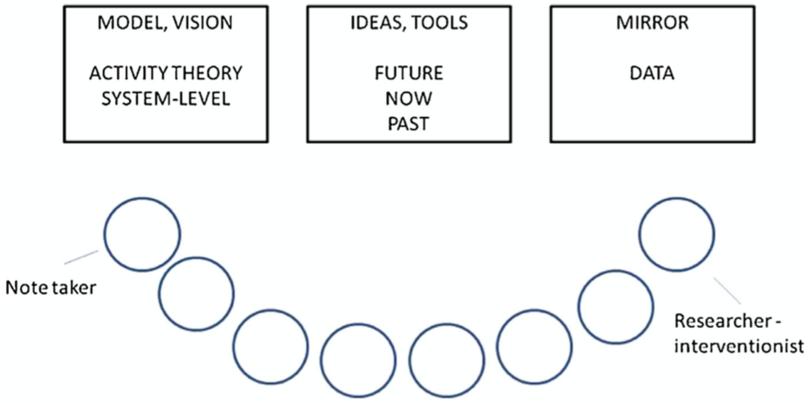


Figure 7: DWR (Source Ellis et al, 2015)

Extending the comparison, in both Rounds and DWR it is the teacher who identifies the problem to be examined and deliberated upon, and the data pertaining to this issue is generated not for its own sake but as a means to develop practice (Ellis et al, 2015, p.49). Further, the data is jointly analysed in similar ways, for instance within the post rounds discussion in rounds and in the 'mediating social space' (Change Laboratory) of DWR (Ellis et al, 2015, p.49). Both approaches require open communication, mutual trust and respect amongst colleagues, and are forward-looking rather than retrospective and evaluative (Ellis et al, 2015, p.49). Drawing upon the terminology of CHAT, Ellis et al (2015) suggest that rounds can be understood as a mediating tool that practitioners deploy to improve 'the object of their activity'.

Having compared the two approaches, Ellis et al (2015) point out that three key methodological points require further consideration as to their impact and efficacy for both research and practice. The first of these pertains to the fact that teachers are part not just of an organisation but also a field or practice with its own norms, which has implications for how – and indeed whether - the changes in the practice of the individual teacher as a result of PD also influence the teacher's colleagues, departments and institutions.

The second methodological concern shared by Ellis et al (2015) is over the role of theory in rounds, with the authors asserting that whilst CHAT tends to over-rely on theory by operating on the assumption that exposing participants to theory will change their perceptions by means of model/vision (Fig.7), within rounds, it is unclear how theory helps participants at all to develop answers to the issues they have identified (Ellis et al, 2015, p.45). Distinguishing the role of theory in teacher rounds and DWR, Ellis et al (2015) suggest that as the former tends to rely on 'learning in and through practice' with teacher knowledge remaining tacit, its insights cannot be extrapolated for wider impact, whereas in CHAT and DWR, the emphasis on theory means that 'insights and new knowledge constructed by participants' can be applied to other settings, thus contributing to wider impact and improvement. Establishing the role that theory plays can potentially become more difficult when implementing various layers within the research analysis (i.e. in the case of this study, LS and a CHAT-based lens).

The third methodological issue raised by Ellis et al pertains to what collaboration and collaborative dialogue imply in rounds, especially given the potential for such collaborative conversations to peter out into 'shoptalk' or polite chatter, rather than the disruptive exchanges that are needed to drive change in practice. As an adjunct, Ellis et al (2015) highlight that, for successful collaboration to take place, rounds require participants to relate effectively with one another based on shared but uneven knowledge, while acknowledging one another's expertise and experiencing responsive freedom in individual practices. This is likely to require institutional leadership to create the conditions for collaboration, learning as well as dialogue. Ellis et al add that rounds require 'relational agency' which is not always easy to achieve, especially if collaboration is deployed as a leadership tool that entails 'enforced collaboration'.

Insofar as this study is concerned then, the comparative analysis of Rounds and DWR by Ellis et al (2015) highlights several methodological concerns to which research undertaken here must be sensitive. While the aim of this study is to project the voices of the participating teachers in the analysis of their practice, it will be important to ensure that the management are encouraged to create the space needed for these voices to emerge and that the gap between the managers, administrators and the practitioners is bridged. CHAT can play an important role in bridging this gap, since it acknowledges the systemic issues and actions that need to be taken concerning the historical, cultural and systemic barriers present. It is also important that the study ensures that researcher hierarchies do not replace institutional ones. As CHAT places emphasis on leveraging practitioner collaboration and disruptive dialogues to develop practice, this issue can be addressed by ensuring that practitioner-driven perspectives are prioritised. Another strength of CHAT is that it enables participants to deploy theory as a tool for analysing and improving practice which can also lead to insights emerging within one practice to be applicable to other contexts (Ellis et al, 2015).

3.5 Conclusion

The literature discussed in the foregoing section shaped the formulation of the research questions in a number of ways. For instance, the literature review revealed that EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia typically experience limited opportunities for PD due to multiple logistical, cultural and socioeconomic factors. In the research setting, existing PD arrangements tend to be top-down and workshop based and not only misaligned with the classroom needs of the Saudi EFL practitioners but also disempower the teachers by excluding their voices and isolating them in their work silos. On the other hand, the discussion of LS as a PD tool suggests that LS by its very structure and design may operate to counter these challenges to the PD of Saudi women EFL teachers, by embedding a critical and reflective approach to pedagogy in communities of practice design, thus creating the space for practitioner-led investigation of the pedagogical challenges faced by the teachers in the Saudi EFL classroom. In addition, the literature suggests that LS as a PD tool may also serve to empower Saudi women EFL teachers and to dissolve the isolating silos in which they work by encouraging collaboration and collective professional learning. Hence, the synthesis of these findings supports the study's hypothesis that LS may provide an effective and promising avenue for encouraging PD opportunities for women EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. Against this backdrop, RQs 1 and 2 were designed to inquire into the opportunities offered by LS as a PD tool to the participating teachers and to explore how the participants perceive experiencing PD through LS respectively. RQ 4 sought to investigate the perceptions and experiences of teachers across Kingdom University to canvas a wider pool of opinion on PD opportunities availed and desired in order to identify whether the respondents were receptive to LS as a possible PD tool.

At the same time, the CHAT section identified the potential of LS as an ‘activity’ around which subject (both individual and group) actions could be understood within the context of wider cultural and historical factors, from the individual to the macro-institutional. Given that the experiences of Saudi women EFL teachers are historically and culturally mediated, the potential of a CHAT analytical lens to probe potential cultural barriers to the effective implementation of LS as a PD tool led to the formulation of RQ3.

In this way, the study aimed to understand the PD needs and experiences of women teachers in Saudi Arabia more generally, whilst simultaneously contributing to the burgeoning literature on LS and the impact of culture in contexts outside Japan.

The research questions designed to frame the study were as below:

1. What opportunities are offered by LS as a tool for PD among EFL women teachers in Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the perceptions of Saudi EFL women teachers towards LS as a means of PD?
3. What, if any, cultural barriers hinder the use of LS in the context of EFL women teacher education in Saudi Arabia?
4. What are the PD experiences and goals/ambitions of the participating women teachers and is LS able to support this?

To conclude, the literature review ascertained the underpinning motivation for the study, namely, the inarguable need to create opportunities for PD among women Saudi teachers and outlined how CHAT and LS could both help to develop a theoretical understanding of this at the researcher level through exploratory study, but also to encourage active self-development on the part of the participants through a form of quasi- ‘formative intervention’. It is suggested that encouraging collaborative and critical approaches to problem-solving for learner issues in the classroom would produce beneficial outcomes for both students and teachers in Saudi Arabia. It is also hypothesised that LS may operate to encourage critical and reflective approaches to pedagogy, foster communities of practice, and contribute to a better understanding of the problems facing teachers and learners in the Saudi EFL classroom. The next chapter will present details of the methodology adopted in the present study to address the research questions selected to underpin the investigation.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the present study was to inquire into participating Saudi women EFL teachers' perceptions of LS as a strategy for increasing critical and reflexive practice and creating supportive communities of practice at Saudi universities. The methodology chapter provides details of the approach, design, and process of collecting data used in the current study. This chapter is structured as follows: 1) context of the current enquiry; 2) limitations of existing research; 3) significance of small-scale research; 4) research questions; 5) overview of the methodology and research design; 6) researcher positioning; 7) theoretical framework; 8) research paradigm; 9) data collection process; 10) rationale for the methods; 11) data analysis; 12) credibility and generalizability; 13) ethical considerations; 14) limitations of the methods; 15) summary of the chapter.

4.1 Context of the Enquiry

The research setting for the present study was a mid-size Saudi university. A recently-established public institution located in a large Saudi city, Kingdom University has a large number of faculties, including medicine, business, science, social sciences, education, engineering, law and language amongst others. It has an enrolment of more than 20,000 students, including undergraduate and postgraduate learners. It was established in anticipation of the Vision 2030 (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2016) roadmap, bringing together university campuses belonging to an older institution to be combined into a new university. Operating under the impetus of Vision 2030, Kingdom University may be seen as a modern and progressive institution with a substantial ratio of women enrolees. As a new university striving to prepare young Saudi learners for effective participation in the knowledge economy, the vision of the institution is to bring prosperity to the region in which it is located as well as to mobilise social and cultural progress of all community members across the spectrum of class and gender through its extensive educational offerings. Although students study in gender-segregated campuses, the widening of women's access to tertiary education across numerous faculties suggests that the university seeks to empower women for effective participation in the labour force. Thus, within the education and cultural context of KSA, Kingdom University may be viewed as a key actor in the modernisation of Saudi society and a catalyst for the productive inclusion of all members of society in the workforce.

4.2 Research Questions

1. What opportunities are offered by LS as a tool for PD among EFL women teachers in Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the perceptions of Saudi EFL women teachers towards LS as a means to PD?
3. What, if any, cultural barriers hinder the use of LS in the context of EFL women teacher education in Saudi Arabia?
4. What are the PD experiences and goals/ambitions of the participating women teachers and is LS able to support this?

4.3 Overview of Methodology and Research Design

The chosen research design is IE which allows the researcher to collect the data using both qualitative and quantitative methods (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972). The embedding of LS within this IE study made it possible for participants to express their attitudes toward LS, self-empowerment and capacity-building for the development of their skills and expertise.

4.4 Researcher Positioning

This section discusses my positioning as a Saudi woman, educator and researcher, and how they influenced and inspired the initial research proposal and focus. Section 4.14 considers in more detail how this positionality impacts the research process itself, and the resultant data collection and interpretation. Observing that Saudi Arabia is perceived as one of the most ‘conservative and orthodox Muslim societies in the world’, Mustafa and Troudi (2019, p.133) point out that ‘Saudi Arabia is the only Arab theocratic country where Islam is greatly intertwined with the government’. The implications of this for a Saudi woman like myself are extensive. Under the impetus of the Wahabi Islamic ideology to which the Government of Saudi Arabia officially subscribes, the society in KSA has been configured in line with prescribed and narrow roles for women limited to mothers and spouses (Miller-Rosser, Chapman & Francis, 2006). Another key constricting influence on Saudi women's agency beyond the strictures of Wahabism is the impact of equally conservative local norms and traditions that reinforce narrow definitions of women's roles in Saudi society through the family structure (Yamani, 2000). Growing up as a woman in Saudi society, along with my co-gender peers and family members, I observed and experienced social practices, frequently enforced through laws, which not only imposed 'restrictive codes of behaviour for women' including strict gender segregation and the 'linking of family honour to women's virtue' to promote women's dependence on men (Littrel & `Bertsch, 2013, p. 313).

Reforms under Vision 2030 (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2016) signalled a new way forward for Saudi women with steps being taken by the KSA government to ease restrictions on women (Mustafa & Troudi, 2019). These ranged from 'appointing moderate scholars in the Council of Senior Scholars, taking initiatives to ease the sex segregation rules in public places, reconsidering the legal guardianship issue, and most recently allowing women to drive' (Mustafa & Troudi, 2019, p.134). Although these reforms began to ease the regulations on what women could or could not do, based on my experiences and observations as a woman university educator, I observed that gender inequalities were so entrenched in KSA's 'governmental and social structures' (Doumato, 2010) that the progressive vision of the present Saudi leadership was unlikely to be achieved, unless structural influences on women's work and agency were investigated holistically. For instance, in my role as a university educator, I observed that my women colleagues and I were disempowered by top-down training cascaded under the directives of senior male leadership at the ministerial and implemented by male leadership at the university level. While as practitioners we had close insights into what was transpiring in our classrooms and the challenges we faced as EFL educators, our input was not solicited in the compulsory training sessions we were compelled to participate in. As a result, the training we received invalidated local knowledge and weakened our repertoires for pedagogical innovation and quality teaching. I realised that many of the challenges we faced in this context stemmed from being subjected to a deterministic and top-down policy context that ignored the voices of the practitioners (Al-Sowat, 2021) and viewed teachers as being little more than implementers of curriculum (Al Shaiki, 2020, p.1359). I found that our PD was not only ineffective but also disempowering. Further, the evaluative dimensions of classroom observations by non-teaching staff members created unwillingness amongst the teachers to seek peer feedback or to open up their classrooms to scrutiny.

Having proceeded for my postgraduate studies abroad, I was introduced during the course of my studies to the LS approach originating in Japan which involves a collaborative process of lesson planning in which teachers collectively identify a learning issue, devise innovative strategies to address this issue, and then trial their ideas in ‘research lessons’, which may be observed and evaluated by the rest of the group (Fernandez, Cannon & Chockshi, 2003). I felt that implementing such an approach would address many of the problems my teaching peers and I faced back home in terms of our PD. Given its emphasis on local knowledge and peer collaboration for professional growth, I felt that the approach could help to improve teaching and learning in the classrooms, break down the silos separating teachers under the existing system and empower them in the long run. In view of the fact that the experiences of the participating teachers in the workplace were mediated by structural, cultural and societal influences, I also felt that adopting IE as a research strategy would help me to capture the impact of these influences on teachers’ actions and practices. This in turn would pave the way for finding ways to reduce the impact of such influences.

I have always believed that empowerment is a key inspiration. The literature review demonstrates that LS has the potential to empower women by equipping them with the necessary skills. It does not depend on the involvement of male decision-makers in any way, and this is a step forward for helping women teachers achieve equality and social progress envisioned under the umbrella of Vision 2030, so that they can transform into productive and contributing members of society and the national economy.

4.5 Theoretical Framework

As the discussion in the previous chapter indicated, the constraints upon the PD of teachers tend to originate from the institution (in terms of provision of opportunities for

PD) and the culture (in terms of lack of opportunities for women teachers to professionally develop while working with others), thus calling for the problem to be investigated and addressed within the frame of CHAT theory.

CHAT theory fits with the ethos of the current study. In the context of evaluating LS as a method for the PD of teachers, CHAT represents an inherently complex theoretical framework because of the way in which it binds together multiple layers and eliminates the delineations which are found within traditional research approaches. CHAT can be used both to conceptualise, observe and contextually position (or even evaluate) LS from the outside, but at the same time, CHAT elements, if it is adopted as a lens through which to consider LS, are constantly at play within the latter. Wei (2019) notes that CHAT can serve as the lens for analysing, conducting studies or reflecting on the practitioners' LS processes. If selected as a lens, any closed activity being observed may be explained in terms of the six CHAT components (as well as a general sense of culture and history) internally, but the activity is also positioned within a wider context, which itself can be analysed through the lens of the CHAT components.

In the context of this particular study, at the micro-level, 'LS' is the activity. With this 'inwards looking' perspective, CHAT analysis places the subject as teachers, the object as their PD, and the mediating force as the formal tools of the LS method. Community, rules and division of labour all interplay around these elements and inform them, taking the form of the existing norms and governance structures with the school, the students and other stakeholders, and the history and culture of the institution.

On the macro level, the activity becomes widely defined, as 'Saudi society'. Within this, LS becomes the mediating tool between the subject-education providers, and the object, namely, the provision of education and PD within Saudi Arabia. Rules, communities and division of labour take the form of social norms, laws, institutional structures and the wider population, along with general cultural and historical elements.

This can be represented diagrammatically. Figure 8 makes it clear how LS can be viewed as an activity and as a component of an activity wherein CHAT is used to evaluate how well that component operates in its role within the wider activity. Within the first part of the figure, the activity is the LS, and the teachers act as subject, while that object or outcome is improvement in teaching practice. To bring this about, the learning activity involves the formal tools of LS as the mediating artefact. In the second part of the figure, at a broader level, the activity now comprises the Saudi society, and the activity at the previous local level (LS) transforms into the mediating artefact. Similarly, educational institutions take on the position of subject and education in KSA assumes the position of object, or outcome of the activity:

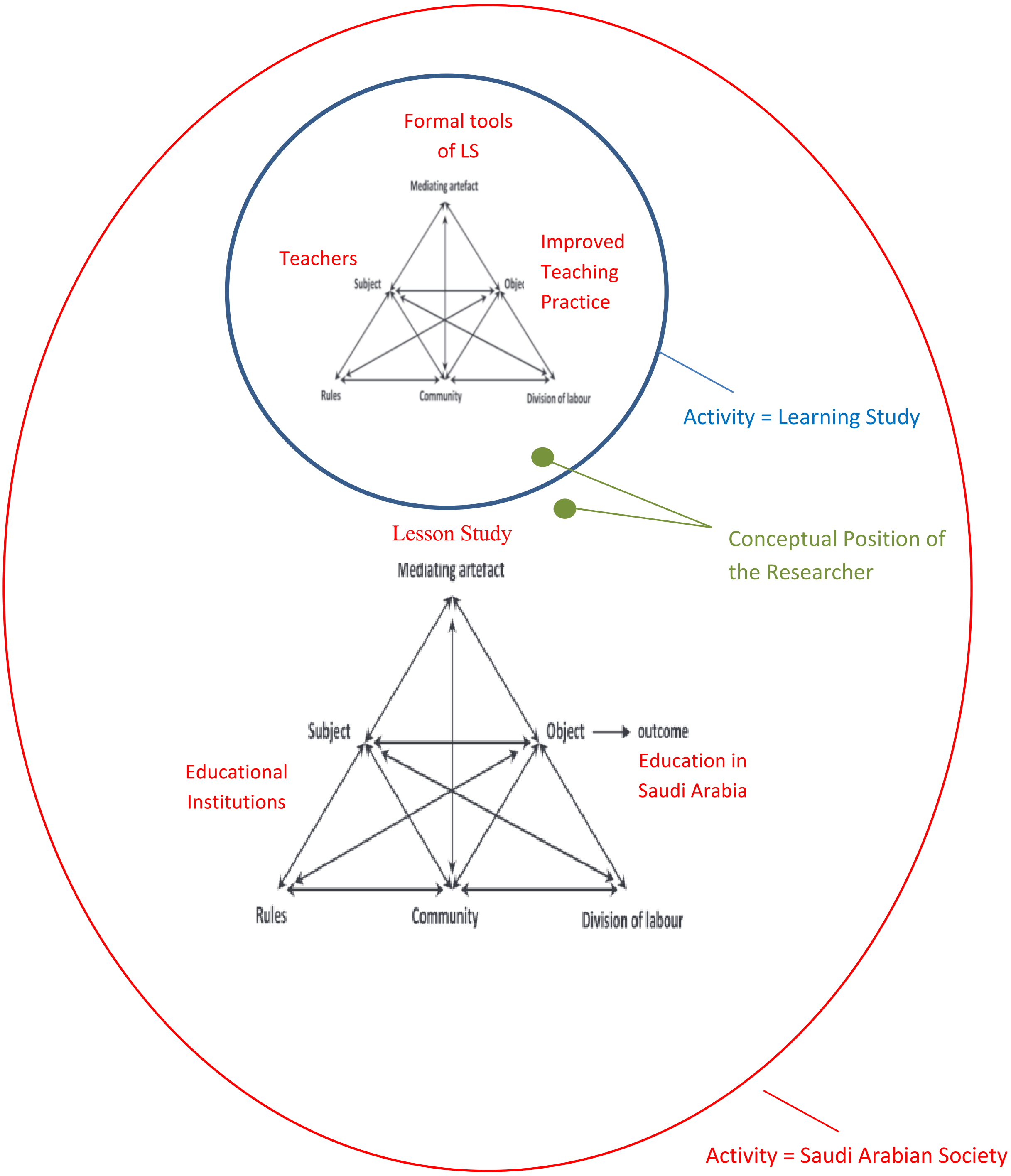

Formal tools
of LS
Mediating artefact
Teachers
Subject
Improved
Teaching
Practice
Objec
Rules
Community
Division of labour
Activity = Learning Study
Conceptual Position of
the Researcher
Lesson Study
Mediating artefact
Subject
Object
outcome
Educational
Institutions
Education in
Saudi Arabia
Rules
Community
Division of labour
Activity = Saudi Arabian Society

Figure 8: Representation of CHAT as an Activity and as a Component of Activity

This also means that CHAT blurs concepts of researcher and subject, because the subjects become researchers of their own practices – observing, critiquing, exploring and evolving. Any additional person observing that process of subjects-acting-as-reflective-researchers through a CHAT lens also becomes intertwined within the whole process; they must at once explore with the subject/researchers (or at the very least report the explorations of the subjects vis-à-vis CHAT concepts), but that same time also stand outside of that experience in identifying how the activity positions itself in a wider environment – in this case, how LS operates within its wider setting, at the institutional level as well as within the educational practices of Saudi Arabia collectively, and thus, within the culture and history of Saudi Arabia as a whole. CHAT frames both this internal and external investigation/critique.

4.6 Research Paradigm

This research study is an IE (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972) study, embedded within an interpretivist paradigm. According to Willis (2007), interpretivism serves as a research approach that permits researchers to analyse unquantifiable variables, such as the participants' views and perspectives, to deduce findings that would assist in responding to the study's research questions. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017, p.33) observes that 'the central endeavour of the Interpretivist paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience…and to understand and interpret what the subject is thinking or the meaning s/he is making of the context'. This research study utilised qualitative and quantitative data sources to explore different aspects of PD. The LS cycles were conducted in order to ascertain the answers to the first three research questions, whereas a survey adapted from validated instruments was adapted and administered to the teachers in the university setting.

As such, IE can be said to constitute a form of naturalistic enquiry (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972), which is exploratory in nature, but adopts both interpretative and descriptive data collection methods to allow the researcher to triangulate her data and capture multiple perspectives (Patton, 1997). This is a different take to other approaches, which tend to be focused on prediction or quantifying the findings (Sloan & Watson, 2001). The goal of IE is to understand complex inter-relationships between context, structure, and content. In this case, the important context is the Saudi culture, which substantially affects the experiences and attitudes of Saudi teachers and their perceptions of LS as an approach to PD. This methodology was envisioned to allow me to account for these complex inter-relationships in my analysis.

4.7 Rationale for the Methods – Explaining the Combined Approach

In the present study, IE was adopted as the research approach because it allowed the researcher to inquire into the learning milieu with a view to outlining cause and effect cycles, connections between beliefs and participant practices and between patterns of organisational behaviour and member responses in relation to the phenomenon under study (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972). This was particularly important given the limited information on how Saudi women EFL teachers' work and PD were shaped by factors pertaining to society, culture and their institution. Given the present study's emphasis on understanding how the work and professional practices of women Saudi EFL teachers within the context of the historicised workplace, a research approach such as IE which is cognizant of the milieu 'as a transactional field in which actors are inseparable from their setting' (Gordon, 1991, p.371) was viewed as being appropriate to the goals of the research. I found that a key strength of IE was that it allowed for the use of 'methods of inquiry [to be] tailored to the exigencies of the particular milieu under study thus allowing 'the investigation to progressively focus and refocus processes, structures, issues, or questions that emergent as significant during the course of the exploration' (Gordon, 1991, p.371). Thus, in IE, 'the choice of research tactics follows not from research doctrine, but from decisions in each as to the best available techniques [or in other words] the problem defines the methods used' (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972, p.17-18). In charting a relatively unknown research territory, I felt that the inherent flexibility of IE as a research approach and its accommodation of research methods according to the problem emergent in the milieu would allow me to collect the data which I needed to understand the relationships and processes at work in the research setting. To this end, across Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the research, I used qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to shed light on different dimensions of the issue under study. The flexibility of IE thus allowed me to use LS as an innovative approach to localised PD and to study how the participants experienced LS through semi-structured interviews and LS cycles (Phase 1, 4 participants), focus group via Zoom (Phase, 2, 4 participants) and survey (Phase 3, 25 respondents). As I wanted to examine how people go about their work, how they build organisations, and how organisations interact with each other, thus affecting the outcomes of the work, I adopted CHAT as an analytical lens for interpreting the data collected in the study (Foot, 2014, p.12).

In this way then, the study should not be seen as running a ‘dual’ methodology of IE *and* CHAT in conjunction with one another. Instead, one is embedded within the other; with IE being viewed not as a fixed *methodological strategy,* but instead a general (and broad and flexible) research *strategy,* with CHAT a methodological *lens* that is deployed *within that* to focus attention on the cultural and historical components which interplay together to inform and influence the practices and experiences of the educators who form the subjects of this study.

Together, this combination allowed the study a great deal of flexibility (for instance, the guiding tenets of IE allowed for the addition of research phases 2 and 3, as it became apparent they were needed), whilst CHAT provides a structured analytical framework within that free and flexible guiding approach, ensuring that the study does not become an unfocused, bloated and undirected overview of an issue that fails to draw any meaningful insight. It might be thus summarised as a strategy which, in combination, broadens that capacity for data collection, but focuses the ambit of the *interpretation* of that data, making for a result that is hopefully comprehensive but tightly focused.

4.8 Data Collection

4.8.1 Participant Selection

All participants were women teachers working at Kingdom University in Saudi Arabia. All of the participants were in their mid-thirties teaching English 101 to foundation year students. English 101 is a course required at many higher education institutions where students develop their persuasive writing skills in English, while the English foundation is the basic level of English taught to students. Below is a summary of the participants who took part in the LS as part of the research.

Table 1
Details of Participants

Teacher (pseudonyms)	Qualification	Years of experience
Assel	Master of TESOL from Canada	4
Wassan	Master of Applied linguistics from UK	5
Najd	Master of TESOL from USA	2-3
Haifa	Master of TESOL from UK	4

All four participants were selected based on their profession and place of employment. I focused on recruiting participants who were working as EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, women teachers from the English Language Institute at Kingdom University were involved in the project, which helped to explore the extent to which LS can be successful in Saudi higher education contexts. I utilised purposive sampling strategy to select participants that met these criteria. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling, which means that the researcher relies on their judgement when choosing participants for the study, usually based on their characteristics or expertise (Campbell et al., 2020). This participant sample is believed to be suitable based on their gender (women) and occupation (teachers in Saudi higher education), which indicates that these participants are likely to experience difficulties in obtaining the same PD opportunities as their peers in other countries (Wang & Gu, 2014).

The participants volunteered to take part in the research study after a presentation and demonstration of the LS Model along with its objectives (Appendix A). The LS handbook by Peter Dudley (Appendix B) was shared with them via WhatsApp group chat (Appendix C), and this was followed with the provision of an overview of the research study. I started the recruitment process by sending out invitations to all EFL teachers at the institution via email (Appendix D). Email addresses were acquired from the Dean of the school who granted permission to contact the teachers directly. Granting permission from the Dean of the school was necessary for this study to take place in accordance with the ethical guidelines presented by British Education Research Association (BERA, 2018, which states that all researchers and participants must promote respect and diversity in educational research (Appendix E and F). Upon receiving permission, the participant Demographics screener (see Table 1). The presentation was addressed to a women teacher audience only. This required them to read the information, ensure that they have the opportunity to ask questions, and to sign to say that they understand the ethical considerations of the project. This included understanding that they will not be named in the project, and they will not be identifiable in the write-up of the project. They were made aware that all data will be securely stored on a password-protected device, that they are under no obligation to participate, and that they are free to withdraw at any time (Appendix G).

4.8.2 Timeline and Location

Data collection of the first phase took place over 4 months between November 2019 – February 2020. The study took place in the KSA, and was carried out within the English Language Institute, Kingdom University. Further, LS cycle – EFL also took place at the English Language Institute located within the University. I obtained relevant written permission (Appendix H) from the institution prior to conducting this research study.

4.8.3 The process

4.8.3.1 Justification for the adaptation of the initial data collection plan

The initially proposed methodology for this study constituted a single-phase project which itself included three stages (outlined in more detail below), including an introduction to the process of LS, implementation of LS activity by participants, and then the collection of feedback based on the performance of these cycles.

However, as is discussed further in section 4.14 regarding the impact of researcher reflexivity, obstacles were met in terms of the comfort of subjects voicing their opinions, feelings and experiences on the subject. They found the process of LS challenging, but they also found talking *about those challenges* challenging. It was thus felt that through the initial methods implemented, full data saturation was not achieved, and more could be elicited from the respondents *if* a method of data collection could be found which overcame the obstacles of respondent discomfort.

Resultantly, Phases 2 and 3 were added to the research process, adding additional methods of data collection which employed increasingly ‘hands off’ approaches – distancing respondents from the researcher (and thus, the associated issues of feeling assessed and critiqued which are discussed further in section 4.14). Furthermore, extending data collection to include attitudes towards PD generally, even from those not involved in the specific LS intervention, would help to contextualise the responses of those involved in the intervention, and identify the extent to which LS may have changed mindsets or perspectives over the course of its implementation. The precise construction of these additional phases is outlined in more detail below.

4.8.3.2 Phase 1

In Phase 1, An explanation of what LS was provided to the participants as part of the process. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews with participants prior to the implementation of the LS cycles.

LS cycles

The study included the implementation of LS cycles process of collaborative lesson planning and the process of subsequently evaluating the lessons, based on observations made by peers and the researcher within the process.

Within these subject areas, the participants were involved in the following cyclic stages:

Stage 1 – Planning/Discussion

The participants were organised into one team of 4 individuals – planning the lesson and then one teacher conducted the research lesson; one participant acted as observer, and myself as facilitator coordinated the proceedings. Three focus groups of 1.5 hours duration each were set up for discussing the subject areas. Each focus group identified a key problem area currently encountered by students and teachers in EFL. This formed the discussion stimulus. I acted as a moderator in these groups, whose key role was to encourage the participants’ discussion contribution. The learning topic for the subject under focus in the LS content was decided by the participants, according to the following criteria: 1) the commonality of the student learning problem; 2) the frequency of the occurrence of that problem, and 3) the possibility or otherwise of the teacher receiving potential PD from the process. These criteria were determined based on the common PD issues faced by teachers from the initial focus group discussions. The participants were informed about stage 2 of the study in the briefing document, I shared with them prior to the study taking place. At the end of the focus group discussion before the LS cycle, I explained to the participants about their participation in stage 2.

Stage 2 – LS

Stage 2 was divided into 2 LS Cycles. The two cycles consisted of *LS cycle 1 – EFL* and *LS cycle 2*. These cycles were conducted sequentially, with Cycle 1 taking place first before being followed by Cycle 2. Each LS cycle was further divided into stages, that were the same for each subject under review. The stages were:

Step 1: Collaboratively Planning the Study Lesson (written plan for lesson)
Step 2: Seeing the Study Lesson in Action (notes/checklists to gather evidence of student learning)
Step 3: Discussing the study lesson (reflection on evidence of student learning collected in class) (although this was not completed by the participants)
Step 4: Revising the Lesson (producing revised lesson plan)
Step 5: Teaching the new version of the lesson (checklists to gather impact of changes in lesson plan on student learning)

a. Teacher Assel taught a lesson to her class, and then teacher Wassan taught the same exercise to her students, which we updated as a group.
b. Then, after we changed it collectively, teacher Najd delivered a lesson to her class, and Teacher Haifa used the same activity with her students.
c. By the end, four teaching cycles were completed, which means that each of the four teachers taught (planning, rewriting, executing, and reflecting during interviews/focus groups).

Stage 3 – Reflection/Discussion

Following the completion of the LS cycles, I conducted semi-structured interviews with all the participants involved in the study. The interviews contained open-ended questions and closed questions that pertained to both the research lesson that had been conducted, and also related to the participants’ views on limitations in relation to their teaching practice either locally in their professional environment or more globally. All data obtained were audio recorded for later transcription. A copy of the transcript is provided in (Appendix I).

Questions used in a post-lesson interview to investigate teachers' perspectives on LS and PD:

- What did you enjoy about the lesson?
- What did you learn?
- What can you do now that you could not do?
- What can you do better? How is it better?
- What aspects of teaching work best for you?
- If the same lesson is being taught to another group, what would you change and why?

After the LS cycles were concluded, the teachers were individually interviewed and asked the following questions: (Reflection phase)

- How do you find the experience of conducting the LS? Positive or negative
- What are your insights and takeaways from the experience?
- Will you use LS in the future?
- Do you think it will be a good substitute for the supervisory observation you usually have at the university?

To review the following characteristics of a good post-research lesson conversation (adapted from Dudley, 2014's LS guide):

- Openness to critical viewpoints and suggestions
- Fidelity to observed data and no excusing failure
- Viewing the post-lesson discussion as a joint learning opportunity
- Clear goals and questions from the plan/observation sheet
- Are the participants skilled observers?

- Are they able to provide feedback and spark discussions based on these abilities?
- Are all participants engaged to the same extent?
- Is there a desire for additional LS lessons after the completion of one research lesson?
- Do they feel comfortable collaborating on the lesson plan?
- Do they desire observation?

4.8.4.3 Phase 2.

After Stage 3, data saturation was not achieved in this case, in which data collection is concluded only when it ceases to yield new themes and insights. In order to supplement the data from the reflective exercise, I conducted a second round of focus groups and survey. Following the interviews, the participants were concerned about their responses being included, so I attempted to make them feel more at ease about this by holding focus group interviews. The focus group post-discussion was held online via Zoom (Appendix J). The participants were asked to join from a quiet and private room to ensure privacy and minimise distractions. The participants could see and hear one another as part of the online focus group. The discussion was recorded using Otter software, upon receiving approval from all participants (Appendix K). Participants were invited to join the Zoom videoconference through email, where an invitation link with a password was shared (Appendix L).

a) Post focus group discussion

In order to validate the findings from the first data collection stage, I included focus group discussions after the LS cycle. I focused on exploring how the teachers felt toward LS as a PD tool. Therefore, the focus group questions addressed the RQ2 and RQ3 as summarised in the table below.

Table 2
Focus group themes, objectives and rationale

Theme	Objectives	Rationale behind the objectives in column 2 and what the researcher hopes to discover
RQ2 Perceptions	To learn about perceived developments in practice through LS (technique)	Perceptions toward LS practices on classroom teaching and contribution to PD.
	To learn about observed developments in practice through LS (practice with partner teachers)	Perceptions toward effectiveness in working with other teachers
	To learn about perceptions of PD after participation in LS	Asks about perceptions of PD through experience in LS.
	Participation in LS and understanding of PD	Asks about participants' level of understanding about PD.
	Degree to which participation was likely to influence future career growth	To discover the teachers perceived LS to be influential in career development.
	Aspects of LS most effective/least effective (e.g. collegial observation provide emotional support, managing students)	Overall perceptions toward LS and its ability to improve professional competencies of teachers.
	Areas suggested for improvement (e.g. how PD is implemented what could make PD more useful? Any area that they mention as a potential barrier-suggestions for addressing it).	Attitude toward potential improvements in PD.
RQ3 Cultural barriers *language, influence of gender (friendships), degree of independence/depending administration for guidance, willingness to receive feedback from colleagues, willingness/resistance to reflect on own teaching practices).*	Language as a barrier (teachers being wary of judgement from other teachers based on their English proficiency)	Observation of self-consciousness regarding judgement of other EFL teachers about using English as a second language in teaching.
	Does gender of the teachers have an impact on their PD, e.g. their ability to form good relationships with other women teachers	Observation of friendships between teachers and reluctance to give feedback that might hurt feelings.
	Whether dependence on administration impacts practice (cultural values shape institutional structure and that connection to autonomy)	Observation of a strong reliance on administration and a more general cultural-gendered hierarchy during focus groups.
	The impact of strict Saudi culture on teachers' willingness to receive feedback/give feedback	Possible responses - reasons for unwillingness to provide feedback. Additionally, open-mindedness in implementing suggestions when it is received.
	The impact of strict Saudi culture on willingness to reflect on own teaching practices	Culture does not prioritise/facilitate regular reflection. As a result, they may be willing yet unsure how to proceed.

According to Lederman (1990), a focus group can be defined as a ‘technique involving the use of in-depth group interviews in which participants are selected because they are a purposive, although not necessarily representative, sampling of a specific population, this group being ‘focused’ on a given topic’ (p. 117). Focus groups were chosen for this study to provide an in-depth insight into teachers’ perceptions toward PD, perceived barriers within the Saudi education system and opportunities presented by LS. While it may be argued that focus groups could represent a culturally challenging context for the participants to voice their opinion, the similarity of my background (shared ethnicity, profession and gender) with the interviewees served to address this to a considerable extent.

Rabiee (2004) points out that focus group participants are selected due to the similarity of demographic and socio-characteristics as well as rapport with the co-participants and the researchers, additionally providing information about perceptions and feelings about specific issues and highlighting differences in the perspectives of the participants. As LS which the participants had experienced in the research setting is collaborative in nature, focus groups represented an appropriate method for collecting data about their perceptions of LS.

4.8.3.4 Phase 3

Surveys

In Phase 1, expected data from the participants’ reflective journals could not be made available. Hence, in Phase 3, a survey based on existing instruments was adapted (Appendix M) and disseminated to 116 teachers across Kingdom University. The selected instruments were drawn from questionnaires within *Teachers Know Best: Teachers' Views on PD*. ERIC Clearinghouse (2014), *OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)* (2009) and *Teachers' perceptions of PD experiences* (Williams, 2014).

(see Appendix N)

This survey focused on quantifying teacher's background characteristics for clearer analysis, more details about PD experiences, and teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices toward PD. I designed the survey questions to answer RQ4. The survey was conducted as part of a study to address EFL teachers' experiences and perceptions of PD at the present university. As in a regular everyday conversation, teachers are not likely to talk about their PD because of self-consciousness and anxiety over perceived judgements. Therefore, in an anonymous survey, the teachers may be willing to disclose more about their attitudes and opinions (Kennedy, 2009).

This survey comprised three sections. Section 1 sought information on the background of a teacher, whereas Section 2 contained questions on their PD at the present university. Section 3 contained questions related to beliefs, practices and attitudes towards PD. The survey did not take more than 45 minutes to complete. The confidentiality and anonymity of the responses were assured by keeping participants' responses stored on a password-protected computer. The survey was structured as follows (see Table 3 below):

Table 3
Summary of survey questions in relation to RQs and aims and objectives of the RQs

Research Question	*Aim of RQ Addressed*	*Survey Questions*
SECTION 1 : *TEACHERS' BACKGROUND from Q1-Q5*	*To highlight demographic information that is critical for collecting data on research participants and determining whether the participants in my study constitute a representative sample for the target population for generalisation purposes.*	- What is your age? - What is your employment status at the university? - Please indicate the highest qualification which you have completed. - Please indicate your designation at this university. - Excluding career breaks (if any), please indicate the number of years you have worked as a teacher.
This section goes towards answering RQ1. SECTION 2: PD from Q6-Q9	*Given that the current research examined the possibility of implementing LS as a PD tool, these questions focus on PD and the influence of the activities that they have undertaken on the teacher's development and the effectiveness of the PD they've received.*	- In the box below, please indicate the number of days you were engaged in PD over the last 12 months. - Thinking about less formal PD, during the last 12 months, did you participate in any of the following activities, and what was the impact of these activities on your development as a teacher? - Thinking of your own PD needs, please indicate the extent to which you have such needs in each of the areas listed. - Since joining the present institution, have you participated in any of the following types of PD activities (A), and what has been the impact of these activities on your development as a teacher (B)?
This section goes towards answering RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4 SECTION 3: TEACHING PRACTICES, BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS PD from Q10-Q15	*These questions examined teaching practices and whether participants considered PD useful or stimulating.* - Q10 focused on exploring further PD opportunities. - Q11 and Q12 were related to lesson study, asking teachers whether they have heard of LS and engaged in using it, and the teachers received responses on collaboration, which is an attitude that is a component of LS. - Q13 focused on teachers' perspectives towards PD. - Q14 enquired about their preferred tools to achieve PD, which may be an activity similar to LS. And so, my RQs on the feasibility of doing LS will be answered. - In Q15, participants discussed any barriers or challenges keeping them from engaging in PD, as well as strategies to improve it.	- How often do you do the following at this university? Please mark one choice in each row: - In the table below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the given statements. Please mark only one response per row: - Based on your past experience and/or perception, how helpful do you perceive small group collaboration for PD to be in supporting each of the following activities? - In the table below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the given statements. Please mark only one response in each row.

4.9 Exclusion of some questions:

Because the original survey was excessively long and risked participant non-completion, I reduced the number of questions. I also removed questions that were redundant or similar.

4.10 Data Analysis

4.10.1 CHAT Analysis

Data from a range of sources were collected on the participating Saudi women EFL teachers participating in the study. These included (i) pre and post-LS cycle semi-structured interviews (ii) Lesson cycle evaluations, observations, and feedback, (iii) classroom observations, (iv) focus group, and (v) survey. The questionnaire collected data on the demographic profile as well as the PD experiences and perceptions and practices of the participants. In the interviews, I inquired into the participating teachers' perceptions of PD prior to the LS cycles and their perceptions of lesson study following the implementation of the LS cycles. The focus group data sought to inquire into the participants' experiences and perceptions of LS once the intervention had been completed. The qualitative data were analysed to map how the practitioners, tools and community interacted and the impact of societal and cultural influences on the teachers' work and PD. The survey which was aimed at canvassing the opinions of teachers across the university in the research setting as to their professional development and perceptions of LS as a PD approach helped to evaluate how the wider community of teachers felt about their professional development.

A large amount of qualitative data was generated from this research study. The data consisted of interview recordings from each of the phases. The transcripts were analysed via the categorisation of the data into themes and subthemes.

Data from the focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed personally for data security. I used otter.ai website to provide the initial transcription, which I then manually corrected. Datasets in the form of transcribed focus group interview data, and from teacher diaries were subjected to separate thematic analysis (Braun &

Clarke, 2006) in order to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within data. I used the deductive reasoning approach from Braun and Clarke (2006), which meant that themes and codes were developed based on the research questions as opposed to the inductive approach, where themes and codes are progressively refined. I used this approach as it allowed me to drive the analysis based on my specific research questions and the items that I wanted to explore in more detail, as opposed to seeing what information the data generates. Themes and codes were generated using NVivo. (see Appendix O)

There were six steps involved in the thematic analysis procedure as elaborated by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the first stage, I read and re-read the data, which comprised a familiarisation process that I went through to understand my findings and their meaning. This involved going through the transcripts from interviews and focus groups to understand the emergent data. In the next step, I coded the data, which comprised the initial code-development exercise. In this step, I looked for the initial codes from the transcripts, with the intention of revisiting and refining them later after exploring the rest of the data. In the third step, I searched for themes, which were developed based on the initial codes I identified in the interview and focus group transcripts. In the fourth step, I reviewed the themes, which involved reading through the transcript again, and refining/changing the existing themes. In the fifth step, I named the themes, which was the final name of the themes guiding my discussion of the results and analysis across all data collection methods I had used. The last step was producing a presentation of the results. Nowell et al. (2017) noted that thematic analysis is a highly flexible approach due to its ‘theoretical freedom’ and that it can be adapted to address the needs of research across the spectrum. Further, it lends itself to easy comparison across data from different participants and proves useful for analysing large amounts of data.

4.10.2 Statistical testing

For the quantitative component, data from the surveys were analysed using SPSS. All data from the surveys were imported into SPSS. I recoded data into numeric versions of variables for the analyses. I conducted descriptive statistics, frequency testing of the categorical variables, and correlation testing to measure the relationship between variables.

4.11 Credibility and Generalizability

In this section, I drew upon the advice offered by Melrose (2001) to ensure that the proposed study conformed to the criteria of credibility and change. To ensure credibility of the study, I undertook the following steps: i) negotiating the type and method of data to be collected in addition to the criteria for relevant data within the framework of the study with the participants, ii) collection of data from multiple sources to identify 'themes or patterns' and 'reasons [for] anomalies' across datasets if any so as to 'illuminate the situation or practice', iii) confirmation of participants as to the interpretations made by the researcher writing the research report and iv) an audit trail of research evidence presented clearly for the benefit of the readership.

Further, the use of multiple data sources (interviews, surveys, and focus group discussion) was aimed to allow for exploring different aspects of LS as a PD approach. Further, I used member checks to confirm participant agreement with the interpretation arising out of the analyses. Member checks are defined as the 'transaction between researchers and participants whereby data are played back to participants' so as to ensure that participant and researcher interpretations of the data match derived and such 'members' evaluations are the gold standard against which researchers' analytic and interpretive efforts are judged' (Sandelowski, 2008, p.501). I implemented this by conducting an analysis of the focus group interviews and then sending the participants definitions of the codes and themes I had identified. I sent these to the participants and provided a timescale of one week to allow them to respond. The estimated time commitment for participants to complete the member-checking was approximately 30-45 minutes.

4.12 Ethical Considerations

In line with guidelines offered by Melrose (2001), I secured appropriate permission from stakeholders and participants (Appendix P) in advance of the research and remained receptive to participant suggestions as to research direction and foci. In addition, I secured informed consent on the part of the participants by ensuring that they have ‘information about the purpose, methods, demands, risks (such as inconveniences or discomfort), and possible outcomes of the research, including whether and how the research results might be disseminated’ along with a ‘with a list of their rights and a range of information they can request’ (Israel & Hay, 2008, p.432). The post-focus group discussion, which occurred in the evening hours via Zoom, would have been an inconvenience for some, particularly those who cannot spend a long time in front of a computer screen. In order to accommodate this, I arranged regular breaks and ensured to inform the participants that they can leave or withdraw from the study at any point as part of their rights. The participants were also asked to read and sign the informed consent form provided by the university where I am enrolled, and they were apprised of their right to withdraw from the research at any point in time, in addition to being assured as to the confidentiality of their data.

To protect the confidentiality of the participants, I replaced participants’ names with pseudonyms and de-identified the data through the removal of personally identifiable information (PII). In addition, British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) guidelines were taken into account to ensure that the current study promoted respect among participants and celebrated the diversity of educational practices adopted by different practitioners (Appendix Q). At the start of the study, it was made clear to the participants that the study was not about evaluating any participant’s performance and that differences in pedagogical choices and practices were to be respected. I did not expect the study to cause harm to the participants. However, participants had the option to opt out from the study at any point, in the event that such risk arose. Moreover, I sought to demonstrate respect, integrity, and honesty when interacting with all participants.

One of the methods outlined in the current study was the focus group interview with participating teachers at different stages of the LS cycle. Smith (1995) has argued that focus group interviews give rise to very specific ethical issues due to the interactional nature of the interview encounter comprising multiple participants and the moderator. According to Smith (1995), a key issue is that focus groups do not comprise extended and deep personal involvement that may be more typical of face-to-face interviews between a single participant and researcher. This is identified by Smith (1995) as being problematic because when participants interact within the focus group, their input transpires within a ‘social context’, thus creating an atmosphere of disclosure that may lead to oversharing of personal information. Further, focus group participants run the risk of revealing themselves not just to the researcher but also to other participants, and this makes it difficult for the researcher to ensure confidentiality of what has been shared if participants choose to discuss this beyond the group (Smith, 1995). On the other hand, some of the participants had already known one another, given that they were all members of the women’s faculty at the same university. They had ongoing relationships during work. I ensured that these relationships stayed positive by modelling mutual respect and tolerance for differences in practice. This motivated them to interact positively as colleagues.

Further, Smith (1995) adds that some participants may experience stress as the nature of interaction within the group is intense. To address these issues within the current study, the researcher ensured the confidentiality of data by clarifying that member contributions were shared not just with the researcher moderating the group but also other members of the group and by encouraging the participants to treat what they hear within the group as confidential (Gibbs, 1997). In line with the guidelines offered by Gibbs (1997), the researcher also ensured that the data generated within the focus group interactions was confidential. In the current study, stress experienced during the focus group meeting was addressed by holding a post-interview debriefing session that would provide participants with a space to discuss their reactions to the interview interaction (Smith, 1995).

Another issue with focus groups pertained to power differentials among participants. This may occur if the participants are of different “ranks” or levels of experience or standing in the faculty. For instance, Bloor (2001) pointed out that there is a tendency to view focus groups as suitable settings for research that addresses nuanced topics as it is believed that participants ‘may feel empowered and supported in the co-presence of those similarly situated to themselves’. However, Bloor (2001) noted that this does not exclude the possibility of power differentials instantiating during the focus group encounters for even though focus groups are dynamic and not directly regulated by the researcher, ‘internal hierarchies’ are likely to persist within the group which may lead to the silencing of views by participants with less power and status. With regard to the current study, I strove to manage these power differentials by moderating the focus group discussions to allow for the equal projection of all participants' voices. Further, in line with the advice offered by Bloor (2001), all participants that took part in the study had the same job title (EFL teachers), but many had different levels of experience between them. The aim of this recruitment was to seek participants with as much teaching experience as possible in order to provide in-depth knowledge of their experiences and attitudes with respect to PD and teaching practices.

As the source of another ethical concern, there was also the need to look at the ethics of transcription within focus group interviews. Research into the transcription process by Mero-Jaffe (2011) suggests that as the interview encounter is inherently embedded within a power relationship, there is a need to address these power differentials. Following the steps taken by Mero-Jaffe (2011) in her study, I addressed these issues of power by transferring the transcripts to the focus group participants so that they can 'validate the transcripts,' which would help to ensure ethical research and empowerment of the interviews by transferring control over what has been transcribed to the interviewees, thus providing them with opportunities to ask for corrections to what has been transcribed and redactions and deletions to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of data.

4.13 Reflexivity and Researcher Ethics in Research

Drawing upon her experience of carrying out a study designed to examine inter-generational dynamics and education amongst British Asian families, Basit (2013) highlights the need for researcher reflexivity and attention to research ethics in evolving research design. In this paper, she makes the point that as value-free research is not possible and as researchers are part of the same social world as their participants, it is important to practice reflexivity in terms of methodological choices and ethics.

In her study, Basit sought to interview children, their parents and their grandparents to understand access to education amongst British Asian families in the UK. During the course of setting up her study, Basit faced many challenges pertaining to approval from regulatory bodies such as the University ethics committee, negotiating access to target participants and adjusting research design in response to withdrawal of participants from the study. For instance, Basit had intended to collect data via digital ethnography by the participating students and to use the images they had taken on the research theme as a pivot for interview conversations with the students. However, due to ethical concerns by a single committee member over the possibility of students taking unflattering photos of teachers and students at school and posting them to social media, Basit had to switch to providing the participants with disposable cameras which entailed having the images, once captured, developed and digitised for copying on a CD-ROM and the researcher's computer for analysis, a time-consuming process that obstructed her research to a great extent. As a researcher of British Asian heritage, Basit also found that she had to be aware of pre-conceived ideas about the kind of ethnic groups she needed to include in her research.

Negotiating access to the participants also proved to be challenging for Basit, as she tried to select suitable research sites and participants with the help of the LEAs. When explaining her research to one school head in particular, Basit also faced difficulties in being allowed access to the target sample as the head was adamant that no single ethnic group should be singled out for participation in the study, although the focus of the research was on British Asian families. Herein the flexibility of research design became important for Basit, who also turned to local faith groups and other platforms to seek and enrol target participants. Basit constructed a methodology wherein participants were interviewed in single-gender groups, with the specific intent of allowing women students the space to share their views without feeling hindered or impacted by the view of their male counterparts, and vice versa. Basit asserts that such an approach facilitated the collection of rich and insightful data from the interviewees, though the study was impacted to a degree by the fact that ss some of the participants withdrew from the study for a range of reasons, Basit had to work out a way to reach out to more potential participants and to secure their consent to participate in the study.

Thus, based on insights gleaned from the paper by Basit (2013), this study also strives to practice reflexivity by engaging in reflection, introspection and critical analysis (Basit, 2010, p.220 in Basit, 2013, p.509) at all stages of the study, with a freedom to make necessary adjustments to the research design as required, and with particular reference to ethicality and participant welfare. Such reflexivity governs choices throughout this study, particularly in relation to data collection and institutional approval, where access to target participants and changes to research design necessitated by participant withdrawal require re-approval by regulatory bodies.

A first part of engaging in said reflection, introspection and critical analysis is recognising that even with the most considered methodology and efforts to uphold the highest standards of ethicality through conformance with formal mechanisms, the process of research and the presence of a researcher will always have an impact on the subjects participating. As the findings in Section Five illustrate, a common theme relating to the practice of LS is the issues Saudi teachers have – culturally – with the idea of mutual assessment and evaluation, demonstrating a high preference for hierarchy in the process of giving and receiving feedback. For participants, there is a general feeling that feedback should flow unidirectionally, downstream, through formal mechanisms. If then they feel this in the professional setting, there are obvious parallels regarding concepts of observation and perceived evaluation when the teachers in question are acting as research subjects. Questions about the right and authority of a relatively young educator to come in, ‘suggest’ changes and evaluate the success with which these changes are implemented can be seen not as an effort to evaluate or critique the intervention (i.e. LS) itself, but to evaluate and critique the *subjects* in their efforts to fulfil the requested change. Whilst this is obviously *not* the intention of the study, it may be felt to be an inherent and unavoidable by-product by the subjects – one made all the more complex by the multifaceted role that I by necessity must undertake within the intervention, acting first as LS facilitator, before ‘transferring over’ to become evaluator of the intervention. In a non-research-based setting, if a person were to administer training and then evaluate performance, that evaluation would necessarily be *of the subjects taking the course,* and how well they had absorbed and put into practice the relevant information. But the fact is that in this research context, it is not *their inherent ability, performance or diligence* I am measuring, but the structural factors that might limit the very possibility of them implementing the intervention effectively. The difference is subtle, but vital, and it may be difficult to communicate that nuance to participants, leading to a situation in which subjects feel inherently judged – a fact that could have a negative impact on their morale and future practice.

The fact too that as a researcher I have brought these pedagogies from ‘Western’ educational systems and myself maintain a ‘progressive’ attitude towards gender equality and teaching practices in general can also itself seem like an implicit criticism of Saudi culture in general, Saudi educational systems more specifically but more pertinently, *a criticism of those who partake in them or find them valuable*. I do indeed think that there is room for significant improvement in the Saudi system (as there is in every educational system), and I do believe that many of those problems step specifically from the religious, cultural and political context of Saudi Arabia. But my criticisms are structural, and my research aims to examine those structures, and not the specific people within them – though it is, of course, unavoidable that people are an inherent *part of* structures.

The best that can be achieved in attempting to counteract the complexity that arises from ostensibly ‘suggesting changes’ through an intervention-based structure, and appearing to ‘evaluate peers’ when I am in fact evaluating systems is a process of open, transparent and clear communication of my intentions, my beliefs and my positionality. I must own the fact that my choice to engage in research will impact the individuals who participate – in ways I cannot fully predict or control, and not always for the better. Ethical practice requires that I work to minimise those ways as far as possible, and put in place structures that allow my participants to express their fears, frustrations and challenges – both concerning the intervention being tested (which is of course a central aim of the study), but also in relation to their role as research participants.

4.14 Limitations of the Methods

One of the major challenges associated with conducting research among teachers in Saudi Universities is gender segregation in the Saudi public sphere. Within Saudi Arabia, legally mandated gender segregation in public spaces means that universities are typically divided into men’s and women’s faculties (Khan, 2011). This presents significant limitations when conducting research, as it is often difficult to establish access to both men’s and women’s departments. The current study focused on women teachers in Saudi Arabia, in part due to these constraints, and in part because numerous research studies have highlighted that gender segregation affects women disproportionately in Saudi Arabia, meaning that they are excluded from many PD opportunities that are otherwise open to men (Al-Hamzi, 2003). However, as part of these delimitations, there are potential limits with respect to the transferability of the findings to male teachers.

Linked to this is an additional important challenge for the research study. This is the management of the participants’ inevitable anxiety that has naturally developed from their exposure to scrutiny. It must be remembered that introducing the LS concept into Saudi Arabian classrooms is novel. Saudi women teachers in particular are unaccustomed to lesson scrutiny and criticism, except in performance evaluation proceedings. Thus, there could be significant challenges when encouraging these teachers to discuss and reflect meaningfully. Similarly, it is possible that the participating teachers may conduct the research lesson falsely, in a manner that does not radiate their normal teaching practices.

4.15 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the approach, design, and process of collecting data used in the current study. This chapter discussed the context of the current enquiry, previous research, current research questions, overview of methodology and research design, theoretical framework, data collection process, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the current study. The next chapter will provide an overview of the study’s findings.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted in three phases. In the first phase, the study included the process of collaborative lesson planning and the process of subsequently evaluating the lessons, based on observations made by peers and myself within the process of using LS. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and focus group with a total of four participants. In order to supplement the data from interviews and focus groups, I conducted a second phase, where she distributed a survey questionnaire to a total of 25 EFL teachers working at the Kingdom University of Saudi Arabia. The results chapter has been structured to answer each research question chronologically, with research questions 1-3 consisting of data from interviews and focus groups, and research question 4 consisting of data from the survey only. Data analysis in this chapter will be divided per research question, and all themes that have emerged for that research question will be discussed. Throughout this chapter, data will be analysed through the CHAT lens.

5.1 Opportunities posed by LS as an avenue for PD among EFL women teachers in Saudi Arabia

The first section of this analysis refers to the opportunities posed by LS in the Saudi EFL teaching environment. Some interviews and focus groups took place after the process of collaborative lesson planning and the process of subsequent evaluating of the lessons, based on observations made by peers within the process. At that point, the teachers were yet to implement LS in their own teaching. Some of the themes were centred around opportunities, which occurred during the first phase of the study, that is the interviews before the implementation of LS.

5.1.1 Need for establishing teaching practices through more effective PD

This section was divided into three subsections, which collectively relate to the ways that teachers can improve their teaching practices through more effective PD. First, the teachers reflected on their previous experiences of PD. Then, the teachers discussed students' needs as an important factor in improving teaching practices. Last, teachers have discussed how they can change their existing teaching practices.

5.1.2 Prior experiences of PD

When asked to comment on the existing PD opportunities available to them, some of the participants viewed the workshops organised by the management, as somewhat positive while others tended to view these workshops and training as having restricted utility for them. For instance, one of the interviewees observed that:

> *To be honest because it's a starting university, its actually Impressive. The number of workshops we've had. Notice it's actually mandatory for each teacher to attend at least three workshops per semester to be counted in her valuation.* {Interview, T. Najd, Nov.2019}

Here it is very clear that teachers previously only attended mandatory workshop sessions, which were prearranged by the institution and the same for all teachers. These types of workshops tend to be designed in the same format for each teacher without considering their specialism or experience, leading to a very limited development experience in general. Specifically, the emphasis in Saudi Arabia appears to be on the mandatory workshops, where teachers are simply taught the same material, with limited room to contribute to sharing knowledge. According to Foot (2014, p.3), the power of LS is that it allows researchers to apprehend the "systemic whole of an activity" rather than its discrete components alone, which allows them to analyse "a multitude of relations within an activity system" at a single point in time and as it develops over a period of time. Thus, rather than focusing on one element of PD alone (such as workshops) LS promotes the idea of developing through multiple activities, which is not the experience that Saudi teachers have had in the past. Saudi Arabia had historically experienced challenges in the training and development area, due to legislative, economical, demographical, and technological aspects (Hamdan, 2015). This potentially represents a significant limitation of the current model of PD for Saudi teachers. However, as current participants had limited prior experience with LS, this may potentially make the process more challenging for them to adopt.

However, while agreeing that some of these workshops were beneficial, as the extract shows, the interviewee distinguished between these by noting that while the training aimed for the ideal kind of practice, they were not always 'practical':

> *I mean sometimes aren't very beneficial. Yeah, it's more like opening your eyes to things, but doesn't mean that these things could work in your classroom teachers are really different teachers, different students, and different classroom environments are different so it's not always helpful.* {Interview, T. Wassan, Nov.2019}

Workshops in a Saudi setting are structured in a way that the more experienced member of the team teaches others about new material. Although one of the goals of LS is to implement new ways of doing things in the classroom, some teachers may not find this approach beneficial to their setting. Further, Sywelem and Witte (2013, p.888) noted that PD in KSA largely takes the form of pre-service or in-service training and that these programmes are characterised by a dearth of "strategic plans to develop teacher's knowledge and skills." Although the knowledge from others can be for personal development, ultimately some teachers will vary greatly in their classroom experience, thus, the knowledge that they share during workshops would not be applicable. Thus, the risk is that a PD system based on LS can only raise knowledge to a limit that is inherently correlated with the knowledge of its most experienced member and the learning environment can create knowledge that exceeds that of its most experienced person because it builds upon the knowledge of the collective cognitively, something that is a common practice in Saudi institutions. But it can only build so much based on the core building blocks of knowledge that the group has to work with initially, and so is in effect 'tethered' at a certain level.

As the extract below shows, PD for Saudi teachers is available on-site or in-house, with no funding being available for training outside the university:

> *If there is a workshop you want to go outside from the school… Honestly, makes sense because there's something that you want. Although you wanted to improve your work which is for them, I still mean that each teacher will be asking for a different workshop. Then, they have to pay for it. As I said it's a new university they're still trying to build.* {Interview, T. Najd, Nov.2019}

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) highlighted the need for PD that is embedded into the job. They argued that effective PD should be "situated in teachers' classrooms with their students, as opposed to generic PD delivered externally or divorced from teachers' school…contexts" (Darling-Hammond et al, 2017, p.5). In Saudi Arabia, teachers are not learning within their own classrooms, instead, they attend a generic workshop, which is offered to all other teachers, regardless of experience. As a result, this would suggest not only that such PD is decontextualised from the teachers' local practice but also that the PD is provided sporadically rather than as a continuum. Given also that such PD is tactical rather than tied to long-term plans to improve teachers' repertoire of skills and expertise, Saudi teachers receiving the PD are likely unlikely to experience ongoing, planned and strategic PD.

One interviewee is pointing out the difficulty of external engagement with a wider community and taking part in PD activities like workshops, due to funding constraints. The participant revealed fewer positive perceptions of the workshops at the institution:

> *It's not well organised, it doesn't meet the needs of the teachers unfortunately. Umm... I only attend these workshops, to tell you the truth. Just to gain points in my evaluation* {Interview, T. Assel, Nov.2019}.

Some of the participants have expressed less favourable comments about the workshops, however, these have not been included in this thesis fully in order to protect the identity of the participants and the potential implications this may have on their professional setting (BERA, 2011). However, as the extract above shows, this implies a prevalence of performativity agendas in PD – measured outcomes and judgements about teacher effectiveness.

Drawing upon Pekrun's Control Value Theory (2000), Thompson and Turner (2019) noted that teachers' perceptions of the extent of control they have can determine the value they accord behaviour in regard to PD and linked outcomes. For instance, if the "teachers perceive they do not have some control with respect to the implementation of the PD (e.g., they feel coerced to do so, such as attend a mandatory workshop) and/or they do not see some value for the innovation, they will experience both negative emotions and low/no motivation to participate" (Thompson & Turner, 2019, p.1). When compared with the PD initiatives available at more well-established universities, another participant stressed that the university in the research setting needed to do ‘a lot of work’ to bring their efforts on par with other higher education institutions:

> *Honestly, they're average, not updated nor outdated... they're developing their teachers but comparing it with other universities like [name] and others, no. still a lot of work is needed.* {Interview, T. Wassan, Nov.2019}

Further, as the extract below shows, workshop facilitators were selected not on the basis of their expertise but rather based on whoever was willing to volunteer and lead the training:

> *They just provided it, whether you get the benefit out of it or not. They're just like asking random teachers just to volunteer and do a workshop.* {Interview, T. Wassan, Nov.2019}

From the analysis above, it is evident that existing training/workshop provision in the research setting was largely unsatisfactory for several reasons, including its ad-hoc nature, lack of relevance, outdated input and dearth of teacher input that could improve the usefulness of the trainings. Data analysis also revealed that there was limited support in the research setting for PD by means of enrolment in university programmes for higher education:

> *Ah, write a proposal because it isn't something that they give us here in Saudi so like about we have to look for international universities and when you want to look for International University takes a year to get into any course. Yeah, so we have to start.* {Interview, T. Haifa, Nov.2019}

Interestingly, interview data also revealed that another challenge for PD via higher education was of the narrowness of the specialisation choices available to interested teachers. As the extracts below show, the university was keen to sponsor teachers of studies in TESOL but not in other areas:

> *Of course, they are the financial sponsors. They're telling us to go but the problem is now this year, they are focusing on one area which is a PhD in TESOL.* {Interview, T. Wassan, Nov.2019}

Thus, as the analysis shows, Saudi teachers experienced limited support for PD for a variety of reasons, ranging from the need to gain admissions to international universities, issues pertaining to nominations for higher studies and sponsorship for restricted specialisations, which are all factors that are inflicted by the Saudi institutional structure. The professional development they received was limited and was not in line with the PD concepts promoted by LS. The current PD approaches did not account for the fact that all teachers vary greatly in their experiences, knowledge, and practice, which can make PD practices such as workshops not practical. From the CHAT perspective, Saudi Arabia historically did not invest into the training and development of its workforce until recently, when it began to recognise the importance of offering opportunities to the young workforce as part of the Saudisation of the nation (Government of Saudi Arabia, n.d.). Darby (2008) found that with the support of university mentors, the teachers were able to re-compose their professional self-understandings, improve their practice and contribute to improvements in learners' attainment on an ongoing basis. However, such cannot be observed in the Saudi setting, as all teachers are treated the same with respect to their PD and receive limited opportunities to take ownership of their learning.

5.1.3 Ability to address different needs of students

This theme was important to include, as the needs of students formed the foundation for many of the concerns which teachers had toward LS. Analysis of interview data showed that the teachers view PD through LS as providing them with the capacity to address the diverse needs of the learners. For instance, as one interviewee noted, LS gave them the opportunity and space to explore 'alternatives and solutions' by discussing difficulties faced by their students:

> *As, like say other voices and we all have the same, let's say, students with difficulties so we can discuss them together we can try to find alternatives and solutions.* {Interview, T. Haifa, Jan.2020}

LS also appeared to help the teachers to learn to pay attention to student preferences as part of their teaching which in turn motivated the students:

> *The first thing I take away from the LS cycles is we have to hear our students' preferences more than us. It's kind of motivating them…Now I am thinking of my students first before delivering the lesson to clarify the rules on the board.* {Interview, T. Wassan, Jan.2020}

Through LS, the teachers seek to enhance the ability of students to obtain taught skills as well as concepts. To delineate this further, teachers aim to not only teach students content related to the subject studied but also to support them in obtaining the necessary skills that can assist them with learning (Fernandez, 2002). This can include effective research skills, structuring answers, identifying key issues in questions and the general ability to understand the intended purpose of any literature (Fernandez, 2002). This can be clearly seen in the abstract above, where Saudi teacher clearly identified their priority for students when delivering their lessons. Historically, incorporating students' feedback into learning was considered risky by the Saudi teachers, who felt like incorporating students' feedback may lead to incorporating more foreign cultures and geopolitically sensitive contexts into their learning, which made the Saudi education system less inclusive of opinions of students. As the extracts show, LS provides teachers with a forum for professional conversations with positive outcomes for student learning, which helps to shift away from the rigid teaching practices of Saudi universities.

5.1.4 Reflecting on and changing teaching practices

The teachers have accounted for their past experience with PD and the core concept behind PD – students' needs. However, the teachers have also started to reflect on ways that their teaching practices can be changed through LS. LS was perceived as encouraging the participating teachers to learn to reflect on their practice and to modify it in line with students' needs. For instance, one interviewee observed that there had been a tendency to 'deliver' lessons without paying much attention to what was actually happening in the classroom:

> *We deliver and we don't really pay too much attention to what's happening there. Is there a problem now that there is more analysing for what happened for the activities the classes?* {Interview, T. Assel, Jan.2020}

Working together and doing LS made it possible for teacher participants to look at the lesson plan holistically, rather than as a chore that needed to be accomplished, as noted by Teacher Assel:

> *Now I see the whole picture of the lesson, not even like just I'm just delivering I'm just need to prepare for the exam the matrix and that's it.* {Interview, T. Assel., Jan.2020}

As the extract above shows, LS allowed the teachers to view their lesson planning as something much wider than simply a preparation of students for their exams. Indeed, the teacher above recognises the opportunities for the inclusion of learning within their lesson planning. LS also enabled participating teachers to focus on students facing challenges in learning and to come up with ways to help them and solve the problem, as highlighted below:

> *I'm trying to notice what were their reactions I think before, but I feel now it's being done more elaborative because we're doing it together and we so that also gives me the opportunity to think about not alone, not doing my own lessons. We focus on certain students and then we'll try to see there are things that we can look at the things that we deal with and how to solve this problem* {Interview, T. Assel, Jan.2020}

Indeed, the teacher-researcher collaboration can help the teachers to increase their focus on student learning (particularly those suffering from learning disabilities) based on the deep analysis by the teacher-observer, which can be clearly seen from the extract above. This was highlighted by Klefbeck (2020), who found that students' knowledge increased as a result of teachers' adjusting their lessons subject to feedback and students' learning needs. For Teacher Haifa, reflecting as part of LS led to an increased capacity to adjust her teaching to the level of her students by thinking about her practice:

> *I feel like it's gonna be a very huge change before… I feel like, cuz I'm teaching now the same level 101 So I'm starting to reflect on my teaching and how can I change it to my students' level.* {Interview, T. Haifa., Jan.2020}

For teacher Najd, reflecting as part of LS played a pivotal role in changing who she was as a professional. For instance, as the extract below shows, teacher Najd experienced an increased capacity to adjust her teaching effectively when she learned to observe, reflect critically and seek feedback on how she was giving instructions for an activity:

> *So, I see myself now reflecting on lessons after each lesson, thinking more about the students' needs. it changes me in a way. I started doing different things. First, I give like more guidelines before any activity… And some students didn't get so like I need to give to be clearer on giving like guidelines and instructions.* {Interview, T. Najd, Jan.2020}

The extract below shows the thoughts of the teacher from an interview that was conducted during the LS period. The extract below shows the thoughts of another teacher, which were gathered after a significant amount of time had passed. In the extracts below, a number of ideas for increasing instructional effectiveness are shared by the teacher participant:

> *And instead of delivering, we need to change the way the lectures way workshops are that we have in our institution is like lecturing students and teachers although we are at the same stage and level. I don't like the way workshops are structured just like teachers and students. You attend your lesson and then you go out and you get nothing out of these workshops.* {Focus group 2, T. Wassan, Nov.2021}

The extract above shows that as the teacher had a chance to consider ways of improving their teaching practice, they became more critical of the existing teaching processes in their institution. Stemming on from this idea is the more general notion that reflection required teachers to take a more active involvement in their teaching practices, becoming far more than a mere conduit that was administering content and learning stipulated by someone else, and instead be required to confront their own relationship and place within the sphere of PD and their role as teachers more generally within their cultural context. Paavola et al. (2004) assert that within a narrowly drawn collective or group (such as a group of teachers at a Kingdom University), the mediating tools that we might use to influence or affect our knowledge process can fall into one of three broad categories; knowledge can 'independently exist' outside of that group and be ported in, knowledge can be disseminated within the group through the process of participation, or knowledge can in effect be 'created' through mental/cognitive processing of existing information to create new understanding. Some of these can be immediately seen from the extracts, as teachers recognise the importance of collaboration and learning from others as a way of developing and recognising their own teaching practices. It is immediately apparent simply from the conceptual nature of the model that when practiced as a group, the above stages readily contribute to knowledge dissemination between members of the group (through discussion and sharing), but also, through the process of analysis and reflection, call for a level of cognitive engagement that is core to the process of knowledge creation (Cheng & Ling, 2013). Respondents indicated that this gave them a sense of 'responsibility' in their practice, driving them to engage more comprehensively with elements of planning, experimentation, evaluation and discussion.

5.1.5 Prospects for collaboration through LS

Data from the Phase 1 interviews showed that participants viewed collaboration in the context of LS, as the means to work together and share resources to aid one another's teaching. There were many extracts from the interviews where participants discussed the opportunities presented by LS for more collaborative working. Analysis of interview data showed that the participating teachers had collaborated more in terms of working together and sharing resources in the previous year. However, after the implementation of the new curriculum from National Geographic, such collaboration had given way to the practice of teachers working alone and relying on the teacher book, rule-following and the pacing guide to delivering their lessons. For example, Teacher Assel noted that:

> *I work kinda solo as the new curriculum from National Geographic helps us, even more, to work alone. While last year, we used to have a curriculum where it is all about collaborative work, we had to work together, and share resources all the time. But this time, we have a teacher's book, follow the rules and the pacing guide.* {Interview, T. Aseel, Nov.2019}

This extract reveals ways of working dictated by policymakers and implemented by university managers that steer the teachers to work alone by providing them with self-contained resources to guide their teaching appear to be embedded in the new textbook from National Geographic. This is not an uncommon practice in Saudi Arabia, which is a society of historical segregation of genders, where collaboration between teachers has not been as common as in Western countries (Elyas & Picard, 2010). This also suggests that the teachers lose the opportunity to use collegial collaboration as a lever for developing their understanding of praxis or for addressing the unique challenges faced by their learners within the local context.

Professional development under the LS approach, which makes use of collaboration and enables self-led PD, can motivate teachers to evolve their practice and undertake professional learning. For instance, as the extract below reveals, collaborating at the very basic level can involve the sharing of resources via collaborative IT tools so that teacher colleagues can improve their practice:

> *We gather together when we have exams, we will use google drive to share an interesting exercise, slides or anything to practice. So I found a piece of teaching. I fell in love with a very new technique.* {Interview, T. Assel, Nov.2019}

What this extract from data affirms is that they had a fairly clear understanding of collaboration as one component of LS approach entailed after the demonstration. LS gives the participating teachers a platform to build their knowledge base as it requires the teachers to move beyond their tendency to isolate themselves and encourages collaborative effort towards developing improvements in teaching that impact both teachers and their students positively (Chokshi & Fernandez, 2005). Cultural norms (e.g. institutional policies and institutional culture) tend to obstruct the Saudi EFL teachers as they try to engage in interaction with their immediate working community (e.g. management, colleagues, students and parents), which moves away from the collaborative aspect proposed by LS. This is a cultural contradiction, which Engeström (2001, p. 137) describes as “historically accumulating structure tensions within and between activity systems,” which can only be resolved through collective and collaborative actions as opposed to solely individual actions, such as CHAT (Engeström, 2001, p.16). As the extract above shows, LS helped teachers with collaborating at the very basic level, which included sharing resources via collaborative IT tools so that teacher colleagues can improve their practice.

The value of LS was also shown in teacher perceptions of how it opened up opportunities for “learning from each other” and gaining new insights and perspectives based on the experiences of others. One of the main components of CHAT discusses the community which is made up of individuals who share interest in the object with the subject or actor, and the relation between the subject and the community which share an interest in the same object, which can create room for collaboration and sharing ideas between these individuals (Foot, 2014, p.6). As one of the interviewees noted:

> *The most thing that I remember the most important things that the collaboration how we guys were, how we were learning from each other. They were adding to each other's experiences.* {Interview, T. Assel, Jan.2020}

Earlier research has also shown that when teachers are provided with opportunities for collaboration, they are more motivated to address the challenges in their teaching and to carry on implementing reforms to their practice (Darby, 2008). Thus, the teachers (subjects) are using the tools from the LS (i.e. the collaborative aspect), as a way to reach their PD (object) and overcome the cultural and historical teaching practices of the Saudi education system. The tools of the LS play a key role in helping teachers to understand their professional challenges and through discussing with others, they are able to explore new ways of changing their practice.

Further, as the focus of the observations was not on flaws, the observed teachers do not feel the pressure of observations for evaluative purposes. This is more likely to encourage teachers to introduce a more open and collaborative space with other teachers. As one participant said:

> *Yes, we're in this in the same boat together and we're just discussing and we're just going through this and we're observing what the other teachers teaching, but we're not looking at the flaws.* {Interview, T. Haifa, Jan.2020}

However, in some instances, collaborating was also about finding ‘mistakes’ and fixing them but with the emphasis being on correcting them collaboratively. The perception of ‘mistakes’ seems to stem from a shared understanding amongst teacher colleagues of things that were awry with the lesson, as the extract below reveals:

> *So, every time we find more mistakes. And then we correct them, and then we go and find other mistakes. Yeah, and we correct them together.* {Interview, T. Najd, Jan.2020}

Interestingly collegial observations also seemed to offer emotional support to teachers in that they made them less alone when facing problems with the students. From the CHAT perspective, the institutional structures within the Saudi education context do not promote emotional support or collaboration as a way of improving one’s practice, instead, one is expected to work on their improvement individually. As the extract below shows, the observers and their insights offered a figurative fresh pair of eyes to teachers otherwise likely to struggle alone with the challenges of practice:

> *I always try to be updated and read about the trend events, you know, if I have a problem inside my classroom if I have like students with, let's say, difficulties so you study them, yeah, I try to find like try to read some other teachers their solution, the way they experienced this problem also. And then I feel like, Okay, I'm not alone.* {Interview, T. Haifa, Jan.2020}

Thus, it is clear that collaboration helps teachers to identify new ways of improving their classrooms. Based on discourse analysis of the interactions of teachers participating in lesson study, Dudley (2013, p.107) found that LS helped to create “motivating conditions” for the participants to “enable collective access to imagined practice and joint development of micro-practices.” The collective sharing and use of information between teachers are significant because it sets the base for a form of personal development as a teacher in Saudi Arabia, which is typically continuous and progressive in nature, rather than stilted and segmented as promoted by the Saudi education system (Sywelem & Witte, 2013). When the collective holds information, then any new entrant can access it and quickly be brought up to the same level, whereas when personal development is individualistic, then different teachers may be occupying different rungs of different ladders at any given point (Nissila, 2005). LS is a tool that allows Saudi teachers to reach that collective knowledge-sharing within the system of education in Saudi Arabia.

As the interview data showed, observing one another’s classrooms allowed the teachers to learn from colleagues, particularly in terms of learning and implementing new activities in the classroom. As one of the interviewees noted, a key insight from observations was that activities could be very different, reflecting a perception that the most beneficial outcome of LS was the variation of class routines.

> *I remember I learned from Wassan's class, there were like, too many things we asked from them, like to choose a colour. And then to choose another one. So, for me I think the most. The benefit from this experience is how different the activities will be. If it were like excused in different classes.* {Interview, T. Najd, Jan.2020}

As presented in the extract below, another interviewee reported that observations had highlighted the need for teachers to motivate students and to vary their class routines, rather than focus on the book alone. This process can be called knowledge creation, and one of its strengths is that it requires participants to build their knowledge in a contextual setting (Saudi education setting) and invest in the process and contribute effort to introduce new approaches in their practices (Cheng & Ling, 2013), thus supporting their PD. This process of innovation calls for active participation and diverse cognitive processes to be deployed by the teachers, securing the ‘neuro-biological’ component of created knowledge, which helps teachers to continuously improve their teaching practices (Cheng & Ling, 2013). As one participant mentioned below:

> *Yeah, and to motivate students more by doing extra activities and engaging students in groups. More than individual work or pair work, because they get bored, more… So, changing their places is better than sticking to the same place and it's really boring if I do the same routine.* {Interview, T. Wassan, Jan.2020}

The terms used by the participants in the current study with regard to lesson study align with research findings from recent research (Richit, da Ponte & Tomasi, 2021), which suggest that LS provides teachers with the opportunities to work together in collaborative relationships of trust. Examining the LS-based professional collaboration of Brazilian school teachers, the study by Richit et al (2021) found that “mutual support and encouragement established trust among the participants, so that each one felt motivated to become intensely involved in and committed to the LS and, above all, to face and overcome personal and/or professional difficulties.” Such can start to be observed in this first section – teachers have recognised some of the ways that collaboration with other teachers positively impacted their teaching practice. Moreover, collaboration is recognised as a useful tool for overcoming professional difficulties.

5.1.6 Preference for non-evaluative collegial observation

Data from this section has been collected during phase 1 of the study, during the planning stage for LS. Many teachers have expressed their concerns about being evaluated during observations, and it appeared to be a discomfort for many. Data analysis revealed that participating teachers recognised that LS could afford opportunities for development through collegial observations rather than the customary evaluative observations. As an interviewee observed:

> *Yes. Because, again, the observation thing is they're just attending one part of the class maybe I'm doing many plenty of other stuff… The second thing it's that it puts you in this spot there and it's really, it really makes you nervous for me it really makes me there.* {Interview, T. Assel, Jan.2020}

The Saudi Arabian educational context is characterised by an ‘isolation’ practice whereby teachers conduct their lessons individually without significant supervision from other individuals or professionals (Cordesman, 2003). However, LS introduces a new practice where the teacher is exposed to ‘public’ scrutiny and they are prone to feedback and opinions from other participating teachers (Alzahrani, 2016). Under this approach, the teacher is required to teach the created lesson plan while the other members of the group observe and take notes to point out whether the learning issue under evaluation has been adequately addressed (Alzahrani, 2016). Indeed, CHAT helps to understand why receiving feedback would put Saudi teachers at such discomfort, as respondents in this study deemed this practice to be highly stressful as it was considered to be a criticism of their work as opposed to helpful feedback. CHAT explains that the teachers’ beliefs are a reflection of their interaction with their working environment, which does not consider feedback as something positive, but rather a criticism (Foot, 2014). Moreover, the teachers’ reality is shaped by their past experiences, where feedback is likely to only have been given in the event that the teacher did something wrong. As the extract below shows, the evaluative aspect of conventional teacher observations tends to put the teachers on the defensive and intent upon defending what they have done:

> *Yeah of course because they don't see you don't see you, reflecting they don't see you like doing the whole thing… And if you like you defend yourself afterwards you want to defend yourself exactly because all I want to do is not lose the mark instead of just correcting my work. All I want to do is just like say prove like how no I didn't do that.* {Focus group 1, T. Najd, Jan.2020}

The extract above offers a critical perspective of lesson observation used for either performance management or PD. Evaluative observations are also limited because they do not take into account teacher decisions within the context of teachers’ knowledge of their own students and their learning styles.

> *Especially that they don't know my students, they don't know their level, their needs, like, some of them are enough level... And then they will ask me like, why didn't you give them individual instructions and I know. Yeah, I know the students I know like where they are.* {Focus group 1, T. Najd, Jan.2020}

This could be seen as a disadvantage of LS as the process for observations can be quite rigid. According to Fernandez (2002), once the lesson plan has been created, one teacher from the group should teach the lesson to their students as the other members of the group observe and take notes. The teachers then reconvene in order to share the observations they made and express their reactions. If the feedback is positive, then few (if any) modifications are made to the original lesson plan. If the feedback on the LS is negative, the lesson plan is revised, and until it is revised another teacher is tasked with teaching their students while members of the group observe and assess its effectiveness in addressing the learning issue. However, this approach does little to account for students' learning differences and needs, something that only the teacher knows very well. What LS does not account for is the fact that each teacher is an expert in their classroom, i.e. they know the students, their learning needs, strengths and weaknesses. Collaboration may be a useful approach to improve teachers' PD but may not benefit the teacher who already knows her students best. As the extract above highlights, evaluative non-collegial observations put pressure on the teacher being observed, especially as they do not factor into account all the hard work and planning the teacher has done prior to lesson delivery.

After the observations were complete, some of the teacher participants felt that the evaluation of their teaching by other teachers was too formal and narrow in that it was focused on awarding scores without providing any feedback to support the teacher's progress. The extract below refers to feelings that one teacher had following the LS exercise:

> *Speaking about the observation, they do observation, it's like it's a bit formal, not that it was formal, and evaluate you. And then they give you like a score again; no feedback is given.* {Focus group 2, T. Haifa, Nov.2021}

There was also a feeling amongst the participants that the process was rigid and one-way, lacking the space to integrate feedback from the teacher being observed if she felt that the score did not accurately reflect her performance, as the extract given below indicates:

> *But sometimes it's not even correct. And you have to like, defend yourself and say, like, No, I did that and I wanted to do that. And even the day you put in your feedback, your score doesn't change.* {Focus group 2, T. Najd, Nov.2021}

Moreover, the idea that LS hits an ‘optimum’ level of stress (which is tied to better learning retention) was also touched upon. Respondents contrasted the group observation process with more formal evaluation processes, which they deemed to be highly stressful – destructively so. The reason for the stress is very much the setting of the Saudi education system, which plays a part in influencing teachers who consider feedback and observation as an opportunity for criticism and scrutiny. Whilst in other cultures such behaviour would be treated with enthusiasm and feedback welcomed, Saudi teachers experience a level of stress associated with the formal teaching practices in the country. Saudi teachers associate this with the practice of judge-mentoring advanced by Hobson and Malderez (2013) which comprises peremptory judgements or evaluations of teachers’ planning and instruction in the form of ‘comments, ‘feedback’, ‘advice’, ‘praise’ or ‘criticism’. This is in contrast to the group observation process within LS, wherein their stress levels were lowered. Indeed, McCarthy (2019) argued that such evaluations can be used to spread the demands from managers across the school to suit each teacher’s capacity, which helps them to provide more targeted deliverables not at the expense of their mental health.

Another participant questioned the authenticity of the observation whereby non-teaching staff members or members with limited teaching commitments carried out assessments of the teachers’ performance:

> *I think it's mostly related to administrators. And other than that, just one ledger one time for terms observation. That validation is mostly administrative tasks. But there is nothing like authentic related to our teaching… They don't give you feedback. That or they don't give you anything that you will work on from that point. You just take the feedback in a file or something and that's it.* {Focus group 2, T. Assel., Nov.2021}

The analysis of data indicates that the existing system of observations is not perceived positively by the teachers on several counts, such as a lack of constructive feedback from peers or a lack of practical ideas for the teacher to implement. Further, the evaluations are not considered to be authentic because they are carried out by non-teaching staff members or members with limited teaching commitments which, as the extracts above imply, is viewed as making it difficult for the observers to accurately assess the performance of the teacher under observation. Negative perceptions toward feedback of others are likely to stem from the division of labour within the Saudi education system, where hierarchy between teachers can be observed, and feedback from lower-ranking teachers may not be as welcomed by a higher-ranking teacher. Ball (2003, p.215) observes that such practices comprise a reductive evaluation of teaching as well as learning which is yoked to the idea of teachers "organising themselves as a response to targets." However, as the analysis of focus group data presented below shows, the teacher participants are cognizant of the importance of giving and receiving feedback.

That's very important. I wish they would do that. {Focus group 2, T. Najd, Nov.2021}

> *Yeah, that's really, really important. We have to learn how to get it back and how to receive it. How to be able to accept that? Yeah, I think that's really important.* {Focus group 2, T. Assel, Nov.2021}

As the analysis suggests, feedback can be viewed as a way for colleagues to open up to each other which is a pre-requisite for effective professional collaboration. When looking at this extract through the CHAT lens, it becomes clear why Saudi teachers would welcome feedback as a development opportunity. Each activity of the teachers is a reflection of their collective environment as well as the social and historical context. Their performance at their job helps them to define their own role within their working environment, which encourages them to take on more training and development to improve. In the earlier example given above, the teacher participant views feedback as being vital for receiving and accepting it appropriately, an important consideration in a Saudi culture where critical feedback may be seen to threaten 'face' (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). In fact, Department for Education (2016) states that effective PD for teachers cannot exist in isolation, and it is a process that can be improved through mentoring, planning, discussing, and providing feedback by others, which can be challenging for Saudi teachers who do not welcome criticism. Thus, teachers are encouraged to respond to advice and feedback from peers and to actively engage in collaborative activities that promote their PD.

Data analysis showed that the teacher participants valued the opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and friends under the LS approach:

> *Also the atmosphere was very comfortable. it wasn't a formal thing. It was informal. So we felt it was we were more flexible. It was easy to share. Like we didn't feel under pressure.* {Focus group 2, T. Assel, Nov.2021}

> *But for me, it was really good working with partners because I know them personally. So that's what made my friends here saying that it was informal and it felt really comfortable working with them. Of course, because if I'm going to have like advice or corrective suggestions from friends, who happens to be also colleagues that's really helpful and positive for me.* {Focus group 2, T. Najd, Nov.2021}

In addition to observing that the LS approach was more flexible and less formal than the conventional PD, the teacher participants found it easier to share ideas and opinions within the group and did not feel pressured by the prospect of having to impress others, which is progress for Saudi teachers. However, some teachers highlighted that LS could have more of a social nature as opposed to an educational or professional one:

> *If we were supposed to work with someone else. But us together as a group, it felt more like we're talking to friends not like this is just a colleague.* {Focus group 2, T. Assel, Nov.2021}

The participants also observed that it was easier to accept advice or critique colleagues who were also friends. The relational aspect of LS means that friendships can start to form between teachers (if they did not exist before), which can make it feel as if the teacher is sharing ideas with a friend, as opposed to someone they work with. The CHAT lens of analysis recognises the interrelationship and impact of community, division of labour, and rules, which includes the relationship between subjects (teachers) and their working relationship with colleagues (context) as a way of improving their practices (object). These components have an active role to play in how LS is carried out by Saudi teachers and used as a device to create knowledge within the group. Thus, CHAT elements have a direct mediating effect on the ability of LS to engender created knowledge within a group. This suggests that the act of feedback is more than a mechanism for exchanging ideas or advice, but also includes a relational element of trust and respect, where teachers trust each other's feedback.

Data analysis showed that there was an interest on the part of the teacher participants in collaborative planning involving all the teachers. As the extract below shows, the teacher felt that group planning and demo lessons would enable teachers to come up with unified strategies for teaching grammar or language skills:

> *Yeah. Maybe group planning? Yes. It could be included. But also we would have something that is for all instructors. For example, a demo class, applying what we've learned or applying certain strategies, like N was saying, if we're going to have different teachers and students outcomes are going to depend on the teachers. So we can have like unified strategies for certain for certain grammar, certain language aspects, or subsequent skills.* {Focus group 2, T. Assel, Nov.2021}

Unified strategies would mean that all teachers are equally involved in the process of its development, which would further promote collaboration. In relation to 'division of labour', LS promotes an equality of role; members of the group are not individually responsible for holding, disseminating or using information: they create, encode, store and even retrieve it on a collective 'transactive' basis (Moreland, 1986). This in effect allows for the snowballing of knowledge creation (but, as will also be discussed latterly, may impose a limiting element also). According to Leontiev, while the action was individual and the operations were habituated behaviours, the activity was collective (Bakhurst, 2009, p.200). While the individual action could be carried out by individuals or groups to attain a specific goal, an activity was carried out at a community level, making use of 'a division of labour' and being driven by motive and directed towards motive (Bakhurst, 2009, p.200). This is a suitable approach for teachers from Saudi universities, who continue to take individual actions, but this time contributing to a benefit of a wider collective. While data analysis revealed that working cooperatively, particularly with co-workers who were friends, was widely valued, there was also some recognition that if they were not friends, this could be problematic:

> *I can say 50% positive and 50% Negative. Depends on the partner actually… But if you have a partner that is not cooperative with you, or have different views or starting to like impose something! You know what I mean?* {Focus group 2, T. Wassan, Nov.2021}

The extract above and those analysed prior to this highlight that the Saudi teacher participants, while valuing the opportunities provided by LS, are strongly interested in convergent collaboration with partners or group members and evidence apprehension of divergent views or conflicting opinions. Indeed, Engstrom (2001) stresses the idea that CHAT is a combination of tension, conflicts, and contradictions, and it is these that drive human development. It becomes more complex in the Saudi context, where higher-ranking professionals are viewed more favourably than those with a lower ranking. This is deep-rooted within the Saudi culture, which is highly hierarchical. For instance, decisions are typically made by the highest-ranking person, and highest-ranking individuals also receive the greatest level of respect (Darby, 2008). Therefore, conflict or contradicting views are not in line with the standard Saudi culture of respect for higher-ranking and more senior individuals. As such, in understanding how CHAT components contribute to the functioning of LS as an activity, it might be important to understand that the Saudi 'community' and 'rule' elements are not there to secure collaborative, smooth agreement of thought, but to promote difference, conflict and thus, progress (Darby, 2008). This highlights an important gap in the teachers' preparedness for PD wherein diverging views on topics and issues may arise from time to time.

5.1.7 Decrease in stress and increase in teacher confidence

As previously explained, observations can induce stress and anxiety among Saudi teachers. In the CHAT context, it is argued that human's activities are linked to their mind, that is what they think and feel. In this instance, the feelings of stress and anxiety are formed as a result of the cultural and historical development of each teacher within the Saudi community. Observations made by multiple individuals can make the teachers feel exposed to criticism, as in Saudi community these scenarios are typically linked to criticism and harsh feedback. On the other hand, some teachers have expressed that LS can in fact have the opposite effect – decrease stress and help teachers to improve their confidence. Having a colleague observe a class was viewed with less trepidation due to the more equal relations between members of the LS group, distinguishable from the asymmetrical-and thus stress-inducing relations of observer-as-evaluator looking to find flaws and mistakes, which is a common association with feedback in Saudi schools. As one of the interviewees noted:

> *Maybe, okay, I can tell you it's not like completely gone. I'm completely confident and feel comfortable with it, but it's better, it's improving I told you I told you that I need we need that. So that it makes us like a less stressed, less anxious, someone being there in the classroom.* {Interview, T. Assel, Jan.2020}

This would suggest that it is a more democratic approach that disrupts hierarchical power relations in tradition performance management related lesson observation is more welcomed by the teachers and more likely to induce collaboration and learning from one another. This also means that CHAT blurs concepts of researcher and subject because the subjects become researchers of their own practices – observing, critiquing, exploring and evolving. Any additional person observing that process of subjects-acting-as-reflective-researchers through a CHAT lens also becomes intertwined within the whole process; they must at once explore with the subject/researchers (or at the very least report the explorations of the subjects vis-à-vis CHAT concepts), but that same time also stand outside of that experience in identifying how the activity positions itself in a wider environment – in this case, how LS operates within its wider setting; within the institution it is being examined within, within the educational practices of Saudi Arabia collectively, and thus, within the culture and history of Saudi Arabia as a whole. The teachers feel less pressure and stress with this approach and are more likely to be responsive to feedback.

Collaborating and learning from one another as part of LS was also viewed as empowering when teacher members shared with one another how the ideas of different teachers they had observed gave them ideas for their own classes. As the extract below shows, this inspired confidence amongst teachers when their ideas were appreciated and deployed in other classrooms:

> *And then you have many people telling you like many ideas like remember A has something to say and we use their material, even watching each other teach you remember, like A has commentated on something she learned from me. W has a comment of something I learned from her like she said, Oh, I saw your student reacted with this idea, I'll try it in class. And then we gained confidence.* {Interview, T. Najd. Jan.2020}

The extract above highlights the difference between being observed and participating in observation, suggesting that not only the sharing of ideas but also the active engagement in self-led observation were invigorating for the teachers' development, pedagogy and confidence. This speaks towards both LS as a tool of empowerment, but also suggests that this study itself has been effective in empowering the participants as researchers and agents of change to have a direct impact on their surroundings. Rabia Ali (2015) elaborates that the teacher identity is dynamic and nuanced and varies according to "circumstances, time, people and space," which ultimately gives teachers the power to influence their development and learning. Moreover, investigating the impact of LS on the participating schoolteachers in the US context, Smith (2008, p.156) found that "Lesson study has the potential to unite teachers as a community of learners" as they "explore the core functions of teaching and learning at their school and to do so in a context of professionalism and empowerment." There is clear evidence of that here – the participants are clearly identifying the fact that they are learning from others' feedback, which in turn is increasing their confidence, which starts to replicate that of the US setting.

5.2 Perceptions of EFL women teachers in Saudi Arabia toward LS

This section focused solely on the perceptions of EFL teachers toward LS as opposed to discussing the LS itself and its features. The goal of this section was to answer RQ2 and understand how Saudi EFL teachers feel about LS before having a chance to use it, and after having some experience with it. This section combines responses from both phase 1 and phase 2, which were the interviews conducted within the LS period and interviews and focus groups conducted after the LS period had finished.

5.2.1 Challenges to implementing LS

Although teachers have managed to recognise the benefits of LS during the planning stage and after having some experience with it, there were few things which they noted as challenging to implement. These themes arose during phase 2 of the study, once the participants had a chance to use LS for some time.

5.2.2 Perceived Intrusiveness of collegial observation

Although collegial observations are a key component of the LS approach, data analysis indicates that the teacher participants had mixed feelings about this. As the extracts presented below demonstrate, there was a feeling amongst the teachers that although being observed by colleagues was different from evaluative administrative observation, it still gave rise to nervousness:

> *I would also say even though we are friends, I was still nervous. I can't compare it to having a formal observation that freaks me out, but I was still a bit nervous having someone observing my class.* {Focus group 2, T. Aseel, Nov.2021}

There was also the perception that having their class observed by other teachers was discomforting for the students. This led them to behave differently from how they usually behaved in class, particularly leading to an attempt on their part to refrain from making mistakes, even though they were usually encouraged by their teacher not to worry about errors:

> *And even if we know each other already, students didn't know that and that will not be helpful for them. So even my best students didn't speak up that day. They were observed. So, I think the students were pressured, maybe! We're not talking about one teacher observing, there were like four other teachers. So they were like a little bit nervous to speak not to make mistakes. When I usually encourage them to speak.* {Focus group 2, T Najd, Nov.2021}

> *Yeah, I would say maybe we are a bit out of the real classroom atmosphere. It is good to do once in a while, but I wouldn't say I would repeat that on a weekly basis or a daily basis. That would be too much. Too much pressure on students and on colleagues.* {Focus group 2, T A., Nov.2021}

The second is that it is incorrect to assert that LS is theoretically dependent upon the presence of open minds. As such, in understanding how CHAT components contribute to the functioning of LS as an activity, it might be important to understand that the ‘community’ and ‘rule’ elements are not there to secure collaborative, smooth agreement of thought, but to promote difference, conflict and thus, progress. Culturally, Saudi educational system does not promote a space for teachers to collaborate and share thoughts on their practices, which severely limits the opportunity for conflict, and thus progress, to arise. Nevertheless, the focus group data showed that there was some awareness that such collegial observations were proving discomforting because they diverged from the usual practice:

> *Yeah, and it leads us back to W’s point of view that we don't do this usually. Maybe if we used to do that more often the students will be more relaxed. Yeah. But it was the first time so they didn't know what's happening.* {Focus group 2, T. Najd, Nov.2021}

What the extract above shows is the need for teacher participants to orient their students to the developmental aims of collegial observation, with the overall goal of improving the teaching experience for the students. It also shows the underlying apprehensions of some of the teachers who might find it difficult to open their classrooms to collegial scrutiny.

5.2.3 Time-intensive nature of LS

Another challenge to LS implementation pointed out by the teacher participants pertained to the time-consuming nature of the approach:

> *The drawback is as I mentioned before, it's time-consuming. You have to put that all in your schedule attending your peers classes, set time to discuss before and after.* {Focus group 2, T. Assel, Nov.2021}

As the extracts below show, these activities are viewed as entailing considerable time commitment:

> *A lot of time Yeah. Lesson planning is having to look at one thing from different perspectives, how each of us receive it, conducted in her own class? And the bad thing about it. Is the time definitely.* {Focus group 2, T. Wassan, Nov.2021}

> *But if someone or other teachers who will observe my class in a formal way, then I don't know! It would put more pressure on me. And yeah, it's gonna be time-consuming.* {Focus group 2, T.Haifa, Nov.2021}

> *Whenever we start planning a lesson or just before class or even after class we sometimes have questions like situations we face or difficulties in certain lesson points. We just ask about them but have a whole lesson plan and giving specific time for that. I would say that needs a bit more time.* {Focus group 2, T. Assel, Nov.2021}

The analysis of the data above reveals the teacher participants' concerns over the time-intensive nature of LS implementation. It is possible that LS implementation is viewed as time-consuming because the teachers are accustomed to one-off mandatory trainings (as mentioned earlier on in this chapter) where the teachers must attend as part of their evaluations, whereas LS is organic and embedded in their own practice, and most significantly, requires the teachers to lead it themselves. Moreover, LS requires more time to set up and organise, as opposed to pre-planned mandatory training available to all teachers. In this case, LS becomes the mediating tool between the teachers and PD through challenging the existing institutional structures that teachers are accustomed to and encouraging them to develop their own study plans as opposed to relying on pre-planned mandatory trainings, which is the same for all teachers, regardless of their experience.

5.2.4 *Need for integration of more time for practice and discussion in ideal programme*

It became apparent that teachers (in general) felt that more time and practice was needed to implement the best programme for them, as there were some of the features of LS they were not comfortable with. These features will be discussed below.

5.2.5 Perceptions of curriculum

As the extracts in this section show, teachers are provided with set curriculum resources which dictate teaching approaches, whereas LS as an approach, advocates that teachers should review and evaluate resources and teaching approaches on the grounds of what they observe and notice in learners responses. The new curriculum appears to offer some flexibility with teachers:

> *I think with the new curriculum from the National Geographic I am seeing some promise. They sent us a link and ummm. Yesterday, that tackled some recent topics in Saudi Arabia like recent techniques in teaching, I actually I did not have the time to look at it, but it was promising* {Interview, T. Waasan, Nov.2019}

It is interesting to note that there is effort on the part of some teachers not to comply with the pacing guide too rigidly but to seek justifiable modifications when necessary. For instance, as the extract below shows, one of the interviewees is confident about speaking up when she experiences a disjunct between teaching a narrative essay and the integrated focus on grammar:

> *Though we have some problems with it. For example, on third week we had a narrative essay and the grammar is present simple so I went to…., the who organizes the pacing guide and I told her the grammar part it's not related to the writing skill we are supposed to teach... I speak up my voice.* {Interview, T. Wassan, Nov.2019}

The extract above shows that while teachers appreciate the new textbook and make use of the pacing guide, when necessary, modifications are sought so that there is curricular congruity in what is being taught to the learners. Indeed, LS provides teachers with the opportunities to work together in collaborative relationships of trust (Richit et al., 2021). Given that these modifications arise from collegial discussions and input, the relevance of an LS approach is evident in this context as it creates opportunities to address the needs reported here. Dictated curricular and pedagogy limit teachers' opportunities to experiment, notice learners' needs and address them and position the teachers as only implementers of the curriculum, which is a typical culture of development in Saudi Arabia (Al-Hazmi, 2003). This confidence appears to be instigated as a result of LS, where teachers are becoming more open to providing feedback to each other and start to recognise flaws with current practices. The shift to the use of pacing guides represents another move to a system of teacher learning that does not consider the ramifications of leaving teachers to cope on their own.

5.2.5 Perception of Administration as being non-receptive to teacher feedback

The post focus group discussion took place in phase 2, approximately ten months after the initial interviews with the participants. At this point, the participants already had some experience with using LS as part of their practices. According to the focus group interview data, the participants felt that the administration did not pay attention to their feedback or input:

> *I wanted to create some kind of difference and I suggested starting a blog. And I sent in a formal. They directed me directly to someone. I never received any reply.* {Focus group 2, T. Assel, Nov.2021}

The analysis also showed that while teacher feedback regarding preferred PD was solicited by the administration, their input or choice of topics was either disregarded or amended, as is evident in the extract below:

> *Yeah, I can also tell you, Jawaher, that at the beginning of the term, they will send us a table… And then they will not choose from these topics that we suggested… They would change your topic or amend, make amendments to it and stuff like that.* {Focus group 2, T. Najd, Nov.2021}

As the extracts below show (collected during phase 2 of the study), there was also a feeling amongst the participants that their concerns over the usefulness of extended hours of EFL instruction shared via post-semester reflective papers with the administration were unheeded:

> *I think it's too much but we can handle it that we don't have any other choice are three and 15 minutes, hours for students is too much to learn a language that they might not even use. And we say this every year in our in the reflective paper after the term but they don't change anything.* {Focus group 2, T. Najd, Nov.2021}

Amongst the teacher participants, there was a feeling that their voices were not heard by the administration when it came to the matter of their PD:

> *We don't even choose topics or stuff. It's a workshop and you have to attend and if you don't attend, it will affect your evaluation that we don't want to learn about. We don't choose anything. That we don't even have like, you know, a link or something after the workshop to evaluate it.* {Focus group 2, T. Najd, Nov.2021}

The analysis of data revealed that the teacher participants felt unheard by the administration on important issues such as topic-selection for their PD, initiatives for improving their students' learning and concerns over class duration. It does not lead the administration to integrate the teachers' input in its decision-making which tends to be top-down and reflective of the perception that the managers know best and that the teachers are required only to 'deliver'. As previously discussed, Saudi culture is very hierarchical, and decisions are typically made by the more senior individuals within the organisation, and that is typically unquestioned and accepted by others within that organisation. This helps to highlight why teachers in the current study have been reluctant to share their opinion about current training practices, as culturally questioning senior decisions is not welcomed in Saudi Arabia (Al Alhareth et al., 2015). Culture is also an important aspect that distinguishes Saudi Arabia, as Saudi teachers have been shown to stifle critical and reflective approaches to pedagogy and were afraid to show 'weaknesses' in front of their managers and peers (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). This may make the teachers less likely to object or suggest a different topic to their managers, as they could be afraid of how it would impact on their final evaluation.

5.2.6 Positive perceptions of pacing guide

The pacing guide refers to the curriculum map used by the teachers as part of LS planning. The analysis of data suggests that the teacher participants feel positively about the pacing guide, as it is comprehensive to provide structured support, guidance and a frame for their practice but not overly specific so as to stifle their creativity in teaching:

> *Yeah. What I like about the pacing guide is the points are too general. So I don't think It's not specific that you have to use this strategy. So it gives us a kind of creativity and I can do whatever I want. I follow my own style of teaching.* {Focus group 2, T. Wassan, Nov.2021}

> *Yes, I agree with them because the class is like more than three hours sometimes. So you have to cover what is in the pacing guide but then for the rest of the class. You can do whatever you want, you can come up with more activities, and they can cover anything they say I feel like we're not strictly.* {Focus group 2, T. Haifa, Nov.2021}

As the extracts above show, the pacing guide as part of LS planning provides teachers with adequate support as well as the space to use strategies that they find effective to their teaching and the opportunity to make use of engaging activities as a way of improving their lessons for students. Thus, whilst many solutions proposed by the participants worked within the bounds of the fundamental concept of LS, the solutions they proposed in this area were fundamentally at contrast with Saudi Arabia's cultural and historical context. Historically, teaching plans in Saudi Arabia were designed generically for all teachers, with a main goal of good exam performance by students (Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2018). In this instance the teachers have welcomed the opportunity to take ownership of their teaching and try different things within their teaching, as opposed to just examining the students. This can be positive for teachers, as it can encourage them to be more creative in their teaching, but it also shifts away from the fundamental idea of collaborating with other teachers.

5.2.7 Fostering instinctive self-reflection through LS

After having some experience with using LS, teachers became more confident in using self-reflection in their practice. The analysis of focus group data shows that the teacher participants were aware of the benefits of reflecting on their practice which ranged from learning to improve their teaching to becoming aware of gaps in one's own teaching by observing others:

> *I think it actually makes you see yourself delivering a lesson. Because when I watch my friend teaching, I can notice what she's doing right, what she's doing wrong.* {Focus group 2, T. Najd, Nov.2021}

The extracts above show that reflecting on their teaching practice as part of LS enables the teacher to generate new trajectories for self-improvement and become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. It allows them to observe and then compare what other teachers are doing with what they are doing and to identify what they would do to improve their teaching and techniques. This is a major shift from the typical fear of 'saving face,' which often occurs when teachers in Saudi schools are a subject to observation or feedback.

With respect to the extract below, the teacher participants felt positively about the opportunity to reflect on their instructional methods and the learning challenges faced by students within the informal space provided by LS:

> *I think it was a really interesting experience because I felt like I had the chance to sit and discuss some students related issues really with other colleagues who experienced the same exact problems.* {Focus group 2, T. Haifa, Nov.2021}

Some teachers have admitted that they already engage in self-reflection as part of being a teacher:

> *Reflecting on myself is something that I think comes naturally to any teacher. You just keep an eye on how's the class going? And I see what activities just my*

> *students like, I take activities from one level to another level and I see how they act and react to them, so I usually take notes.* {Focus group 2, T. Najd, Nov.2021}

> *I would say I reflect on what I do. It's like yes, but it's unintentional, or it just happens like okay, a certain strategy or a certain a certain method hasn't worked with my students. So I tried something new, or whatever I found suitable I stick with it, I stick to it, or maybe I could expand what I see good for my students.* {Focus group 2, T. Assel, Nov.2021}

In relation to the idea that the LS process itself engages cognitive processes which support knowledge creation and cement its retention for longer on a neuro-biological level, many of the respondents referred to the fact that they were now bringing reflection into their practices as a result of seeing its benefits as part of LS; an inherently critical, cognitive action. Empirical studies such as that of Büchel & Raub (2002) identify that it is a practice of knowledge creation that produces the most tangible value out of any of the various forms of organisational learning. Reasons for this include the fact that by virtue of being 'created', it is inherently irreplicable unless deliberate intention is made to pass it on to external parties – thus making it a unique asset for an organisation, which – in a commercial setting – can be leveraged to achieve competitive advantage (Bolade, 2020). However, as this is Saudi Arabia, there is typically little emphasis on knowledge creation, instead teachers are encouraged to attend rigid training with little to no contribution (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). In addition, the situations in which knowledge is created (rather than 'learned', such as during a LS) might also often be environments of slightly higher stress, because they are performative and participatory, with Blakemore (2005) identifying that stress (up to a certain level) produces optimum learning. The analysis of the data above revealed that many of the teacher participants reflected instinctively on their teaching and made adjustment to their strategies and techniques to address learning needs effectively based on the knowledge that they created from observations. Although some teachers have admitted to already engaging in self-reflection prior to LS, providing feedback to other teachers as part of LS may have triggered self-reflection in them even more, as demonstrated by teacher Najd in the extract above, who began to take notes of how their students were reacting to their teaching.

5.2.8 Teacher perceptions transformation due to experiencing LS

Although this section has focused on teachers' perception to LS, the next one focuses specifically on how teachers' perceptions and experiences have changes since they have started to use LS in their classrooms. All of the responses are from phase 2 post focus group discussion.

5.2.9 Perception of LS as relevant and engaging

The analysis of the extracts presented below shows that the teacher participants view LS to be engaging and relevant on a number of counts. Unlike workshops with generic PD topics, LS is viewed as providing multiple insights which can be applied immediately in teaching contexts:

> *Yes, actually. PD for me is always better. When it's practical. Instead of just attending workshops like you have a bunch of PD aspects and points to apply right away in your teaching. There are a bunch of things you're learning all at once. It's not just one point. So yeah, leading to PD. is a huge step forward.* {Focus group 2, T Assel, Nov.2021}

Learning from workshops is rarely applied in practice, but collaborating with colleagues on improving instruction is perceived to be interesting, despite the challenges inherent to self-led PD:

> *I totally agree that doing something is different from just learning about it or seeing it through workshops. We have workshops, but they are mostly repeated, and we don't actually take them to reality or do anything about it.* {Focus group 2, T Najd, Nov.2021}

> *If it was required for us as instructors to have the teaching groups or the lesson planning groups would actually be good. As I said, if we don't do it like all the time, we are required as part of our teaching to do so with someone we choose. Then it would be really good actually, in groups!* {Focus group 2, T Assel, Nov.2021}

The focus group participants observed that the advantage of LS over workshop learning was that it generated very specific ideas and strategies for application in the teachers' instructional contexts, whereas in workshops, even if the ideas were good, there was a dearth of insights into practical application:

> *I feel when they mentioned something in the workshop. Sometimes it's a good idea, but you don't know how to apply it in your classroom. Unlike when we had a LS. And we do all these observations after the class then we can discuss every specific techniques and we can apply it in our classes. So it's more applicable.* {Focus group 2, T H., Nov.2021}

> *Yeah. I think I actually stole something from A's class. I think I stole an idea about the table you did on the on the PowerPoint. I don't exactly remember what it is what it was about. Maybe adjectives that's something that's useful in my class. Yeah.* {Focus group 2, T N., Nov.2021}

Evidence for the idea that LS inherently embodies aspects of a community and working with other teachers for self-improvement (which Mitchel and Nicholas (2006) identified as also beneficial to the development of 'created knowledge' in groups by virtue of encouraging cognitive diversity) can be found throughout the responses of the participants in this study. Respondents to the interviews frequently used collective terms; either 'they' or 'we', along with words such as 'share' 'together', 'not alone', 'collaborate' 'learn from each other' 'add to each other's experiences', 'discussing' 'in the same boat' and 'trust'. All of these words suggest a heavy community focus to the practice.

5.2.10 Redundancy of existing PD practices

After using LS for some time, this experience prompted teachers to reflect on some of the existing PD practices that they have in place. The extracts below show that the PD practices are viewed as unhelpful because they tend consist of trainers making presentations but not offering practical ways to improve practice:

> *Having these workshops like, yes, I at the beginning of the first like, as a beginner. I didn't benefit from that. But now I started thinking okay, this was repeated, I want to or sometimes I think, okay, I don't, I'm not going to use these strategies… So, I don't feel that it's useful like it used to be when I was a beginner teacher.* {Focus group 2, T Assel, Nov.2021}

The analysis of data also shows that existing PD tends to be repetitive and redundant, and as the teachers are not invited to provide feedback on the training:

> *I agree. It's totally repeated and redundant. I'm sorry to say that.* {Focus group 2, T Najd, Nov.2021}

> *I agree with your perspective. Yeah. It is repetitive and boring, sometimes!* {Focus group 2, T Wassan, Nov.2021}

Based on discourse analysis of the interactions of teachers participating in lesson study, Dudley (2013, p.107) found that LS helped to create “motivating conditions” for the participants to “enable collective access to imagined practice and joint development of micro practices.” Micro-level actors and bodies influence the design and implementation of PD of teachers. This would suggest that within the context of the institution, there is a need to consider multiple activity systems (such as LS) in order to understand how teacher learning in the setting transpires and how it is facilitated or hindered, which has been the main goal of this study throughout. The study also showed how collaborating within LS had helped the teachers to activate and use knowledge, which was usually latent, thus improving their abilities to become aware of and evaluate their learners’ needs as well as motivations, thus helping to address the concerns of the teacher participants about redundant and repetitive feedback and training.

5.3 Cultural barriers to introducing LS in the context of EFL women teacher education

One of the major and most important themes from this analysis centred around Saudi culture, and how culture impacts the successful implementation of LS by teachers. The major concern is around giving feedback to others, as this can be considered as critique by other teachers. At the same time, in Saudi Arabia it was not deemed appropriate for lower-ranking teachers to give feedback to the more experienced teachers.

5.3.1 Concern over offending others while giving feedback

The responses of participants revealed cultural barriers to extending or receiving feedback. Feedback is an essential aspect of LS implementation, and as the extracts below show, the teacher participants experience hesitation in providing feedback and receiving it:

> *Of course, this is like this will be the hardest thing to do. Even if I noticed something that I think the teacher didn't do well, I don't think I have the strength to say that, you know, you did this wrong, and you should have done this and that.* {Focus group 2, T Najd, Nov.2021}

> *I think it's different from one person to another but I feel it's a culture thing. And we're not used to it.* {Focus group 2, T. Hafa, Nov.2021}

Then the participant shared that she found it hard to give or to receive feedback due to cultural reasons which made it difficult for people not to take feedback personally, even though it was aimed at professional improvement:

> *Maybe it's just me. I don't know! I always find it hard to accept or to give feedback in Saudi culture, because people will take it personally.* {Focus group 2, T. Najd, Nov.2021}

What the above analysis suggests is that local culture can obstruct effective LS implementation. Therefore, for successful implementation of LS to transpire, the teacher participants must learn to reflect on the key processes of LS and their culturally conditioned perceptions of these processes. For that, the teachers must become aware of their culturally conditioned hesitations to giving and receiving feedback, as this is seen as something negative and critical. Ellis et al. (2011) presented teacher rounds as a form of collaboration-based research that attempts to create new insights that can develop practice with DWR, a developmental intervention that is based on the idea of disrupting and developing practice by enabling practitioners to problematise and become critically conscious of discourses and practices in their work setting and their historical and cultural situatedness. Ellis et al (2011) observe that in rounds teachers experienced socially situated development in their own workplace settings by means of systematic teacher-led collegial collaboration wherein teacher praxis is transformed via the creation of insights based on observational evidence, reflection as well as inquiry. Further, they note that what is distinctive about rounds is that it is an approach to developing teacher practice from the perspective of the practitioners rather than from the perspective of researchers. However, as a way of growing, Saudi teachers can start to observe this as a positive way of building and strengthening relationships with other teachers, which allows for greater willingness to accept and give feedback.

In contrast, the extract below reveals that the teacher participants welcome the exchange of feedback between colleagues who are friends and perceive it to be constructive and a form of learning from one another:

> *We felt like we're all at the same level where we're, we're teaching each other and we're learning from each other. So it's fine for us all. It's okay to make mistakes. Which was fine, but someone else? Maybe that would different.* {Focus group 2, T. Assel, Nov.2021}

LS calls for a collaborative undertaking where engagement is on equal footing. This creates a clear imbalance between the cultural elements needed for LS practice, in relation to its cultural norms and rules, and the cultural norms and rules that constitute a part of the wider setting that LS is being positioned in. This conflict clearly presents a barrier to LS being deployed in a way that is fully effective. It raises questions – which are not answered within the data gathered here but would provide an interesting avenue for future exploration – as to how desirable it is to ‘fit this square peg into a round hole’. Within the activity system, there are disturbances (relating to personal/interpersonal challenges) which influence immediate individual actions as well as contradictions comprising structural tensions that have built up over time within an activity system and between interacting activity systems (Olavarria, 2013, p.43-50). Contradictions meld and transform how things are done and give rise to disturbances, conflicts as well as innovation (Kamanga et al., 2019, p.215). The resolution of the contradictions can lead to the attainment of the desired outcome (Olavarria, 2013, p.43-50). LS is theoretically dependent upon the presence of open minds. Indeed, Engstrom (2001) stresses the idea that CHAT is a community of tension, conflicts, and contradictions, and it is these that drive human development. As such, in understanding how CHAT components contribute to the functioning of LS as an activity, it might be important to understand that the ‘community’ and ‘rule’ elements are not there to secure collaborative, smooth agreement of thought, but to promote difference in feedback, conflict and thus, progress.

5.3.2 Impact of high-power distance on exchange of feedback

The extracts below reveal the reticence expressed by the teacher participants over the prospect of giving feedback to others in a culture wherein higher expertise prevents people from accepting advice easily:

> *I'm not willing to go beyond the professional you know, identity or whatever.* {Focus group 2, T. Najd, Nov.2021}
>
> *Yeah, criticism is kind of our culture. And even if they know that you're right, they just wouldn't take it.* {Focus group 2, T. Assel, Nov.2021}
>
> *Yes, they will think that you're judging them. Especially if they were on different educational levels like PhDs or lectures! I don't think they will take my criticism at all. Or advice. I wouldn't say criticism, but advice.*

> *It's really hard to give suggestions or advice to someone about their work, something that they do every day.* {Focus group 2, T. Najd, Nov.2021}

Respondents were unable to fully internalise the fundamental idea that meaningful knowledge could be created within a closed system, without external inputs and without being dictated by the presence of hierarchical ‘expertise’.

> *If I'm going to give some feedback to a doctor or someone who is more experienced than me. So I would think; maybe she's doing it right. She has her own perspective, or I would say something like that.* {Focus group 2, T. Assel, Nov.2021}

LS calls for a collaborative undertaking where engagement is on equal footing. Insofar as there are differing levels of experience or knowledge within a group undertaking LS, this does not influence their position or value within the setting; all members hold equal validity, merit, right to contribute and value of opinion. In contrast, Saudi society has relatively high hierarchical cultural norms (Sabah et al., 2014). What the extracts above suggest is that the teacher participants must learn to overcome their own apprehensions about giving feedback before the LS approach which makes extensive use of feedback as a learning tool can be implemented successfully. This can be achieved in a way that does not question the knowledge and experience of someone more experienced and senior. Instead, teachers may share their own approaches, or share what they would most benefit from as opposed to focusing overly on criticising the other person.

5.4 What are the PD experiences and goals/ambitions of the participating women teachers and is LS able to support this?

5.4.1 Survey data analysis and discussion

In order to supplement the data from the reflective exercise, I conducted a survey (see Appendix M) to see whether different findings could be generated. The statistical tests that have been carried out in this study include the descriptive tests and the correlation tests. Similar to the previous sections, data was analysed through the CHAT lens.

Descriptive tests were used to describe the frequencies, perceptions, and preferences for PD of women teachers. The correlation tests were used to tell whether there is a significant linear relationship between a pair of items, whether the relationship positive, and what is the magnitude, or size of that relationship. All data was collected using a survey (listed in the appendix M) during phase 3 of the study. All participants were women, over the age of 18, mostly working full-time, all holding at least a bachelor's degree, mostly lecturers working a minimum of 3 years. A total of 25 teachers took part in the study. I sent the survey to all 116 teachers and 25 have responded to the survey. Larger number of participants were used for the study to gather a more representative view of Saudi teachers at the institution studied. This chapter will present a summary of the findings that were obtained in this study along with further analysis and discussion.

In response to Q7 as it was explained in the previous chapter, the mean (10.640; see Table 1 in Appendix R) indicated that on average, the teachers in this sample spent almost 11 days engaged in PD over the past 12 months. The definition of PD has been left open by me, meaning that it would consist of all activities that support one's personal development, such as sharing resources, attending training, collaborating with others, etc. I left the definition open to the participants, allowing them to make their own judgement on what they consider a PD activity. However, the standard deviation (19.769) indicated that the number of days which the teachers spent on PD varied to a significant extent. This means that although it is clear how many hours each teacher dedicated to PD activities in the past 12 months, it is unclear why such variety between teachers occurred. One interpretation could be the fact that Alzahrani (2016) have identified a significant lack of PD opportunities for teachers in Saudi Arabia, which means that many teachers do not spend much time on PD due to limited access to such opportunities. When analysing this finding through the CHAT lens, it becomes apparent that women in Saudi Arabia have suffered extreme restrictions accessing any PD opportunities, which suggests why the training opportunities have not been widely utilised (Al Munajjed, 1997). However, further analysis later on in this chapter will help to determine these factors.

The mean for Q8 (3.732) showed that teachers have participated in a moderate number of PD activities (see Table 1 in Appendix R). Five of the participating teachers did not report reading professional literature (Q8.1), whereas two teachers within the sample did not report engaging in formal dialogue with colleagues (Q8.2). A much large number of teachers (21 teachers) revealed that they did not invite colleagues to observe their class (Q8.3). Again, some variation between participants' answers was noted, however, reasons for these variations were not yet evident at this point in the analysis. These findings connect with the idea that the Saudi Arabian educational context is characterised by an 'isolation' practice whereby teachers conduct their lessons individually without significant interaction with other individuals or professionals (Abu Alsuood & Youde, 2018). Chokshi and Fernandez (2004, p. 521) observe that teachers who are not accustomed to this approach in teaching would develop nervousness as well as become self-conscious about opening their classroom to other teachers. The finding also connects with earlier empirical research in the Saudi EFL context which identifies a number of tensions experienced by teachers in regard to peer observation as a possible activity for PD. I observed these sentiments from their initial LS intervention, where many teachers expressed nervousness, uneasiness, and lack of confidence about collaborating with other teachers.

Applying Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to interview data, Ismail (2014) found that Saudi EFL teachers viewed peer observation as being problematic for a number of reasons. These ranged from concerns over the ability of the novice teachers to adequately assess senior colleagues to the trustworthiness of the peer observers in maintaining confidentiality of what they had observed in colleagues' classes. Considering this through the lens of CHAT, which promotes an equality of role; members of the group are not individually responsible for holding, disseminating or using information: they create, encode, store and even retrieve it on a collective 'transactive' basis (Moreland, 1986). Moreover, a more recent study by Almuhammadi, Assalahi and Madini (2020, p.74) which examined the perceptions of Saudi women EFL teachers towards the impact of PD also found that at times professional development via observation is seen 'as a source of efficacy doubt' rather than as a helpful PD tool. The limited number of days allocated for professional development, the restricted PD activities engaged in by the participants and the moderate impact of PD reported by the teachers in the study suggest the need for an enhancement not only in the duration of the PD but also higher order professional development activities to scale up the effect of PD. An ongoing teacher education and LS has become part of standard practice in countries such as Japan and is used to develop professional knowledge that may be shared beyond individual institutions, to the wider professional community (Earp, 2016). The success of these approaches has stimulated teachers' PD, which could have its future in Saudi education system.

Responses to Q9 which inquired into the teachers' perceived need for the PD activities discussed above generated a mean of 3.053 (out of 10), thus indicating that the teachers perceived only a moderate need for such PD activities. In response to Q10, the mean score (3.700) indicated that the teachers typically found the PD activities to exercise only a moderate impact on their development as teachers. A point of some significance is that a substantial number of teachers (50%) did not report participating in at least eight of the 12 items (see Table 2 in Appendix R), a fact which needs to be factored into the equation when evaluating the teachers' reported perceptions and experiences of PD. As can be seen from the table below, majority of the activities listed encountered little to zero engagement from the teachers, apart from activities such as observation visits to other universities, mentoring/peer observation, Individual PD Plan advised by others, guided practice, peer study groups and Inquiry/Action Research. This indicates that teachers have enjoyed the activities that involved observing the performance of others, working collaboratively with others, and any activity that centred around individual development.

Responses to Q11 with a mean of 1.735 indicate that the participating teachers only engaged in a given activity from amongst the set of items described in the questionnaire less than once a year. With reference to the individual items, data analysis showed that the most frequent type of PD activity reported by the teachers comprised exchanging teaching material with colleagues (11.4; *M* = 4.200; see Table 3 in Appendix R). However, this means that teachers have only exchanged the materials, as opposed to actively discussing the content together. As previously mentioned through CHAT lens, historically PD and training in Saudi Arabia was done individually as opposed to in a group. Saudi Arabian culture centred around individual accomplishments as a way of securing a job or getting promoted (AlMunajjed, 1997). LS is an approach that enables teachers to reap these experiences while they share and discuss common concerns as well as improve their existing knowledge, such as through sharing materials (Fernandez, 2002).

On average, the teachers engaged in exchanging the materials a little more than 3-4 times a year. Attending a team conference (11.5; *M* = 2.84), as well as ensuring common standards in evaluation (11.6; *M* = 1.92) ranked amongst the next most prevalent types of PD activities engaged in by the teachers. On average, the teacher participants engaged in these two types of activities about once a year each. The least common activities engaged in by the teachers included developing a curriculum (11.2; *M* = 1.88) and engaging in joint activities across courses/levels (11.11; *M* = 1.96), each of which the teachers typically engaged in less than once a year. The activities that are most likely to promote dialogic and collaborative approaches include discussing the vision and mission of the university with peers, discussing and deciding on instructional media, discuss learning development of specific learners, co-teaching, professional learning activities, providing feedback to other teachers, training other teachers and discussing cross-curricula projects (Alzahrani, 2016). For most of these activities, teachers in this study reported that they have never taken part in these activities. The Saudi Arabian educational context is characterised by an individual practice whereby teachers conduct their lessons individually without significant supervision from other individuals or professionals (Alzahrani 2016). Through the CHAT lens, in Saudi Arabia members of the group are not individually responsible for holding, disseminating or using information: they create, encode, store and even retrieve it on a collective ‘transactive’ basis (Moreland, 1986). Through the CHAT lens, Saudi Arabia is a culture that is strongly characterised by performance and results, which suggests why teachers are focused on their performance in isolation as opposed to their performance as part of the group. Thus, it is not surprising that in a culture such as Saudi Arabia there is little evidence of such activities taking place. These findings affirm earlier research which suggests that ‘the dominant model of CPD (Continuing Professional Development) in Saudi Arabia is the training model which usually depends on a training plan established to meet the educational priorities of a central authority (e.g., MOE) in terms of identifying the needed skills and competences’ (Sabah, Fayez & Alshamrani et al, 2014, p.100) as opposed to promoting dialogue between teachers, and collaborative peer discussions and analysis.

Q12 which asked the teacher respondents about their follow-up actions (from a given list in the appendix M) subsequent to engaging in a PD activity resulted in a mean of

4.048, indicating that the teacher participants on average agreed with the list of statements presented below. It is notable that only a limited number of respondents agreed strongly with any of the listed items.

The standard deviation (0.466) suggests that most teachers reported a similar level of agreement with each other. Interestingly, the highest level of agreement within this set of items was for implementing new strategies in the classroom (12.2; *M* = 4.16; see Table 4 in Appendix R), suggesting mostly individual level change as a result of the PD activity. On the other hand, the least level of agreement for the listed follow-up actions in Q12 was for peer collaboration aimed at improving students' learning outcomes (12.6; *M* = 3.92), thus suggesting that working with peers as a way of improving practice generated the lowest level of agreement. It may be that Saudi Arabian teachers interpret their PD journey differently as opposed to engaging in discussions and collaboration with others. In the Saudi Arabian context, observations in classroom proceedings are done during performance evaluation therefore when other teachers monitor and offer feedback on other teachers' teaching process, it elicits nervousness as well as fear from the teacher conducting the lesson (Chokshi and Fernandez 2004). This is unlikely to be seen as productive and beneficial by the Saudi teachers, who are more likely to focus on solo activities that they can implement into their own classrooms.

Responses to Q13 with (*M* = 3.910) surprisingly showed that the participating teachers typically found small group collaboration to be helpful for supporting the listed PD activities, despite many teachers reporting that they did not engage in collaborating with others as a way of improving their practice. The standard deviation (0.438) indicated that most teachers reported a similar agreement range when answering this set of questions.

Surprisingly, small group collaboration was found to be the most helpful for discussing each other's' experiences despite many teachers not engaging in such activity often (13.1; *M* = 4.36; see Table 5 in Appendix R), and debriefing student behaviours (13.7; *M* = 4.20). However, on average, the teachers rated small group collaboration to be the least helpful for identifying daily learning objectives (13.5; *M* = 3.52). Identifying daily learning objectives is an activity that requires daily commitment from a group of teachers, which is why small group collaboration may not be the most optimal solutions for this specific activity. These results show that small group collaboration is perceived as being useful for a limited range of purposes excluding collaboration on curricular matters. The main reason is that the Saudi Arabian educational context is characterised by an ‘isolation’ practice (as discussed in the earlier sections) whereby teachers conduct their lessons individually without significant contribution or collaboration with other teachers (Alzahrani 2016). However, a LS introduces a new practice where the teacher is exposed to ‘public’ exposure and they are prone to honest feedback from the participating teachers, which may make them less willing to see the benefits. Moreover, none of the teachers rated any of the activities to be very unhelpful.

The next section focused on identifying the context and purpose of collaboration in Saudi Arabian context, as well as the levels of existing collaboration. In response to Q14 which queried the respondents as to their preferences for university or self-led PD, working with others or independently, thinking about their teaching as well as feedback and reflection on practice, the mean for this composite (3.490) indicated that teachers in the sample reported engaged in a given activity from this set of items less than once a year. The standard deviation (0.391) indicated that the responses of the teachers to the items under Q14 were greatly similar.

On average, the teacher participants preferred to design their own PD (14.2; *M* = 4.20; see Table 6 in the appendix) and thought about how they could strengthen areas that needed improvement (14.11; *M* = 4.12). Interestingly, many teachers felt that constructive feedback on their teaching practices was helpful (14.7; M = 3.88). The statements with which the teachers disagreed the most included ‘reflection does not help me in improving how I teach’ (14.10; *M* = 2.20), and ‘I do not think about my teaching…’ (14.12; *M* = 2.24). This suggests that the teacher participants not only reflect on their practice but also are aware of the key role of reflection in improving their practice. This also suggests that teachers are open to improving their practices in teaching, but perhaps the way that they view improvement may be different than in context of other countries, such as Japan where LS is popular. In the Saudi Arabian context, there is a lot of emphasis on individual and personal achievements, thus the teachers may view improvement as developing their teaching practices on their own. These findings align with existing research (Al-Asmari, 2016) on EFL teachers’ perceptions of ongoing PD and their practices in regard to their PD, which emphasises the point about individualism and isolation. In a questionnaire study of 121 teachers at the English Language Centre (Taif University KSA), Al-Asmari (2016) found that the participants not only perceived PD as being key to their development but also revealed setting goals for self-development in teaching and reflecting was beneficial for their practice. However, as in the current case, the teachers did not consider the role that collaboration and working with others can have on their PD, instead they overly focused on individual efforts.

5.4.2 Correlations

A Pearson correlation is used to measure whether a relationship exists between different variables and assess how strong that relationship is. The correlation was conducted between the composites of Question 8 (Thinking about less formal PD, during the last 12 months, did you participate in any of the following activities?) and 9 (Thinking of your own PD needs, please indicate the extent to which you have such needs in each of the areas listed), 8 and 14 (In the table listed below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the given statements), 9 and 14. The correlation showed a statistically significant, medium-sized positive relationship between the two sets of items ($r(21) = .538$, $p = .008$). This indicated that the more impactful the teachers found the set of items from Q8 to be (that is, their participation in PD activities), the more need they reported for the items within Q9 (the level of PD needs for each area). This suggests that the more the teachers were active in participating in some of the PD activities listed, the more they were likely to identify a PD need in a specific area. This could be linked to greater self-awareness and self-reflection, and self-help behaviour. Indeed, through the process of analysis and reflection, the individual increases their level of cognitive engagement that is core to the process of knowledge creation, and development (Cheng & Ling, 2013).

A Pearson correlation test for the composites of Q8 (less formal PD activities engaged in by the teachers) and Q14 (preferences for university or self-led PD, working with others or independently, thinking about their teaching as well as feedback and reflection on practice) did not show any relationship between the two sets of items ($r(21) = -.094$, $p = .669$).

The correlation between the composites of Question 9 (indicating PD needs in specific areas) and Q14 (teacher's perceptions and experiences with respect to PD) showed a statistically significant, small-sized positive relationship between the two sets of items ($r(23) = .375$, $p = .065$). This indicated that the greater the need reported by the teachers for the items for Q9, the more likely they were to agree marginally with the items under Q14. Thus, teachers who were more likely to identify a PD need within their teaching practice, they were more likely to agree with statements that were positive about PD and individual development.

For questionnaire items from 11 & 12, a set of 78 Pearson correlations between all items from Q11 and Q12 (see Table 7 Appendix R) was conducted. A Bonferroni correction was applied to account for the number of correlations conducted, such that the alpha value was adjusted from 0.05 to .001 in order to assess whether a relationship was statistically significant. The results showed a statistically significant, strong, positive relationship between item Q11.1 and Q12.2 ($r(23) = .630$, $p < .001$), indicating that as teachers attended staff meetings to discuss the vision of the university, they were also more likely to discuss and coordinate curricular projects. This is unsurprising, as those teachers that are willing to discuss with other teachers the vision of the university, they are likely more open to collaboration than teachers who do not see the benefit of engaging in such discussions. As Foot (2014) argued, a community which is made up of individuals who share interest in the same object can create room for collaboration and sharing ideas. Similarly, there was a statistically significant, strong, positive relationship between item Q11.11 and Q12.1 ($r(23) = .662$, $p < .001$), such that as teachers were more likely to engage in joint activities across courses and levels, they were also more likely to go back and experiment in the classroom. This suggests that teachers that are willing to collaborate and engage in joint activities may benefit from it with respect to their PD. For instance, teachers may be likely to introduce new strategies or experiment with different practices as a result of collaborating with other teachers. This method can motivate teachers to address more challenges with their current practice as a result of collaborating and sharing ideas with others (Darby, 2008).

For items from 13 & 12, a set of 48 Pearson correlations between all items from Q13 and Q12 (see Table 8 in Appendix R) were conducted. After controlling for the number of correlations, no statistically significant relationships between any items from q13 and q12 was found.

For items from 14 & 12, a set of 70 Pearson correlations between all items from Q14 and Q12 (see Table 9 in Appendix R) was conducted. After controlling for the number of correlations, no statistically significant relationships between any items from Q14 and Q12 was identifiable. Q15 and Q16 were included as qualitative items requiring open ended responses from the participating teachers. Q 15 asked the participants to list their most preferred and least preferred activities for their development as teachers, whereas Q16 invited the teachers to add any information related to their PD in their work setting or to share ideas for improving their professional development.

In response to Q15, one of the teachers listed a range of activities, including ‘blogs, writing reviews, reflection, discuss and debate, role playing, oral presentation and forum discussion’, although it is unclear whether there are any amongst this list of activities which are least preferred. Two of the participants listed observation as their least preferred activities, while the other teachers accorded this rating to activities like workshops and conferences, grammar, delivery-oriented workshops without practical application. Two of the teachers did not mention least preferred activities. The fact that observation appears to be not preferred by at least two of the teachers aligns with literature which shows that in the Saudi EFL setting, observation tends not to be always valued as a useful PD tool (Ismail, 2014; Almuhammadi, Assalahi & Madini, 2020). This could be also linked to the fact that observation means that teachers are exposed to ‘public’ exposure, and they are prone to honest feedback from the participating teachers, which can make them more nervous and wary of such collaboration and not view it as beneficial. Preferred activities included ‘group discussion and feedback’, ‘online courses’, ‘teaching methods’, ‘group discussion and creativity’, ‘LS’ and ‘pronunciation activities as well as reading activities.’ Four teachers revealed a preference for group discussions and LS (involving collaborative work and discussions), suggesting that professional conversations and dialogue with colleagues were viewed by them as useful PD tools. However, as four teachers are a substantial minority from the entire sample group, there is not enough evidence to observe a real preference for group discussions and LS among Saudi Arabian teachers. As previously discussed, Saudi teachers associate group discussions with the practice of judge-mentoring advanced by Hobson and Malderez (2013) which comprises peremptory judgements or evaluations of teachers' planning and instruction in the form of 'comments, 'feedback', 'advice', 'praise' or 'criticism'. This is in contrast to the group observation process within LS, where such evaluations can be used to provide more targeted deliverables not at the expense of their mental health (McCarthy, 2019). However, many Saudi teachers prefer to remain with their existing PD practices.

Q 16 drew responses from four of the participants, with two responses focusing on challenges pertaining to the 'pacing guide' provided by the university and the other responses focusing on the outdatedness of the PD experienced by the teachers and the utility of peer observation and collegial discussions for teachers' professional development. Interestingly, one of the teachers shares a liking for peer observation as a PD tool which suggests that although tensions may exist around peer observation by teachers in the Saudi EFL setting, there are some teachers who view being observed as a constructive PD activity. In regard to the responses on the 'pacing guide', one of the teachers shared that it was hard to apply learnings from the PD unit because the university constrained the teachers by forcing them to follow the pacing guide. The other teacher revealed a liking for the 'pacing guide' but revealed that it was difficult to follow it due to limited time and that she felt her creativity in designing materials on her own to be constrained under the circumstances.

Findings above have indicated that my participants are focused on self-development and improvement of their teaching practices, although some were wary about the benefits of discussions and collaborations with other teachers as a way of self-improvement. As this is a fairly unexplored area in the Saudi Arabian context, findings from the current study highlight some need to offer the teachers within the research setting PD which enables teachers to share, discuss common concerns as well as improve the knowledge that they possess.

5.5 Summary

The current enquiry was an IE research and was designed to explore the responses of the participants about LS as an alternative PD approach. Moreover, the current study aimed to explore how the cultural context with PD is Saudi Arabia affected how it was possible or not to implement LS in Saudi classrooms. This study focused on answering four main research questions, focusing on the opportunities posed by LS as an avenue for PD in Saudi Arabia, perceptions of EFL teachers toward LS, cultural barriers toward LS in Saudi Arabia, and PD experiences and ambitions of teachers.

First, it became apparent that LS allowed Saudi teachers to explore collaboration and self-led PD, which was something they had limited experience within the past. Cultural norms (e.g. institutional policies and institutional culture) tend to obstruct the Saudi EFL teachers as they try to engage in interaction with their immediate working community (e.g. management, colleagues, students and parents), which moves away from the collaborative aspect proposed by LS. The value of LS was also shown in teacher perceptions of how it opened up opportunities for “learning from each other” and gaining new insights and perspectives based on the experiences of others. As the interview data showed, observing one another’s classrooms allowed the teachers to learn from colleagues, particularly in terms of learning and implementing new activities in the classroom. The Saudi Arabian educational context is characterised by an ‘isolation’ practice whereby teachers conduct their lessons individually without significant supervision from other individuals or professionals. However, LS introduces a new practice where the teacher is exposed to ‘public’ scrutiny, and they are prone to feedback and opinions from other participating teachers.

There were some challenges with implementing LS in the Saudi context. For instance, teacher participants felt that previous PD evaluation of their teaching was too formal and narrow in that it was focused on awarding scores without providing any feedback to support the teacher’s progress, which highlights the cultural challenges of teachers’ implementation of LS. This affected their perception (initially) of what working with other colleagues would involve. There was also a feeling amongst the participants that the process was rigid and one-way, lacking the space to integrate feedback from the teacher being observed, which caused stress over ‘being judged’ and ‘losing face.’ Whilst in other cultures such behaviour would be treated with enthusiasm and feedback welcomed, Saudi teachers experience a level of stress associated with the formal teaching practices in the country. Negative perceptions toward feedback of others are likely to stem from the division of labour within Saudi education system, where hierarchy between teachers can be observed, and feedback from lower-ranking teachers may not be as welcomed by a higher-ranking teacher. Interestingly, the participants also observed that it was easier to accept advice or critique colleagues who were also friends. This would suggest that it is a more democratic approach that disrupts hierarchical power relations in tradition performance management related lesson observation is more welcomed by the teachers and more likely to induce collaboration and learning from one another.

When asked to comment on the existing PD opportunities available to them, it was very clear that teachers previously had very limited PD in the form of numerous workshops. Specifically, the emphasis in Saudi Arabia appears to be on the mandatory workshops, where teachers are simply taught the same material, with limited room to contribute to share knowledge. Workshops in a Saudi setting are structured in a way that the more experienced member of the team teaches others about a new material. Although one of the goals of LS is to implement new ways of doing things in the classroom, some teachers may not find this approach beneficial to their setting. Saudi teachers experienced limited support for PD for a variety of reasons, ranging from the need to gain admissions in international universities, issues pertaining to nominations for higher studies and sponsorship for restricted specialisations, which are all factors that are inflicted by the Saudi institutional structure. Moreover, as current participants had limited prior experience with LS, this may potentially make the process more challenging for them to adopt.

The teachers have accounted for their past experience with PD and the core concept behind PD – students' needs. However, the teachers have also started to reflect on ways that their teaching practices can be changed through LS. LS was perceived as encouraging the participating teachers to learn to reflect on their practice and to modify it in line with students' needs. Working together and doing LS made it possible for teacher participants to look at the lesson plan holistically, rather than as a chore that needed to be accomplished. Respondents indicated that this gave them a sense of 'responsibility' in their practice, driving them to engage more comprehensively with elements of planning, experimentation, evaluation and discussion.

The analysis of the data revealed the teacher participants' concerns over the time-intensive nature of LS implementation. It is possible that LS implementation is viewed as time-consuming because the teachers are accustomed to one-off mandatory trainings where the teachers must attend as part of their evaluations, whereas LS is organic and embedded in their own practice, and most significantly, requires the teachers to lead it themselves. The time spent on improving one's own practice through LS can be time-consuming in itself, which can be another concern for the teachers. Despite that, data analysis indicated that the teacher participants view LS to be engaging and relevant on a number of counts.

With respect to challenges of implementing LS, participants shared that they found it hard to give or to receive feedback due to cultural reasons which made it difficult for people not to take feedback personally, even though it was aimed at professional improvement. This was even more challenging when it came to giving feedback to higher-ranking teachers. However, LS is a developmental approach that is based on the idea of disrupting and developing practice by enabling practitioners to problematise and become critically conscious of discourses and practices in their work setting and their historical and cultural situatedness, which could have its place in the Saudi context or not due to structural constraints.

With respect to the quantitative data, it was found that the teachers did not spend a lot of time on PD, and the time spent varied between teachers. Moreover, many of respondents indicated that the activities which they participated in have close to a moderate impact on their PD and many expressed a moderate need for further PD activities. However, once given an opportunity, many only engage in PD activities less than once a year, thus not treating it as a priority. On average, the teachers engaged in exchanging the materials a little more than 3-4 times a year and almost never engaged in collaboration with others. However, when comparing the data with the qualitative extracts, it is clear that Saudi EFL teachers have recognised the benefits of using LS, and many of them have started to engage in greater self-reflection as a result. At the same time, Saudi EFL teachers in this particular institution did not have enough interaction with activities promoted by LS and took limited steps toward these activities. Despite this, some teachers expressed enthusiasm and noticed the benefits of implementing LS into their practice. Thus, despite their cultural and historical environment, Saudi teachers that took place in this study have recognised the benefits of the LS and it helped them to start thinking more critically about CPD. However, the findings were not conclusive as in whether or not this was the approach that the Saudi teachers would be willing to adopt long-term, especially when combined with the challenges of implementing these changes in the Saudi education system, which is more focused on individualism and personal accomplishments at the workplace.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This chapter will conclude the thesis by presenting the research questions that guided the study and a summary of the most important findings in relation to these topics. The chapter will also discuss the limitations of the study arising from the constraints of its scope and design. It will present recommendations to address the issues identified in the findings and map research directions which can be undertaken by future researchers.

When I embarked on my PhD journey, the selection of my topic, the research approach and the intervention were influenced by my own experiences of PD. As a women EFL educator within the Saudi university setting, having participated in multiple top-down workshop-style trainings under the direction of the MOE, along with my peers, I had felt frustrated that we had no ‘voice’ in the topics of our trainings and little capacity to apply even what we had learnt in the workshops to our practice. We were compelled to attend the training, but our feedback was rarely integrated in subsequent trainings. Furthermore, the training providers seemed to be interested in delivering their training. If they had shown an interest in whether we were able to apply the learnings from the training or to support us with the challenges we were facing, we would have valued such PD more. However, once the training was delivered, we were left largely to our devices, as a result of which we found little utility in applying what we had learnt, especially as our local realities were very different from the generic training given to us.

Despite the many educational reforms under the aegis of Vision 2030 trickling down to us, women EFL educators like my peers and myself were still working within a workplace conditioned by a conservative and hierarchical culture and history in which decisions were made for us and about us. As a result, we felt a limited connection to what was happening in our practice or interest in improving it. It was ironic that we were given the immense responsibility of the stewardship of young minds and their learning in our instructional contexts, yet our insider knowledge of our practice was devalued.

The reforms launched in KSA, particularly with reference to the integration of women into the workforce, were progressive, but the paradigm of professional learning at the institutional level was still hierarchical and constricting to our autonomy and agency as teachers. I felt that our role as teachers tended to be confined to implementing and delivering top-down determined curricula and pedagogies within isolated silos. We rarely had professional conversations about what we were doing in our classrooms. First was the fear of opening up to others about self-perceived shortcomings in our class routines or instruction. Thus, my colleagues and I tended to keep our difficulties to ourselves, to the detriment of our students' learning and our own professional growth. Thus, the lack of autonomy as teachers and isolation from colleagues prevented me from growing as an EFL practitioner or translating my individual insights and reflections on my practice into pedagogical innovation.

Surveying professional development literature over the course of my doctoral study, I was introduced to the collaborative, observation-based LS approach to PD developed in Japan. Reading up about the approach in detail, I began to realise that this appeared to address many of the issues faced in my teaching context. I was very attracted to the collaborative nature of LS as I felt it could help to open up the practices of participating teachers to collegial feedback, whereas the integrated cycle of observation-based lesson planning, implementation and revision was conducive to building up the capacities of the teachers to research, generate locally relevant insights and to change their own practice. This addressed the issue of autonomy and agency which was so rife in my instructional context. Based on my own experiences and observation of my peers' experience, I strongly believed that LS with its potential for agentive PD was an essential tool for professional development, and that the CHAT lens I adopted for analysing the data could help to provide a historicised account of the workplace and PD practices in the research setting, thus identifying influential variables which run counter to envisioned reforms. However, the approach was not easy. It required time to mobilise teachers, plan and implement. With teachers in the research setting having limited exposure to leading their own PD or having the skillset to investigate their practice, it was evident that LS would be challenging to implement. However, I wanted to persevere with this because it offered the opportunity to level the playing field for women EFL teachers who had been disempowered for so long and excluded from engaging in the power structures within their work settings.

As the facilitator of the LS cycles, I faced some tensions in my dual role as an external researcher who had been away studying abroad for a number of years and a women EFL educator who worked in the same Department as my participants. The icebreaking took some time and affected the way that the participants reacted to the semi- structured interviews, lesson planning and collegial observations of lessons. Another source of tension in my research was the fact that while I had been funded by university to carry out the study, I was also probing teacher beliefs and practices which were revelatory of gaps in which the same institution implemented PD. I had to tread a fine line between being receptive to the issues experienced and reported by the teacher participants and remaining objective and impartial as a researcher.

The methodology I had chosen to use in my study posed a challenge due to a general lack of qualitative research in my culture. While I had received funding for four years of study, my sponsors wanted me to complete study during 3 months because most of the instructors sent for scholarships tended to undertake quantitative research which could be completed within shorter spans of time. The participating teachers' experiences of LS were generally positive. For instance, one of the teachers (Assel) had already been planning her lessons by informally consulting colleagues, so she was quite excited to try the technique of LS which was premised on the same idea. Others like Wassen who were initially hesitant as they feared being 'judged' eventually decided to take part in the study.

The research team gathered to look at the distant vision of the curriculum after they had implemented the project, which was something they did not have the opportunity to do before. They agreed that researching the lesson could lead to a significantly positive impact on developing students' ability to learn. Researching the lesson plan not only allowed the teachers to have an empirical basis for what they were doing in the classroom but also contributed to their desire and motivation to apply such research in the lesson plans.

The teachers expressed greater ownership of their professional development, especially as LS allowed PD to transpire within the local instructional setting. The frequent reflection on planning, evaluation, experimentation and discussion of the learning of the women students brought the teachers together, and gradually the teachers reported that they felt themselves moving directly and indirectly from isolated, individual practices to collaborative and participatory practices in an atmosphere of coalescence and professional participation directed towards a common goal.

In terms of their instructional practices, most of the teachers found that the lesson research had equipped them with many skills, the most important of which ranged from mastering the intellectuality needed for producing a research-based lesson to designing lessons for enhancing the students’ participation in their learning and deeper understanding of the content. The teachers also found that delineating methods of reinforcement and writing about the expectations about students' learning in the researched lesson plan yielded a tangible effect in enabling teachers to present the lesson well. As for the students and their level of achievement, the teachers confirmed that the study of the lesson contributed to a deeper understanding of how the students learnt, and also helped to revise and re-teach the lesson, thus leading to greater participation of the students in the learning process. The participants also reported that LS created harmony between all the team members, even those who were isolated or less willing to participate. Further, there was an improvement in the team's capabilities to design activities that engaged the students. The teachers revealed a deeper understanding of the content, noting that their skills led to a significant improvement in their capacity to observe students’ learning in classes and that were able to discern the pros and cons of the classes they are attending quite well.

LS was observed to have a notable change on the practice of the women teachers as it provided them with new skills. In addition to creating an effective collaborative environment which deepened teachers’ understanding of concepts and helped them to design various activities that enriched the educational process, LS helped to develop the teachers’ critical thinking. The teachers were able to identify the gaps in the curriculum and find ways to address these.

Under the impetus of the Tatweer project (King Abdullah’s Education Development) implemented between 2007–2013, pedagogical reforms including the transformation of teaching methods and strategies at educational institutions in Saudi Arabia have burgeoned in the KSA (Allmnakrah & Ever, 2020, p.340). This is linked in particular to the growing role of English as the language of modernisation, science and technology within policies instituted by the KSA government (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Al-Seghayer, 2005; Elyas & Picard, 2010), whereby the education and training of EFL teachers has assumed ‘core significance’ (Oudah & Altalhab, 2018, p.1407).

However, despite the focus of the Saudi government on empowering women citizens being a leitmotif of the country’s Vision 2030 roadmap (Ho, 2019), research suggests that ‘women are still poorly empowered in Saudi Arabia’ and face key structural challenges, ranging from ‘1) lack of women’s participation in the formulation of strategies, 2) centralisation of the decision-making process [to] lack of authority’ (Alotaibi, 2021, p.161). Against this backdrop, the present study was designed to investigate the PD experiences of women Saudi EFL teachers within the tertiary setting and the potential for a localised self-led PD approach based on the LS approach. Additionally, there was a need to probe how the PD of the Saudi university level women EFL teachers transpired under the influence of historical, societal and cultural factors. Such an analysis was viewed as key to understanding how ‘limiting culture, deeply embedded traditions, and related obstacles’ (Varshney, 2019, p.359) continue to prevent women from reaching their envisioned potential under the progressive Vision 2030.

In line with this, the present study investigated the implementation of LS among EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia as a strategy for increasing critical and reflexive practice, improving pedagogy and creating supportive communities of practice, particularly for women, at Saudi universities. To develop a holistic ‘historicised understanding of how professional practices have been shaped’, the analytic lens of CHAT (Ellis, 2011, p.182-183) was adopted. Hence, the study was framed by the questions presented below:

1. What opportunities are offered by LS as a tool for PD among EFL women teachers in Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the perceptions of Saudi EFL women teachers towards LS as a means to PD?
3. What, if any, cultural barriers hinder the use of LS in the context of EFL women teacher education in Saudi Arabia?

4. What are the PD experiences and goals/ambitions of the participating women teachers? Is LS able to support this?

6.1 Summary of Key findings

6.1.1 Existing experiences of PD amongst the participants

Based on analysis of survey data from the 25 women EFL teachers, the study found that a majority of the participants did not invite colleagues to observe their classes which tied in with existing literature suggesting that the Saudi Arabian educational context is characterised by an 'isolation' practice whereby teachers conduct their lessons individually without significant supervision from other individuals or professionals (Alzahrani 2016, p. 70). Chokshi and Fernandez (2004, p. 521) observe that teachers who are not accustomed to this approach in teaching would develop nervousness as well as become self-conscious about opening their classroom to other teachers. Interaction and collaboration amongst the participants tended to be restricted to the exchanging of teaching materials with colleagues which materials once secured were reviewed individually rather than together with other teachers, thus adding to their isolated practice. Most of the participants also revealed that they had never discussed the vision and mission of the university with peers, taken part in discussions on instructional media or discussed the learning development of specific learners. They had also never engaged in co-teaching and professional learning activities or in providing feedback to other teachers, training other teachers and discussing cross-curricular projects. These findings reinforced how the Saudi Arabian educational context is characterised by an 'isolation' practice whereby teachers conduct their lessons individually without significant supervision from other individuals or professionals (Alzahrani 2016). These findings resonated with earlier research which suggests that 'the dominant model of CPD in Saudi Arabia is the training model which usually depends on a training plan established to meet the educational priorities of a central authority (e.g., MOE) in terms of identifying the needed skills and competences' (Sabah, Fayez & Alshamrani et al, 2014, p.100) as opposed to promoting dialogue between teachers, and collaborative peer discussions and analysis. Indeed, engaging in PD activity did not appear to translate into an increase in working with peers to improve practice at the implementation level. In the Saudi Arabian context, observations in classroom proceedings are done during performance evaluation therefore when other teachers monitor and criticise a teacher's teaching process, it elicits nervousness as well as fear from the teacher conducting the lesson (Chokshi and Fernandez 2004). This is unlikely to be seen as productive and beneficial by the Saudi teachers, who are more likely to focus on solo activities that they can implement in their own classrooms.

The analysis of survey data also showed that the teacher participants not only reflected on their practice but also demonstrated awareness of the key role of reflection in improving their practice, thus suggesting that the practitioners were receptive to improving their instructional practices. However, the analysis also revealed that the teacher participants' perceptions of improvement were likely to be distinguishable from those prevalent in other contexts, such as Japan wherein LS is a popular approach for self-led PD. Given that in the Saudi Arabian context, individual and personal achievements are emphasised over collaborative achievements, there is a greater likelihood of teachers equating improvement with individual-led improvement of teaching practices. These findings are important not only because they confirm existing research (e.g., Al-Asmari, 2016) but because they flag the need to improve the receptivity of Saudi EFL practitioners to collaborative and self-led professional development prior to implementing such PD approaches. The study also found that the university's emphasis on teachers' use of the pacing guide not only constrained them from applying the learnings from their PD but also stifled their creativity in designing materials on their own. This is an important insight given that the present study was focused on inquiring into the participants' existing experience of PD and its impact on their professional learning.

6.1.2 Perceptions towards LS among EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia

The analysis of focus group interview data revealed that the participants clearly understood what the LS approach to PD entailed, comprehending how the approach enabled them to collaborate on improving their praxis and to problematise and research the issues faced by students together in order to come up with effective lessons for addressing these issues. Confirming earlier research, the present study revealed that LS as an approach to PD served to motivate the teachers to draw upon existing pedagogical knowledge while collaborating with colleagues.

6.1.3 Opportunities posed by LS as an approach to PD

A key finding of the present study was the perceived benefits of LS as an approach to the participants' PD. LS was reported to provide them with the capacity to address the diverse needs of the learners, offering opportunities and space to explore alternative and solutions to dealing with identified challenges. It also provided them with a forum for engaging in professional conversations which led to positive outcomes for student learning. LS was also perceived as encouraging the participating teachers to learn to reflect on their practice, modify it in line with students' needs and to introduce variation in class routines by implementing insights from observations of colleagues' praxis. This allowed the participants to extend their instructional practices beyond the textbook and curriculum, thus allowing them to exercise greater agency as teachers. These findings are significant in view of the fact that prior experiences of top-down workshop-style PD made the teachers feel voiceless and excluded from decision-making. The existing training/workshop provision in the research setting was largely unsatisfactory for several reasons, including its ad-hoc nature, lack of relevance, outdated input and dearth of teacher input that could improve the usefulness of the training.

Hence, the existing PD approach disempowered the participants as it expected the teachers to confine themselves only to 'delivering' the curriculum. This is in line with earlier research (Thomas & Turner, 2019) which found that when teachers were excluded from control over their professional development, they were less likely to be positively inclined towards PD implementation or to be motivated to engage with PD actively.

The advantage of collaborative lesson planning under the LS approach was that it encouraged teachers to take a more active involvement in their teaching practices, thus enabling them to become far more than a mere conduit for administering top-down stipulated content and learning and to explore their own relationship and place within the sphere of PD and their role as teachers more generally. The study found that this gave them a sense of ‘responsibility’ in their practice, thus driving them to engage more comprehensively with elements of planning, experimentation, evaluation and discussion.

In the present study, the participants also shared that a key perceived advantage of LS over workshop learning was that it generated very specific ideas and strategies for application in the teachers’ instructional contexts. This finding is supported by prior research on the interactions of teachers participating in LS, (Dudley, 2013, p.107) which found that LS helped to create ‘motivating conditions’ for the participants to ‘enable collective access to imagined practice and joint development of micro practices’. This study also found that collaborating within LS had helped the teachers to activate and use latent knowledge, thus improving their abilities to become aware of and to evaluate their learners’ needs as well as motivation for more effective teaching.

In relation to the idea that the LS process itself engages cognitive processes which support knowledge creation and cement its retention for longer on a neuro-biological level, many of the respondents referred to the fact that they were now bringing reflection into their practices; an inherently critical, cognitive action. The analysis of the data above revealed that many of the teacher participants reflected instinctually on their teaching and made adjustments to their strategies and techniques to address learning needs effectively. The LS approach was useful for the teachers because reflecting together was viewed as being more beneficial than solitary reflection, because it allowed the teachers to access the combined experience and ideas of the group members.

6.2 Barriers to LS in the research setting

6.2.1 Observation-based PD as a potential challenge in the cultural context of Saudi Arabia

While the advantages of LS as an approach to PD are well-documented, it relies heavily on collegial classroom observations. The analysis of data has found that this is a tool that has been used more for evaluative purposes than for PD in the research setting. The present study found that the existing system of observations was perceived negatively by them. Aligned with earlier research on the negative effects of evaluative observations in the form of Observation for Teaching and Learning (OTL) (O' Leary, 2013), the participants' perceptions of evaluative observations were negative on several counts. Firstly, observation was perceived negatively because it not only controlled what the teachers did in the classroom and forced them to organise their practice in accordance with targets but also because the external evaluators were not teachers. Hence, the participants felt that evaluators' observations could not be authentic because they had little understanding of the complexity of teaching.

Under LS, the practice of teachers is exposed to 'public' scrutiny and they are potentially exposed to critic from the participating colleagues. As part of the process, the teachers are required to teach the created lesson plan while the other members of the group observe and take notes to point out whether the learning issue under evaluation has been adequately addressed. The participants in the present study deemed the observation process to be highly stressful. Their apprehensions arose from prior experiences of evaluative admin-led observations. However, they were able to distinguish between the group observation process with more formal evaluation processes, which they deemed to be highly stressful – destructively so. Such formal evaluation processes appeared to run parallel to the practice of judge-mentoring identified by Hobson and Malderez (2013, p.2) which comprises peremptory judgements or evaluations of teachers' planning and instruction in the form of 'comments, 'feedback', 'advice', 'praise' or 'criticism'. However, the present study found that the participating teachers viewed collegial observation under LS with less trepidation due to the more equal relations between members of the LS group. To them, this was distinguishable from the asymmetrical-and thus stress-inducing relations of observer-as-evaluator looking to find flaws and mistakes, thus suggesting that observation under LS was possibly a more democratic approach capable of disrupting hierarchical power relations in traditional performance-based lesson observation.

Aligning with earlier research which found LS to 'unite teachers as community of learners' within a 'context of professionalism and empowerment' (Smith, 2008, p.156), the current study found that active engagement in self-led observation invigorated the participating teachers' cognition, pedagogy and confidence. Thus, in the study context, this not only spoke towards LS as a tool of empowerment but also suggested that the study participants in the study had been empowered due to their capacity to research their practice together and to develop their preparedness to act as agents of change.

However, a key insight generated in the findings was that within the research setting, the participants appeared to be more interested in convergent collaboration with partners or group members and tended to evidence apprehension of divergent views or conflicting opinions. This highlights an important gap in the teachers' preparedness for observation-based PD wherein diverging views on topics and issues may arise from time to time. However, past research on teacher emotion in relation to PD has (Darby, 2008) found that with the support of university mentors, the participating teachers were able to improve their practice and contribute to improvements in learners' attainment on an ongoing basis. In view of the above, professional development under the LS approach which makes use of observation-based collaborative PD motivates the teachers to evolve their practice and undertake professional learning.

6.2.2 Challenge of LS as a closed PD system

While the strength of LS is that it provides valuable insights for localised PD and instructional improvement, a key risk of the approach is that it can only advance knowledge to a limit that is inherently correlated with the knowledge of its most experienced member. Essentially, it can only build so much based on the core building blocks of knowledge that the group has to work with initially, and so is in effect 'tethered' at a certain level. This potentially represents a significant limitation of the LS model for PD within the research setting wherein the participating teachers had been excluded from curricular decision-making to the point where their voices on their own practice were unarticulated and expert members were not clearly defined. In tandem, the participants' prior experience of one-off trainings or infrequent evaluative observation was a hurdle in terms of how they could leverage the very different dynamics of LS for self-led and effective PD.

6.2.3 Implications of hierarchical Saudi culture for the inherently democratic LS approach

LS calls for a collaborative undertaking where engagement is on equal footing. This creates a clear imbalance between the cultural elements needed for LS practice, in relation to its cultural norms and rules, and the cultural norms and rules that constitute a part of the wider setting that LS is being positioned in. This conflict clearly presents a barrier to LS being deployed in a way that is fully effective. LS calls for a collaborative undertaking where engagement is on equal footing. Insofar as there are differing levels of experience or knowledge within a group undertaking LS, this does not influence their position or value within the setting; all members hold equal validity, merit, right to contribute and value of opinion. In contrast, Saudi society has relatively high hierarchical cultural norms (Elbeck, 2016, p.38). The study revealed that the teacher participants felt apprehensive about giving feedback to more experienced colleagues, which is a potential barrier for the LS approach which makes extensive use of feedback as a learning tool.

To summarise, the findings above suggest a possible incongruence between the internal culture of an activity or model (such as LS) and the context of implementation (Saudi Arabia). Such incongruence may either render the practice of the model more beneficial, because it can in essence become an instrument of change – if that change is desired, or it can render it less beneficial, in cases where change is not desired and it will therefore always be operating in conflict with its wider context. It also invites reflection upon whether Saudi Arabia – and the educational provision therein – is actually looking to make such a change culturally. While it is outside of the scope of this work to suggest whether Saudi Arabia should or should not aspire to change, in relation to the subject of the women participants in this study, data analysis clearly showed that the teachers themselves welcomed change.

6.3 Benefits

This section will discuss the observed benefits of using LS as a PD tool in the research setting, the perceptions of the participants towards the approach and the challenges faced in its implementation.

With reference to the benefits of using LS as a PD tool, it was observed that the approach led to sustainable professional development and the cultivation of in-depth applied knowledge. In addition to helping the teachers to plan more effectively and to avoid random instructional decision-making, LS fostered the development of a positive spirit, cooperation and desire amongst teachers and led to the insightful exchange of experiences between them. Collaborative reflections on instructional decisions motivated them to develop new horizons of thinking and to become more creative.

As the LS cycles progressed, the teachers developed a positive attitude to the application of LS as a PD tool, to the point where they were in favour of advising their fellow teachers to apply it. The participants felt that the project should have involved the university/ school leader too, introducing her to how LS operated at the local level, given that the success of university-based PD led by LS was determined by her support of the initiative. The participants also observed that the lesson research cycle should be repeated with the same research team. Although the first experience had been a good and successful one, it was not enough to change the prevailing thinking among women teachers, as they still tended to think of the researched lesson more in evaluative terms than as the locus or catalyst for PD. More time was needed to cultivate productive intellectual habits that would enable the teachers to discuss their successful professional practices and shed their fear of having their praxis scrutinised by colleagues.

While LS was revealed to be useful as a PD tool in the research setting, there were a number of significant challenges in implementing it. Given the cyclical nature of LS and the considerable work involved in working together, observing, documenting, reflecting and applying the insights, a key difficulty was managing these processes alongside teaching and administrative responsibilities. LS takes time to be done properly, and time is a commodity in short supply given the busy schedules of teachers. Another obstacle was that the teachers were not accustomed to documenting their practice and write reports. As a result, this acted to slow down the pace of work in the LS cycles. The lack of incentives to implement LS also hindered its effective implementation. With pre-existing work intensification and no recognition of leading one's own PD, the teachers' engagement in LS lacked incentives to be sustainable. Researching a lesson requires a repertoire of skills including research methods, reflectivity and cognition on the part of the teachers. There was a dearth of all of these amongst the participants as they were not used to researching their lessons in this way.

6.4 Limitations

Although the present study presented an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences of LS as a PD approach, the constraints of scope and available time for undertaking research led to the emergence of specific limitations. First of all, a key limitation of the present study was its sample size, namely that it investigated the experiences of only four teachers women EFL teachers at a Kingdom University. The engagement of more participants in the LS intervention or the inclusion of more participants at other universities would have contributed to more generalisable findings as well as to the identification of factors (e.g., location of the university, variations in existing PD implementation), if any, with possible impact on the findings. Secondly, the present study did not include the perspectives of educational managers or policymakers. Although the use of multiple data collection tools within the study was designed to triangulate the data, the inclusion of other stakeholder perspectives would have helped to provide not only more effective triangulation but also more enriching insights into the potential of LS in the study context.

6.5 Contributions of the study

The present study was envisioned with an eye to the importance of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. As a reform package, Vision 2030 is as much about economic change as about social change. It foresees Saudi women playing an active role in the country's economy. According to Varshney (2019, p.359), 'limiting culture, deeply embedded traditions, and related obstacles' continue to prevent women from experiencing the kind of empowerment targeted by Vision 2030. This is equally true of women in the teaching profession within Saudi Arabia. The top-down nature of PD cascaded to the Saudi women EFL teachers perpetuates conservative societal and cultural patterns which do not acknowledge women professionals as being capable of leading their own professional growth and development. Instead, it entraps them in silos at work dependent only on top-down training provided by the MOE.

Hence, the present study was designed to probe the PD experiences of women Saudi EFL teachers within the tertiary setting and the potential for a localised self-led PD approach that would allow the participants to develop as agentive leaders in their workplace. With earlier research with women EFL teachers in the Saudi context (Althaqafi, 2016, p.211) showing that they lacked ‘a voice in curriculum formation or development’ as well as access to programmes which could encourage ‘teachers to come together, share their opinions, learn from each other’s experience and develop themselves as professionals’, the aim of the present study was to investigate whether a LS approach could challenge these disempowering patterns of development.

This study makes three key contributions to the research on the PD experiences of university level Saudi women EFL teachers. First, in a departure from earlier research within the Saudi university EFL context, it uses the analytic lens of CHAT to develop a holistic picture of how limiting PD is provisioned to women EFL teachers at Saudi universities. Such a holistic picture delineates the impact of history and culture on the participants’ workplace and PD practices. Knowledge of these interacting variables can help researchers to design more effective professional teacher development which addresses historical and cultural obstacles in advance so that empowering PD can be achieved particularly for women teachers. Secondly, the study identifies the challenges to LS approach as PD in a hierarchical cultural context like Saudi Arabia, thus allowing a better understanding of whether LS which is underpinned by a very different and democratic cultural paradigm can work in more conservative contexts. This is particularly important given the need to choose PD practices that are likely to transplant well within destination educational cultures. Thirdly, another important contribution of the study relates to how it has helped to transform the perspectives of women participating teachers, thus enabling them to develop a voice of their own in the workplace and the motivation to engage in self-led PD. While it is a small level change limited to a few participants in one setting, the transformations experienced by the participating teachers are likely to percolate to their practices as well as colleagues over time, thus setting off the momentum for at the very least-department wise change.

6.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following broad recommendations are made.

I. Saudi women EFL teachers should be made aware of historical and cultural factors which influence and constrain their autonomy and agency as teachers. This can be done through awareness raising activities such as discussions on these themes and teacher reflections within the educational setting as well as part of teacher development programmes.

II. Within teacher development activities, evaluative performance-based observations should be substituted by observation as a PD tool implemented by colleagues. Unless such a change is undertaken, any PD based on collegial observation is unlikely to succeed, given the teachers' resistance to evaluative observations. This is an issue which can be addressed by educational managers and teacher educators.

III. Prior to implementation of LS as a PD approach, participating teachers need to be prepared to undertake such collaborative professional development effectively. This means helping them to understand the democratic mechanisms of LS and the importance of opening up their classrooms to observations by colleagues and providing respectful and honest feedback without apprehension of a colleague's seniority or expertise.

Implementing the study in the research setting revealed a number of gaps which need to be addressed for better utilisation of LS as a tool for sustainable PD. These gaps pertained to needed skills, incentives, structures, enabling conditions, and training of selected teachers for development planning and implementation. Recommendations to address these are discussed below:

6.6.1 Skills

The first identifiable gap showed that the participating teachers lacked knowhow of how to reflect on their practice, research lessons and write reports. These skills are pre-requisites for the smooth implementation of LS in the practitioners' work context. Unless and until the participating teachers know how to think about and problematise their practice as well as to identify strengths and weaknesses of their pedagogy, it is hard for them to come up with solutions through research. Further, researching a lesson itself requires a range of sub-skills. These include generating problem statements to address targeted areas of improvement, identifying suitable literature pertaining to the issue for discussions in the LS group and delineating strategies recommended in literature for addressing the issue focused upon (Rock & Wilson, 2005). To be effective as a LS group, participating teachers must be able to carry out research on evidence-based instruction, peruse curriculum materials, generate a suitable lesson plan and take part in instruction, observation and debriefing as well as contribute to the end report (Leong, Raphael & Radick, 2021, p.14). They must also be able to maintain detailed notes, communicate effectively with team members between meetings and share what they know with one another (Leong, Raphael & Radick, 2021, p.14). The present study revealed that the participating teachers struggled with report writing, which is a key element of the LS approach. Hence, it is important to include training for the LS team members in writing up their findings not only for the purpose of documentation of the group's work but also for wider dissemination of findings and insights.

6.6.2 Incentives

Implementing LS is a time-intensive undertaking, and in most instructional settings, teachers usually have a heavy workload including but not limited to teaching, planning, assessing learners' work, providing learners with support and performing administrative duties. In view of the above, it is important to incentivise the teachers' participation in LS means by reducing their instructional workload and providing them with other incentives or rewards to encourage them to take part in the activity. This would also go a long way in encouraging other teachers to focus on the improvement of their practice by participating in LS. Overworked teachers tend to avoid any PD initiative if it makes extra work for them but does not result in tangible or intangible rewards. Thus, it is recommended that LS implementation for PD and pedagogical improvement is accompanied by suitable incentives or rewards to secure and maintain teacher engagement.

6.6.3 Structures

The study also found that one of the issues faced in relation to LS implementation pertained to the dearth of necessary structures to make the initiative successful. This gap could be addressed by establishing community partnerships with schools to provision courses for women teachers that could deepen their knowledge of the scientific concepts. The establishment of a special committee (or unit) in every education office for monitoring the investigation of the lesson in all its aspects, including its mechanism and its impact in practical terms is also recommended. Further assigning a specific fixed time in the school schedule for Lesson Research Team meetings could be a step forward in ensuring that local teacher-driven PD thrives. Based on the findings of the study, it was also observed that there was a need to determine an appropriate scale to measure the impact of achieving the remote goal. The study also identified that well-equipped rooms for teachers of the same specialisation could support the effective implementation of LS cycles.

It was also observed that implementation of LS should commence from the beginning of the year to provide enough time to plan and implement the research cycles. It is also recommended that universities should collaborate with schools in the experience and their involvement in it for the professional growth of the teachers.

To ensure that LS implementation is successful, it is recommended that a special platform should be created for teachers to exchange their experiences through the use of technology. There should be a focus on lessons that are difficult for teachers and students, and attention should be paid to the quality of the student's educational learning. The teachers should be given enough time to work and develop a time plan, and the content of the research should be increased rather than being limited to a lesson. The participating teachers should be supported with insights into appropriate models to follow in their practice by facilitators, and feedback should be provided to them subsequent to conclusion of the LS research cycle.

6.6.4 Needs analysis

The study also indicated the need for the Education Department to undertake a survey of English teachers to learn about their demands, professional experiences, and specific scientific knowledge. Then, using this information as a resource offered by teachers to training programme designers, the Department should lead or participate in the planning of PD programmes, as well as the production of content and training courses based on teachers' opinions and needs.

The General Administration for Training and Scholarships should organise and redistribute responsibilities in training centres in educational administrations by involving trainees (teachers) as an essential part of the design and preparation of PD programmes with the trainers. For example, at the start of each academic year, a group of teachers representing a group of English teachers at the institution may be chosen and invited to attend workshops to create the content of development programmes that would be implemented later.

However, instead of inviting them to a training programme where they simply know the name of the trainer, the location, and who is teaching them, efforts should be made to listen to the teachers and to help them lead their own PD. The evidence from the study suggests that teachers should be able to select the seminars that best meet their needs. Other findings suggested that facilitators should be trained to increase their knowledge and skills. One key recommendation is that those in charge of PD should develop extensive PD programmes and systematically evaluate the programmes across the stages of planning, implementation to evaluation in order to ensure that the programme goals have been achieved.

6.7 Future research directions

In future research, researchers can implement a similar study at other Saudi universities to gauge the extent to which the findings of the present study hold true or diverge in parallel tertiary settings. While the present study explored the experiences of women EFL teachers, as already pointed out, women teachers in general within the Saudi context tend to disempower. Therefore, future research may enrol male and women EFL teachers as participants for a comparative consideration of whether the experiences of the two genders in relation to professional disempowerment are similar or different. While the present study focused only on the experiences of the women EFL teachers, prospective researchers can design a study which takes into account the perspectives of other stakeholders for a more enriching understanding of LS as a PD approach in the Saudi context. For instance, such a study may take into account the insights of policy makers, educational managers and administration to achieve a more triangulated understanding of how professional development is conceptualised and implemented presently as well as the impact of a more agentive local teacher-driven PD model. Another type of study could look at the engagement of teachers in LS and its impact on students' learning which would involve not only attainment data but also interviews with students to understand how their teachers' engagement in LS benefits them. Future studies may also include an analysis of policy and institutional discourses to develop richer insights into how Saudi EFL teachers are positioned and the extent of their agency and autonomy according to these discourses.

6.8 Conclusion

With swift changes transpiring under the reforms of Vision 2030, the world of work and the world of women's work in particular is changing rapidly within the Saudi context. Notwithstanding the limitations inherent to its scope as a student's doctoral research, this thesis showed that for Saudi women teachers to be empowered and contribute as envisioned to the Saudi economy, PD initiatives alone are not enough. Instead, understanding and addressing the cultural and historical dimensions underpinning the teachers' workplace and PD is a key pre-requisite to empowering Saudi women teachers and helping Saudi Arabia to achieve the social change it seeks to root out the entrenched inequities faced by its women citizens. Upon this depends Saudi Arabia's future economic prosperity and social progress.

It is evident that for the reforms and Vision 2030 in the context of women's empowerment to succeed in Saudi Arabia, there must be a parallel focus on large-scale cultural change spanning shifts in the outlook and attitudes of policymakers, educational managers and teacher training providers as well as women EFL teachers themselves. As long as policymakers and educational managers hold onto the idea of top-down centralised PD that does not take into account or validate the insider knowledge practitioners bring from their unique insights into their praxis, the existing structures will continue to be shaped by a collective and disempowering conservative mindset which denies women EFL teachers their agency and autonomy. At the same time, such paternalistic, disconnected and disparate PD which is far removed from the realities of the women EFL teachers' workplace will continue to be resisted by the practitioners. However, it is important to understand that cultural change must be across the board. It is not only the policymakers and educational managers who must learn to realise the potential of the women EFL teachers as architects of their own PD. The women EFL practitioners must also be encouraged to think of themselves as having the agency to investigate and modify their own praxis while growing as EFL professionals. The existing models of PD keep the women EFL teachers in a state of dependence, passively waiting for the institution to offer trainings which may or may not be relevant. A local teacher-driven model of PD such as LS puts the teachers in the limelight, facilitating them to work together collaboratively, problematise and investigate their praxis and come up with research-based solutions leading to pedagogical improvement and innovation. In sum, it facilitates women EFL teachers into transforming into academic leaders in their own right. The women EFL teachers' engagement and ownership of pedagogical innovation and their own professional development under such an agentive model also promises self-sustainable PD which can help to erode the decades of inequities and disempowerment experienced by women EFL practitioners.

At the end, what this thesis has shown is that reforms directed at empowering women need to be understood against the backdrop of the many intersections of history and culture which shape the workplace and PD experiences of women EFL teachers. While on the one hand, a local teacher-led model of PD such as LS holds much promise and potential for catalysing the growth and transformation of Saudi women EFL practitioners, it needs to be taken into account that the model has developed in a very different collaborative and democratic culture. Therefore, in attempting to transplant the PD model into the hierarchical and conservative tertiary Saudi workplace, much ground needs to be prepared, new habits of mind cultivated, skills developed and support from senior management secured in order to ensure a modicum of the model's success. The experiences of the four teachers in this study offer strong evidence for the transformative impact of a teacher-driven model of PD. To the teachers, LS did not just serve as a way to investigate their practice or to grow professionally. Rather it served as a catalyst for thinking of themselves as being capable enough to lead their own PD and to problematise and to change their practice for the better. For the first time, the intervention allowed the teachers to discover their 'agency' and their 'voice' which in turn amplified their ownership of innovation in their classrooms. This is an important step forward, given the prevalence of disempowering PD practices that have held back women EFL teachers, to the detriment of the practitioners' growth as EFL professionals as well as their students' learning. Further research on the impact of LS can validate the worth and robustness of such an approach to PD in the Saudi context, particularly in the context of women EFL teachers' growth as professionals.

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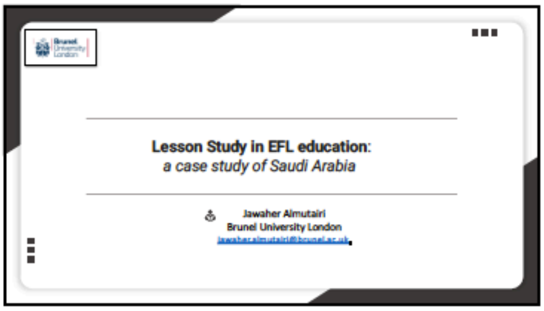
APPENDICES

(Appendix A): Demonstration tools; Power point slides and video

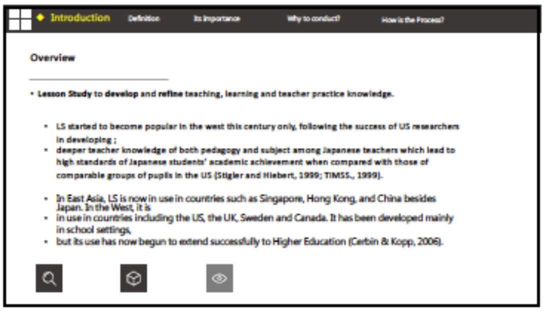


Lesson Study in EFL education:
a case study of Saudi Arabia

Jawaher Almutairi
Brunel University London

Brunel University London

1

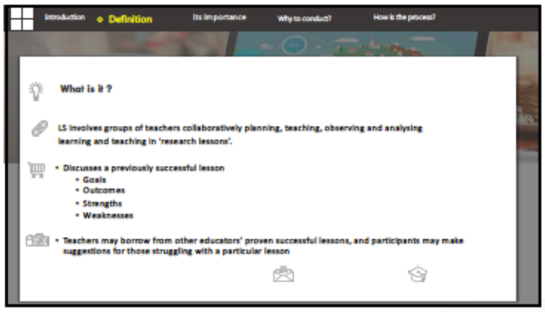


Introduction
Definition
Its importance
Why to conduct?
How is the Process?

Overview

- **Lesson Study** to **develop** and **refine** teaching, learning and teacher practice knowledge.
  - LS started to become popular in the west this century only, following the success of US researchers in developing ;
  - deeper teacher knowledge of both pedagogy and subject among Japanese teachers which lead to high standards of Japanese students' academic achievement when compared with those of comparable groups of pupils in the US (Stigler and Hiebert, 1999; TIMSS., 1999).
  - In East Asia, LS is now in use in countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and China besides Japan. In the West, it is
  - in use in countries including the US, the UK, Sweden and Canada. It has been developed mainly in school settings,
  - but its use has now begun to extend successfully to Higher Education (Cerbin & Kopp, 2006).

2



Introduction
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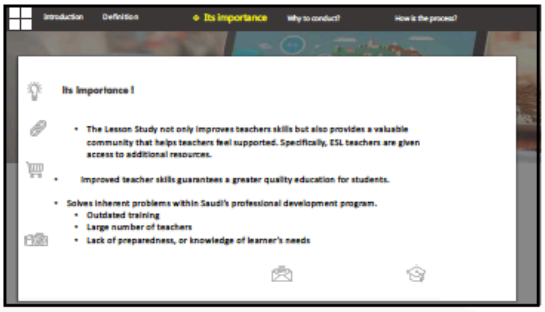
How is the process?

What is it ?

LS involves groups of teachers collaboratively planning, teaching, observing and analysing learning and teaching in 'research lessons'.

- Discusses a previously successful lesson
  - Goals
  - Outcomes
  - Strengths
  - Weaknesses
- Teachers may borrow from other educators' proven successful lessons, and participants may make suggestions for those struggling with a particular lesson



Introduction
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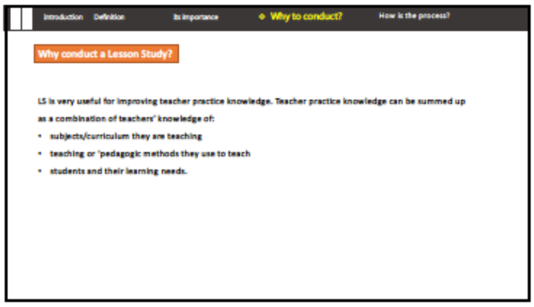
Its Importance !

- The Lesson Study not only improves teachers skills but also provides a valuable community that helps teachers feel supported. Specifically, ESL teachers are given access to additional resources.
- Improved teacher skills guarantees a greater quality education for students.
- Solves inherent problems within Saudi's professional development program.
  - Outdated training
  - Large number of teachers
  - Lack of preparedness, or knowledge of learner's needs



Introduction
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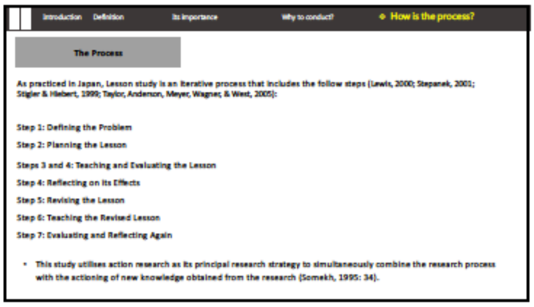
Why conduct a Lesson Study?

LS is very useful for improving teacher practice knowledge. Teacher practice knowledge can be summed up as a combination of teachers' knowledge of:

- subjects/curriculum they are teaching
- teaching or 'pedagogic methods they use to teach
- students and their learning needs.

5



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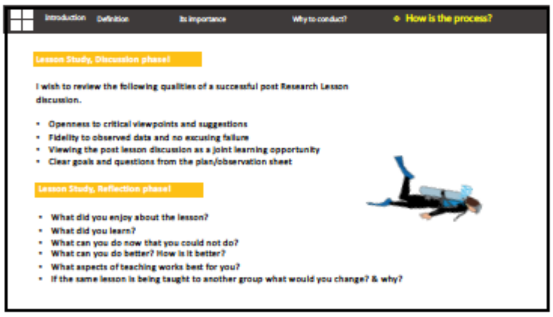
The Process

As practiced in Japan, Lesson study is an iterative process that includes the follow steps (Lewis, 2000; Stepanek, 2001; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Taylor, Anderson, Meyer, Wagner, & West, 2005):

Step 1: Defining the Problem
Step 2: Planning the Lesson
Steps 3 and 4: Teaching and Evaluating the Lesson
Step 4: Reflecting on its Effects
Step 5: Revising the Lesson
Step 6: Teaching the Revised Lesson
Step 7: Evaluating and Reflecting Again

- This study utilises action research as its principal research strategy to simultaneously combine the research process with the actioning of new knowledge obtained from the research (Somekh, 1995: 34).

6



Introduction
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Lesson Study, Discussion phase!

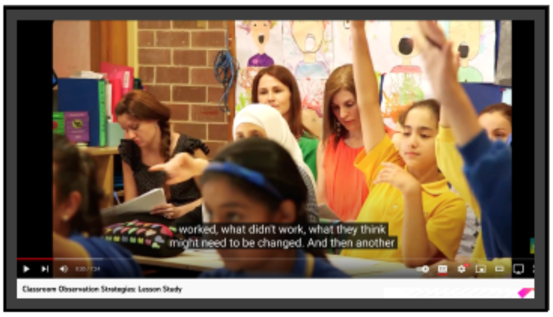
I wish to review the following qualities of a successful post Research Lesson discussion.

- Openness to critical viewpoints and suggestions
- Fidelity to observed data and no excusing failure
- Viewing the post lesson discussion as a joint learning opportunity
- Clear goals and questions from the plan/observation sheet

Lesson Study, Reflection phase!

- What did you enjoy about the lesson?
- What did you learn?
- What can you do now that you could not do?
- What can you do better? How is it better?
- What aspects of teaching works best for you?
- If the same lesson is being taught to another group what would you change? & why?

7

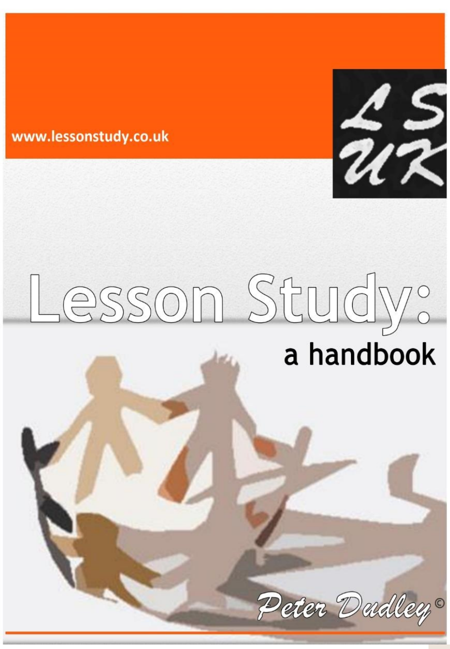


worked, what didn't work, what they think might need to be changed. And then another

Classroom Observation Strategies: Lesson Study

8

(Appendix B): Photograph of the handbook's cover page



www.lessonstudy.co.uk

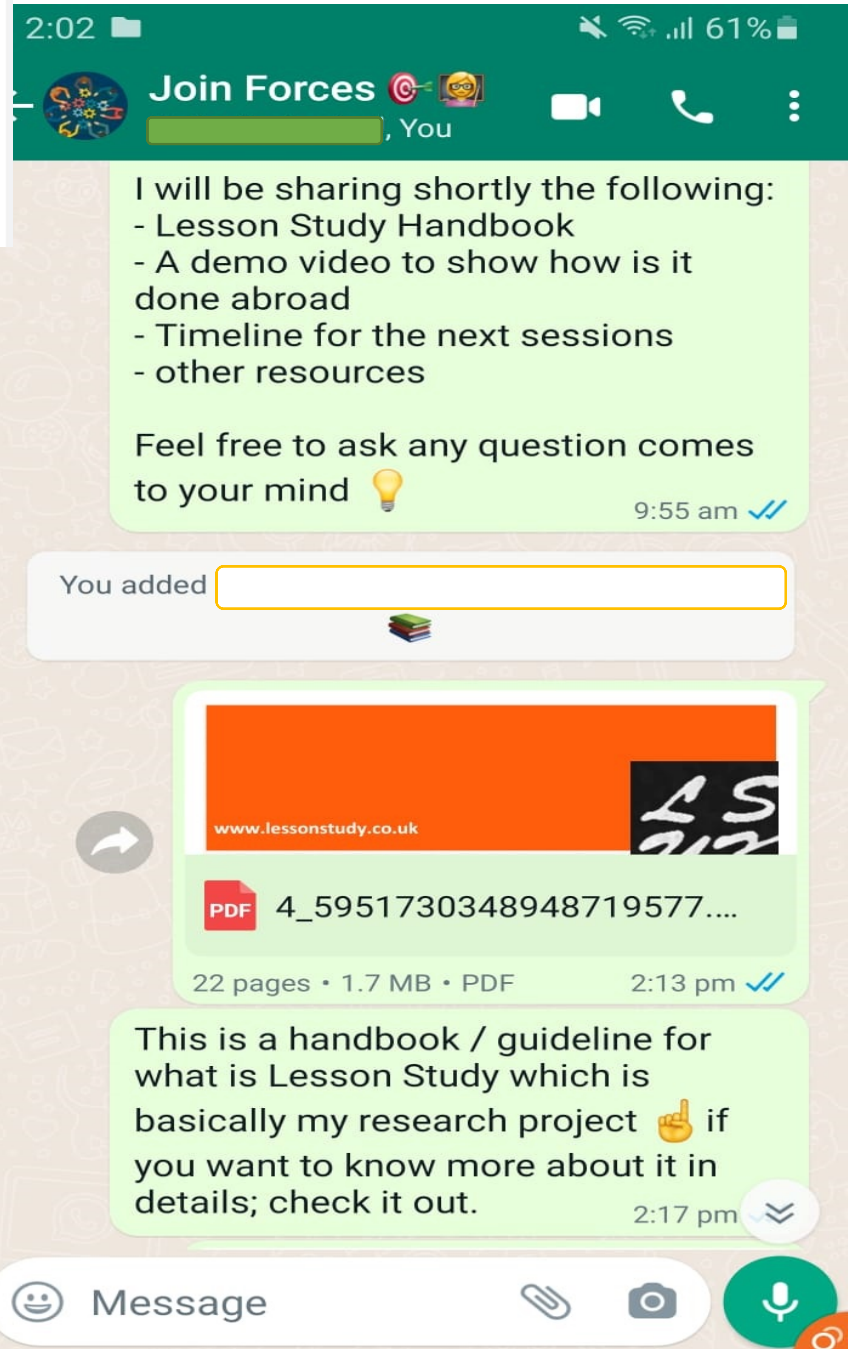
LS UK

Lesson Study:

a handbook

Peter Dudley ©

(Appendix C): Screenshot of the participants' WhatsApp group chat



I will be sharing shortly the following:
- Lesson Study Handbook
- A demo video to show how is it done abroad
- Timeline for the next sessions
- other resources

Feel free to ask any question comes to your mind 💡 9:55 am

You added [redacted] 📚

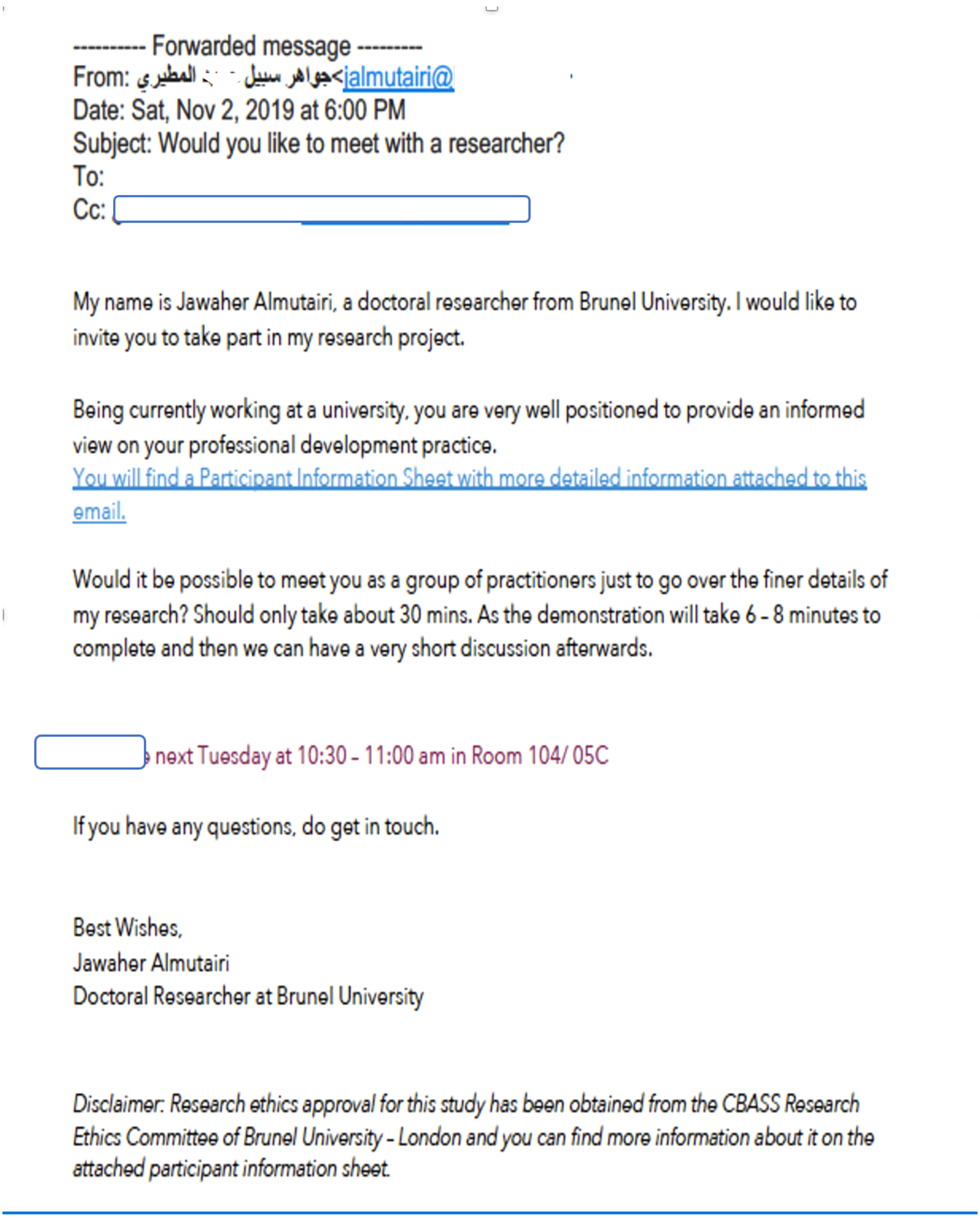
www.lessonstudy.co.uk LS UK

PDF 4_5951730348948719577....

22 pages • 1.7 MB • PDF 2:13 pm

This is a handbook / guideline for what is Lesson Study which is basically my research project ☝ if you want to know more about it in details; check it out. 2:17 pm

(Appendix D): Copy of the teachers' invitation email (phase 1)



---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: جواهر سبيل [redacted] المطيري <jalmutairi@[redacted]
Date: Sat, Nov 2, 2019 at 6:00 PM
Subject: Would you like to meet with a researcher?
To:
Cc: [redacted]

My name is Jawaher Almutairi, a doctoral researcher from Brunel University. I would like to invite you to take part in my research project.

Being currently working at a university, you are very well positioned to provide an informed view on your professional development practice.
You will find a Participant Information Sheet with more detailed information attached to this email.

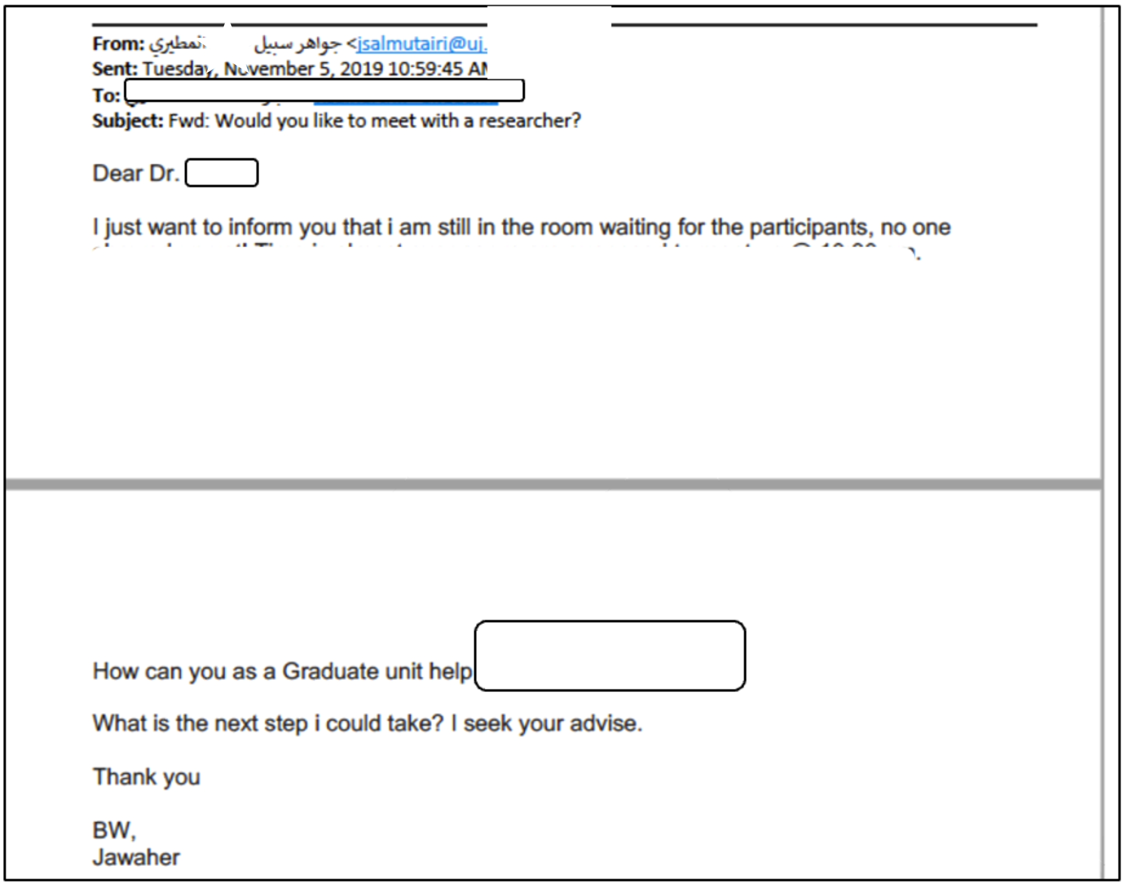
Would it be possible to meet you as a group of practitioners just to go over the finer details of my research? Should only take about 30 mins. As the demonstration will take 6 - 8 minutes to complete and then we can have a very short discussion afterwards.

[redacted] next Tuesday at 10:30 - 11:00 am in Room 104/ 05C

If you have any questions, do get in touch.

Best Wishes,
Jawaher Almutairi
Doctoral Researcher at Brunel University

Disclaimer: Research ethics approval for this study has been obtained from the CBASS Research Ethics Committee of Brunel University - London and you can find more information about it on the attached participant information sheet.



From: نمطيري جواهر سبيل <jsalmutairi@uj.
Sent: Tuesday, November 5, 2019 10:59:45 AM
To: [redacted]
Subject: Fwd: Would you like to meet with a researcher?

Dear Dr. [redacted]

I just want to inform you that i am still in the room waiting for the participants, no one

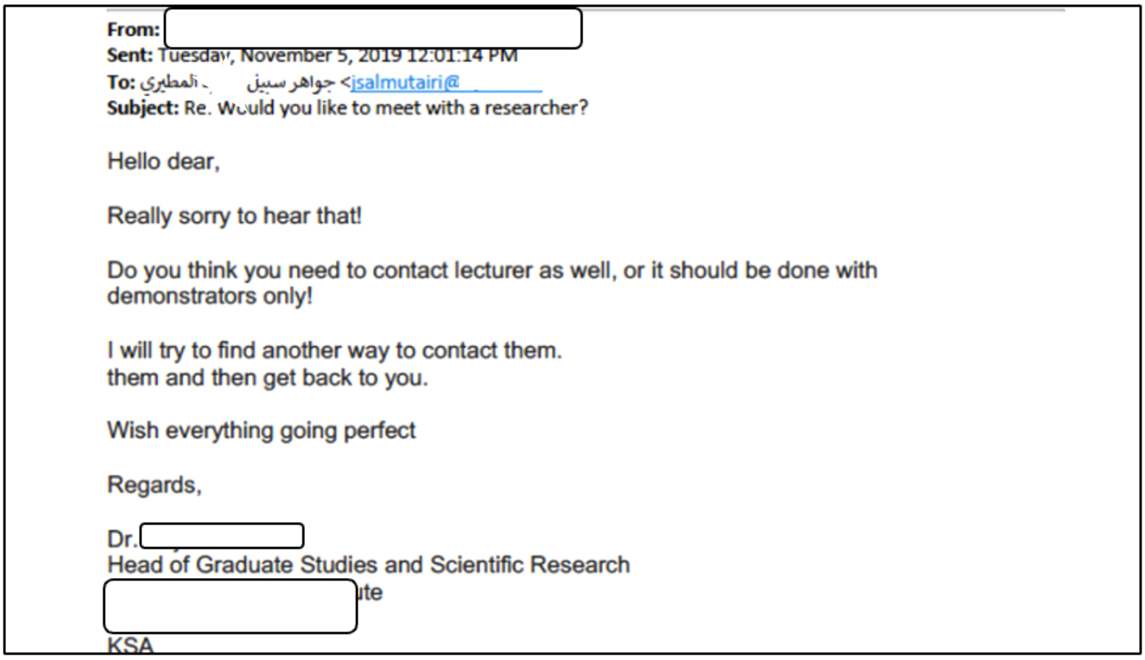
[redacted]

How can you as a Graduate unit help [redacted]

What is the next step i could take? I seek your advise.

Thank you

BW,
Jawaher



From: [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, November 5, 2019 12:01:14 PM
To: المطيري جواهر سبيل <jsalmutairi@
Subject: Re. Would you like to meet with a researcher?

Hello dear,

Really sorry to hear that!

Do you think you need to contact lecturer as well, or it should be done with demonstrators only!

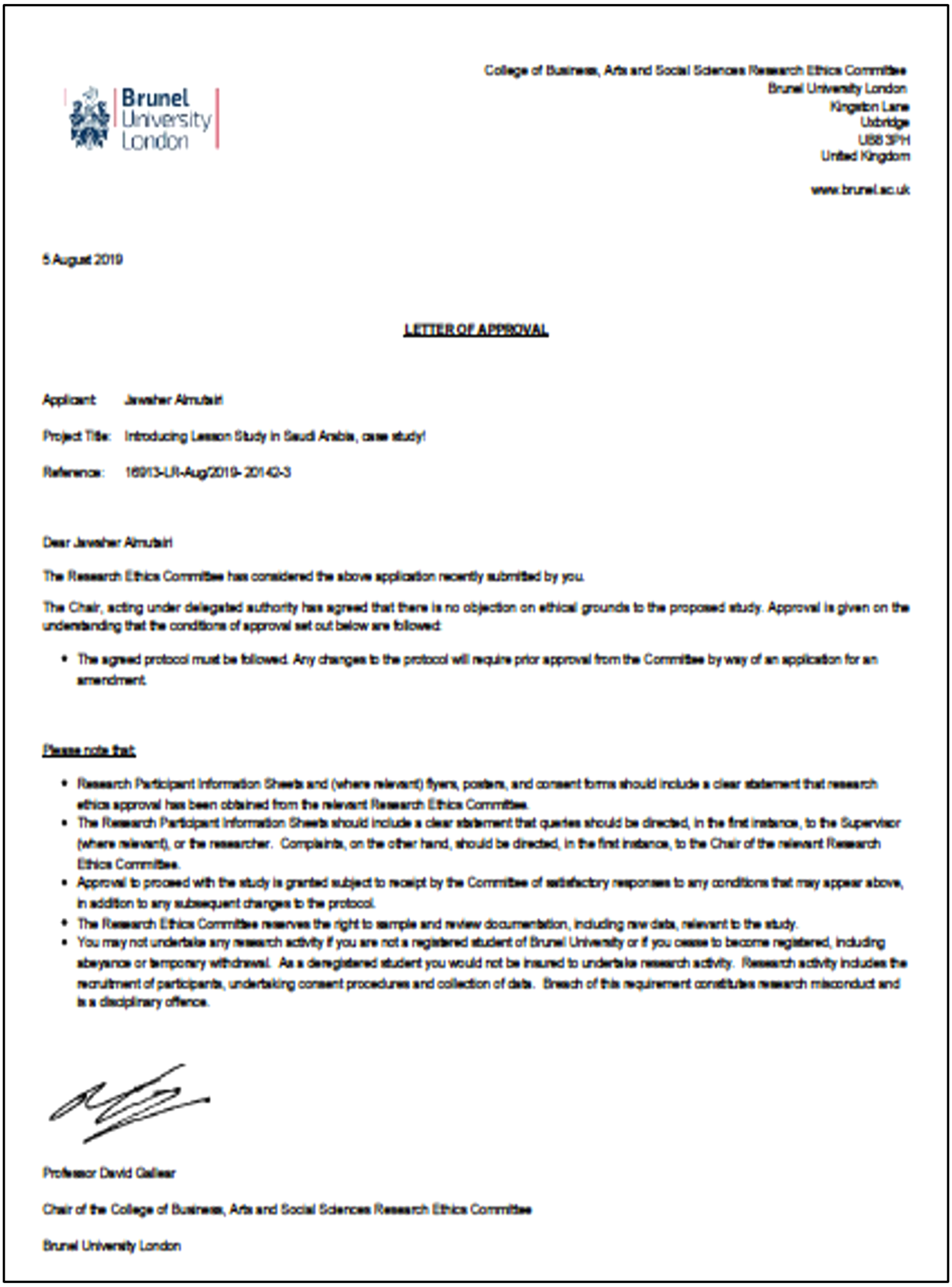
I will try to find another way to contact them.
them and then get back to you.

Wish everything going perfect

Regards,

Dr. [redacted]
Head of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research
[redacted]te
KSA

(Appendix E): Brunel's University Research Ethics committee's Approval



Brunel
University
London

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Brunel University London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge
UB8 3PH
United Kingdom

www.brunel.ac.uk

5 August 2019

LETTER OF APPROVAL

Applicant: Jawaher Almutairi

Project Title: Introducing Lesson Study in Saudi Arabia, case study!

Reference: 16913-LR-Aug/2019- 20142-3

Dear Jawaher Almutairi

The Research Ethics Committee has considered the above application recently submitted by you.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee by way of an application for an amendment.

Please note that:

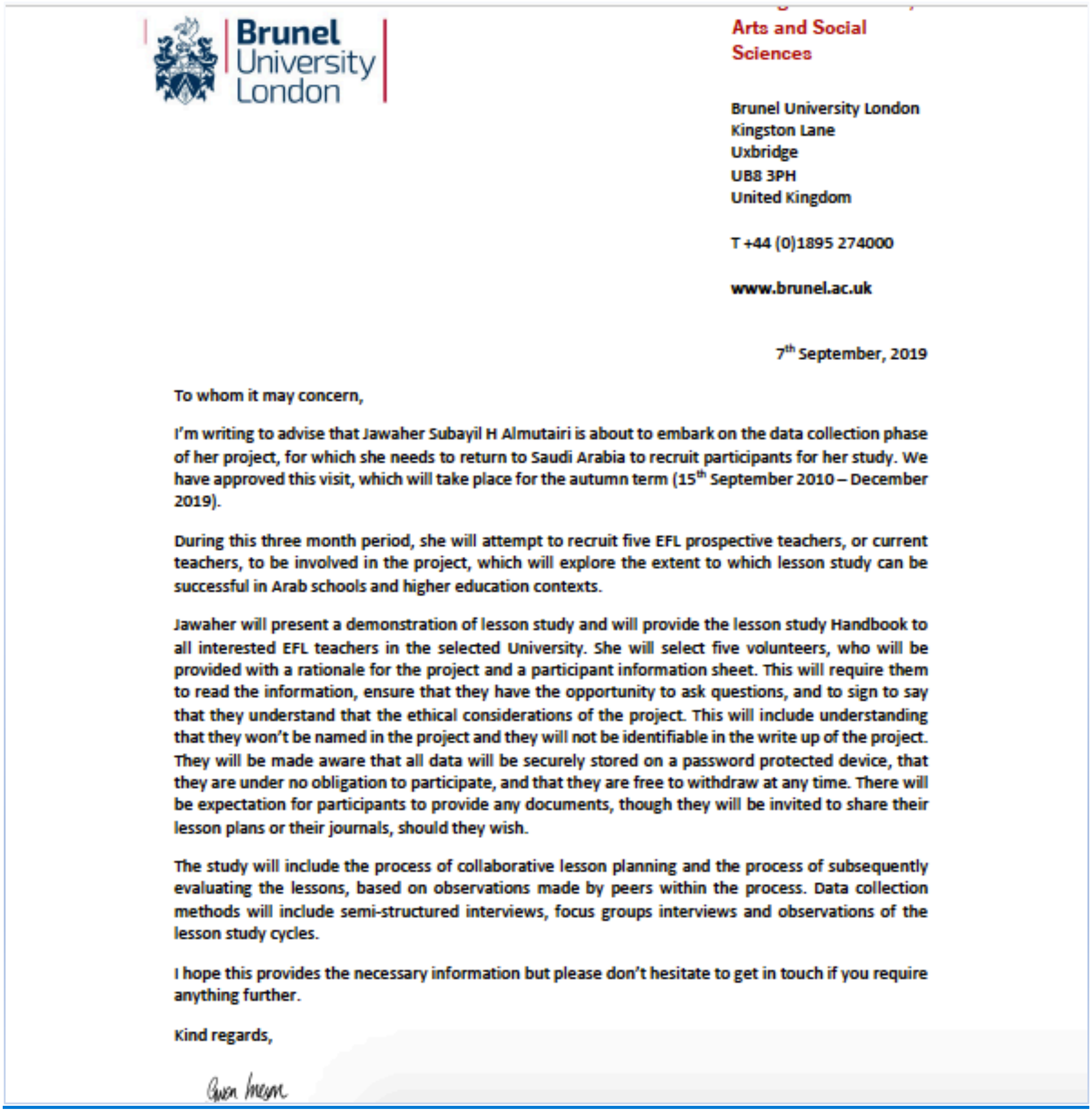
- Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.
- The Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.
- You may not undertake any research activity if you are not a registered student of Brunel University or if you cease to become registered, including abeyance or temporary withdrawal. As a deregistered student you would not be insured to undertake research activity. Research activity includes the recruitment of participants, undertaking consent procedures and collection of data. Breach of this requirement constitutes research misconduct and is a disciplinary offence.

Professor David Gallear

Chair of the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Brunel University London

(Appendix F): Copy of Brunel study Approval (Phase1)



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United Kingdom

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www.brunel.ac.uk

7th September, 2019

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing to advise that Jawaher Subayil H Almutairi is about to embark on the data collection phase of her project, for which she needs to return to Saudi Arabia to recruit participants for her study. We have approved this visit, which will take place for the autumn term (15th September 2010 – December 2019).

During this three month period, she will attempt to recruit five EFL prospective teachers, or current teachers, to be involved in the project, which will explore the extent to which lesson study can be successful in Arab schools and higher education contexts.

Jawaher will present a demonstration of lesson study and will provide the lesson study Handbook to all interested EFL teachers in the selected University. She will select five volunteers, who will be provided with a rationale for the project and a participant information sheet. This will require them to read the information, ensure that they have the opportunity to ask questions, and to sign to say that they understand that the ethical considerations of the project. This will include understanding that they won't be named in the project and they will not be identifiable in the write up of the project. They will be made aware that all data will be securely stored on a password protected device, that they are under no obligation to participate, and that they are free to withdraw at any time. There will be expectation for participants to provide any documents, though they will be invited to share their lesson plans or their journals, should they wish.

The study will include the process of collaborative lesson planning and the process of subsequently evaluating the lessons, based on observations made by peers within the process. Data collection methods will include semi-structured interviews, focus groups interviews and observations of the lesson study cycles.

I hope this provides the necessary information but please don't hesitate to get in touch if you require anything further.

Kind regards,

Gwen Ineson

(Appendix G): Copy of the participants information sheet and consent form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Introducing LS in EFL Education: A Case Study of Saudi Arabia

Invitation:

My name is Jawaher Almutairi, a doctoral researcher from Brunel University. I would like to invite you to take part in my research project. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and ask questions about anything you do not understand. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

It aims to examine the introduction of LS into English as a First Language, or EFL, courses. This has been monumentally effective within the Japanese education system and I seek to apply the same principles to the Saudi Arabian market. While the cultures themselves are vastly different, the principles and modes of operation are essentially the same.

Why have I been invited to participate?

LS inaugurates an alternative approach to PD, by recasting you as the teacher as an active investigator rather than the object of PD activity. This marks an important distinction, as it provides a space in which you do not feel evaluated, but rather are able to critically approach your own pedagogy without judgement. Also, this project allows you as Saudi teacher to be in a situation of self-development.

As the research carried out in Saudi Arabia, women teachers in the education system use both the participatory and emancipatory action plans. It is designed to offer transparency and democracy in the education system process following the rules of engagement accordingly.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also be asked to sign a ‘consent form’. If you decide to take part, you are still free to stop at any time without giving a reason. No questions will be asked if you stop.

What do I have to do?

Series of lessons during and after;

Step 1: Collaboratively Planning the Study Lesson (written plan for lesson)
Step 2: Seeing the Study Lesson in Action (observational fieldnotes/checklists to gather evidence of student learning)
Step 3: Discussing the Study Lesson (reflection on evidence of student learning collected in class)
Step 4: Revising the Lesson (producing revised lesson plan)
Step 5: Teaching the new version of the lesson (observational fieldnotes/checklists to gather impact of changes in lesson plan on student learning)

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Participating in the research is not anticipated to cause you any disadvantages or discomfort.

What if something goes wrong?

If you have any complaints about the project in the first instance you can contact me on my email: jawaher.almutairi@brunel.ac.uk

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications.

Data collected may be shared in an anonymised form to allow reuse by the research team and other third parties.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
Results of the research will be published. You will not be identified in any report or publication. If you wish to be given a copy of any reports resulting from the research, please ask me to put you on my circulation list.

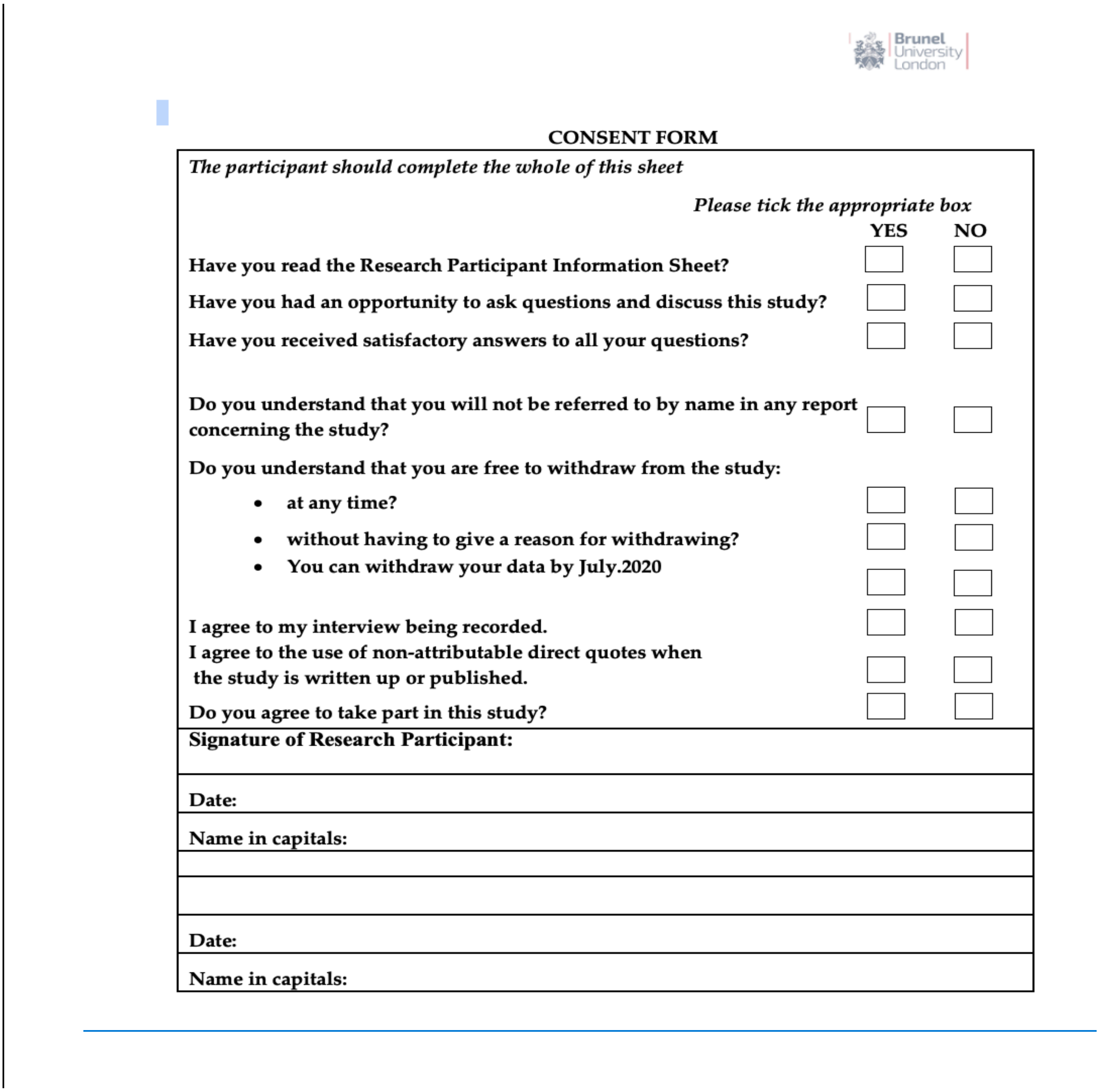
Who is organising and funding the research?
University of ………

Who has reviewed the study?
This project has been ethically approved by Brunel Research ethic Committee.

Include a passage on the University's commitment to the UK Concordat on Research Integrity:
Brunel University is committed to compliance with the Universities UK Research Integrity Concordat. "You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from our researchers during the course of their research."

Contact for further information

- Jawaher Almutairi, *Department of Education in the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences,* Burnel University, London, UK. Tel: +44(0) 7401821999,
  | E jawaher.almutairi@brunel.ac.uk
- Dr Cathy Gower (BEd, MAEd, PhD), Head of the Department of Education, College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences, T +44(0)1895 266496 | E cathy.gower@brunel.ac.uk Brunel University London, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH, United Kingdom
- Dr Gwen Ineson, Director of Postgraduate Research, Senior Lecturer - Mathematics Education, College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences, Department of Education, T +44 (0)1895 265865. | E Gwen.Ineson@brunel.ac.uk Brunel University London, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH, United Kingdom



Brunel University London

CONSENT FORM

The participant should complete the whole of this sheet

Please tick the appropriate box

	YES	NO
Have you read the Research Participant Information Sheet?	☐	☐
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	☐	☐
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	☐	☐
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning the study?	☐	☐
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:		
• **at any time?**	☐	☐
• **without having to give a reason for withdrawing?**	☐	☐
• **You can withdraw your data by July.2020**	☐	☐
I agree to my interview being recorded.	☐	☐
I agree to the use of non-attributable direct quotes when the study is written up or published.	☐	☐
Do you agree to take part in this study?	☐	☐

Signature of Research Participant:

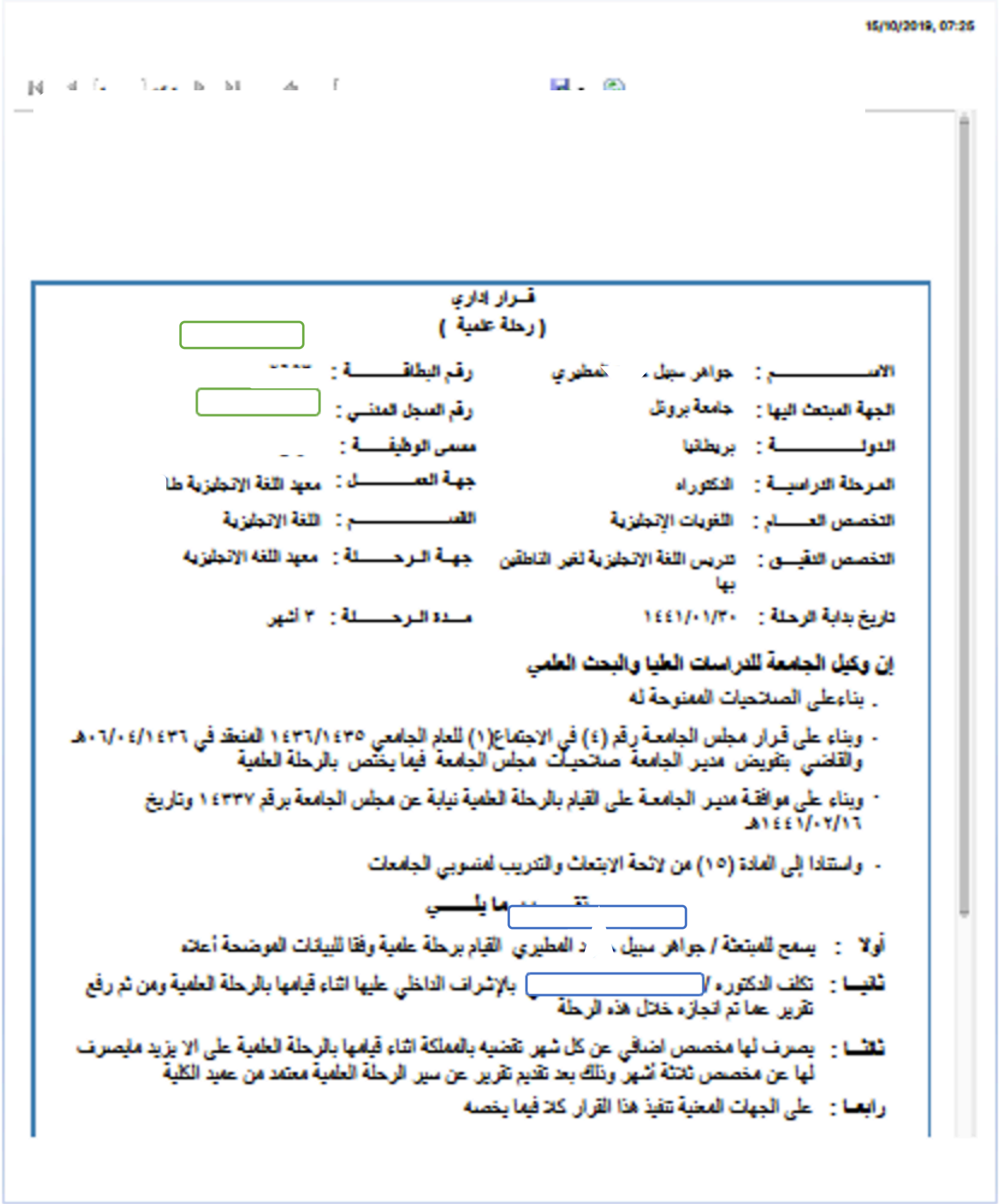
Date:

Name in capitals:

Date:

Name in capitals:

(Appendix H): Eli field trip approval



15/10/2019, 07:26

قـرار إداري

(رحلة علمية)

[redacted]

الاســـــــــم :	جواهر سبيل [redacted] المطيري	رقم البطاقـــــة :	[redacted]
الجهة المبتعث اليها :	جامعة برونل	رقم السجل المدنـي :	[redacted]
الدولـــــــــة :	بريطانيا	مسمى الوظيفـــة :	[redacted]
المرحلة الدراسيـة :	الدكتوراه	جهة العمـــــــل :	معهد اللغة الانجليزية طا
التخصص العـــام :	اللغويات الإنجليزية	القســــــــــم :	اللغة الانجليزية
التخصص الدقيـــق :	تدريس اللغة الانجليزية لغير الناطقين بها	جهـة الـرحـــــلة :	معهد اللغه الانجليزيه
تاريخ بداية الرحلة :	١٤٤١/٠١/٣٠	مـــدة الـرحـــــلة :	٣ أشهر

إن وكيل الجامعة للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي

- بناءعلى الصلاحيات الممنوحة له
- وبناء على قرار مجلس الجامعة رقم (٤) في الاجتماع(١) للعام الجامعي ١٤٣٦/١٤٣٥ المنعقد في ١٤٣٦/٠٤/٠٦هـ والقاضي بتفويض مدير الجامعة صلاحيات مجلس الجامعة فيما يختص بالرحلة العلمية
- وبناء على موافقة مدير الجامعة على القيام بالرحلة العلمية نيابة عن مجلس الجامعة برقم ١٤٣٣٧ وتاريخ ١٤٤١/٠٢/١٦هـ
- واستنادا إلى المادة (١٥) من لائحة الابتعاث والتدريب لمنسوبي الجامعات

تقـ[redacted]ما يلـــي

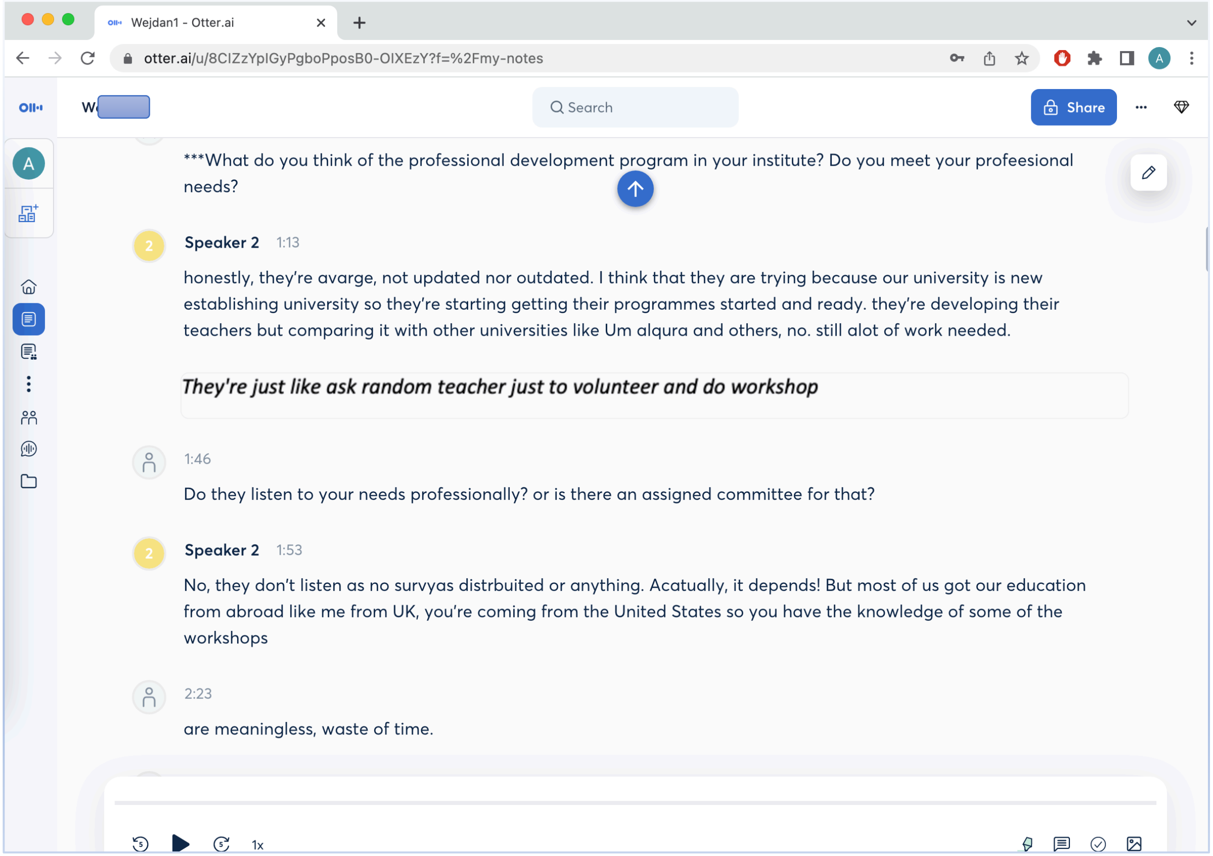
أولا : يسمح للمبتعثة / جواهر سبيل [redacted] المطيري القيام برحلة علمية وفقا للبيانات الموضحة أعلاه

ثانيـا : تكلف الدكتوره / [redacted] بالإشراف الداخلي عليها اثناء قيامها بالرحلة العلمية ومن ثم رفع تقرير عما تم انجازه خلال هذه الرحلة

ثالثـا : يصرف لها مخصص اضافي عن كل شهر تقضيه بالمملكة اثناء قيامها بالرحلة العلمية على الا يزيد مايصرف لها عن مخصص ثلاثة أشهر وذلك بعد تقديم تقرير عن سير الرحلة العلمية معتمد من عميد الكلية

رابعـا : على الجهات المعنية تنفيذ هذا القرار كلا فيما يخصه

(Appendix I): An excerpt from one of the interview transcripts



***What do you think of the professional development program in your institute? Do you meet your profeesional needs?

Speaker 2 1:13

honestly, they're avarge, not updated nor outdated. I think that they are trying because our university is new establishing university so they're starting getting their programmes started and ready. they're developing their teachers but comparing it with other universities like Um alqura and others, no. still alot of work needed.

They're just like ask random teacher just to volunteer and do workshop

1:46

Do they listen to your needs professionally? or is there an assigned committee for that?

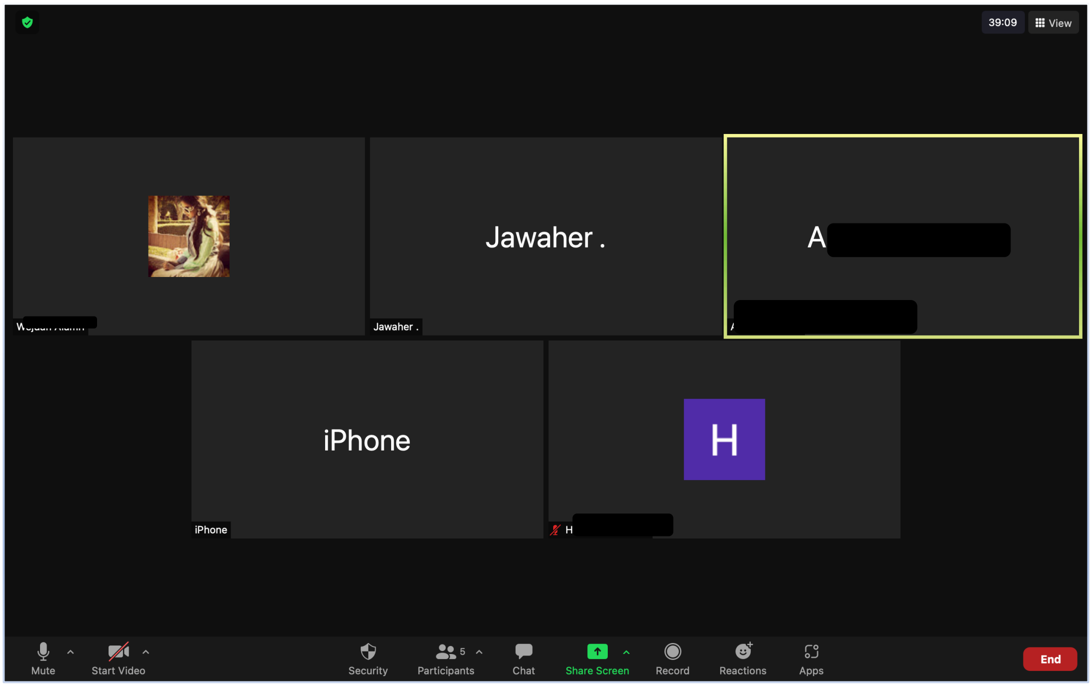
Speaker 2 1:53

No, they don't listen as no survyas distrbuited or anything. Acatually, it depends! But most of us got our education from abroad like me from UK, you're coming from the United States so you have the knowledge of some of the workshops

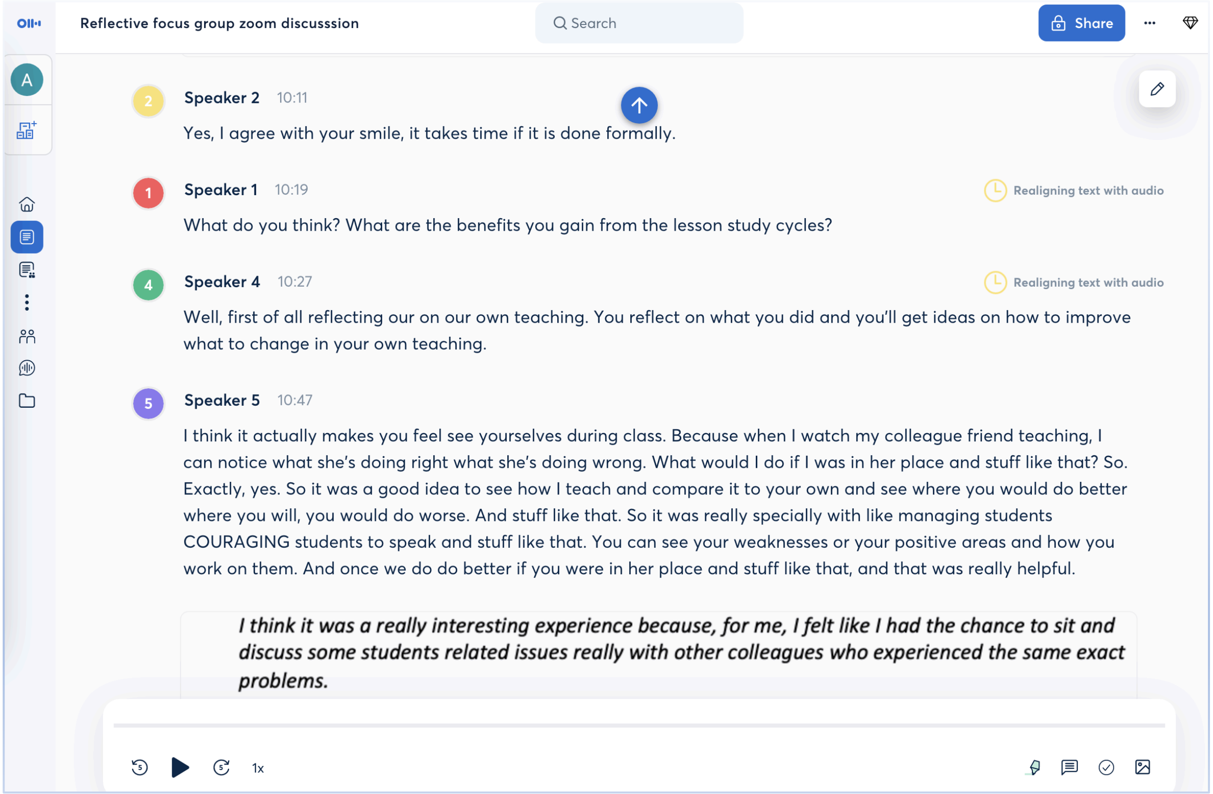
2:23

are meaningless, waste of time.

(Appendix J): Screenshot of the Zoom meeting


39:09
View
[redacted]
Jawaher .
Jawaher .
A [redacted]
[redacted]
iPhone
iPhone
H
H [redacted]
Mute
Start Video
Security
5
Participants
Chat
Share Screen
Record
Reactions
Apps
End

(Appendix K) : An extract of the post focus group transcriptions



Speaker 2 10:11

Yes, I agree with your smile, it takes time if it is done formally.

Speaker 1 10:19 Realigning text with audio

What do you think? What are the benefits you gain from the lesson study cycles?

Speaker 4 10:27 Realigning text with audio

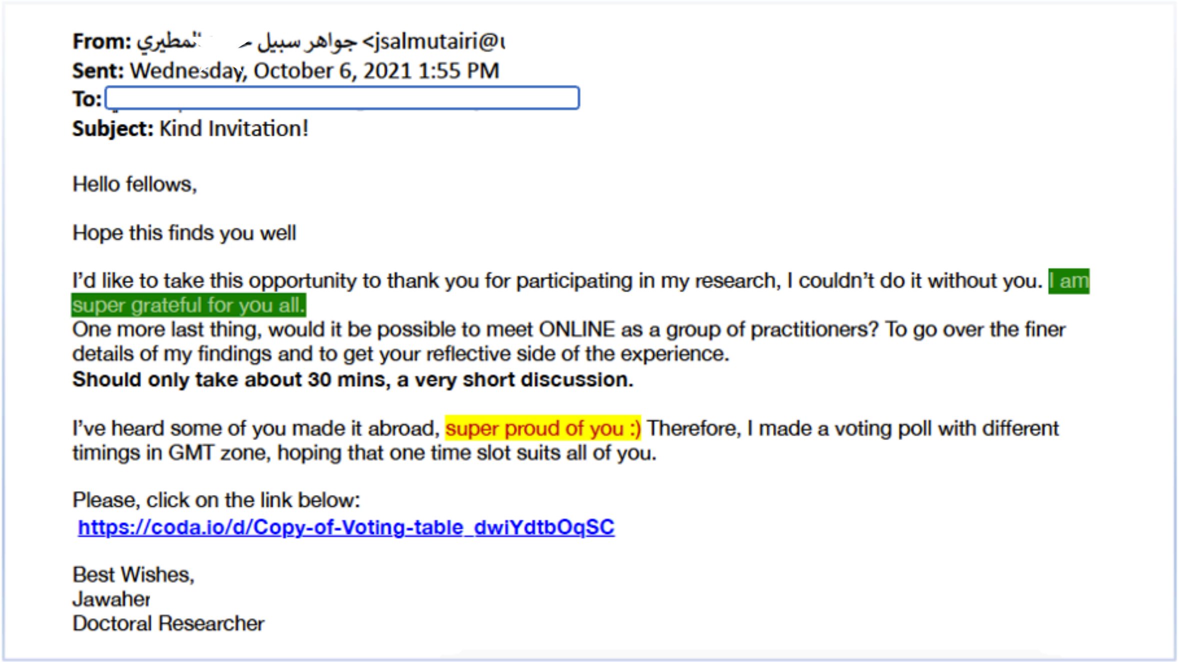
Well, first of all reflecting our on our own teaching. You reflect on what you did and you'll get ideas on how to improve what to change in your own teaching.

Speaker 5 10:47

I think it actually makes you feel see yourselves during class. Because when I watch my colleague friend teaching, I can notice what she's doing right what she's doing wrong. What would I do if I was in her place and stuff like that? So. Exactly, yes. So it was a good idea to see how I teach and compare it to your own and see where you would do better where you will, you would do worse. And stuff like that. So it was really specially with like managing students COURAGING students to speak and stuff like that. You can see your weaknesses or your positive areas and how you work on them. And once we do do better if you were in her place and stuff like that, and that was really helpful.

I think it was a really interesting experience because, for me, I felt like I had the chance to sit and discuss some students related issues really with other colleagues who experienced the same exact problems.

(Appendix L): Copy of the invitation email for the post focus group meeting



From: جواهر سبيل ـ نمطيري <jsalmutairi@
Sent: Wednesday, October 6, 2021 1:55 PM
To: [redacted]
Subject: Kind Invitation!

Hello fellows,

Hope this finds you well

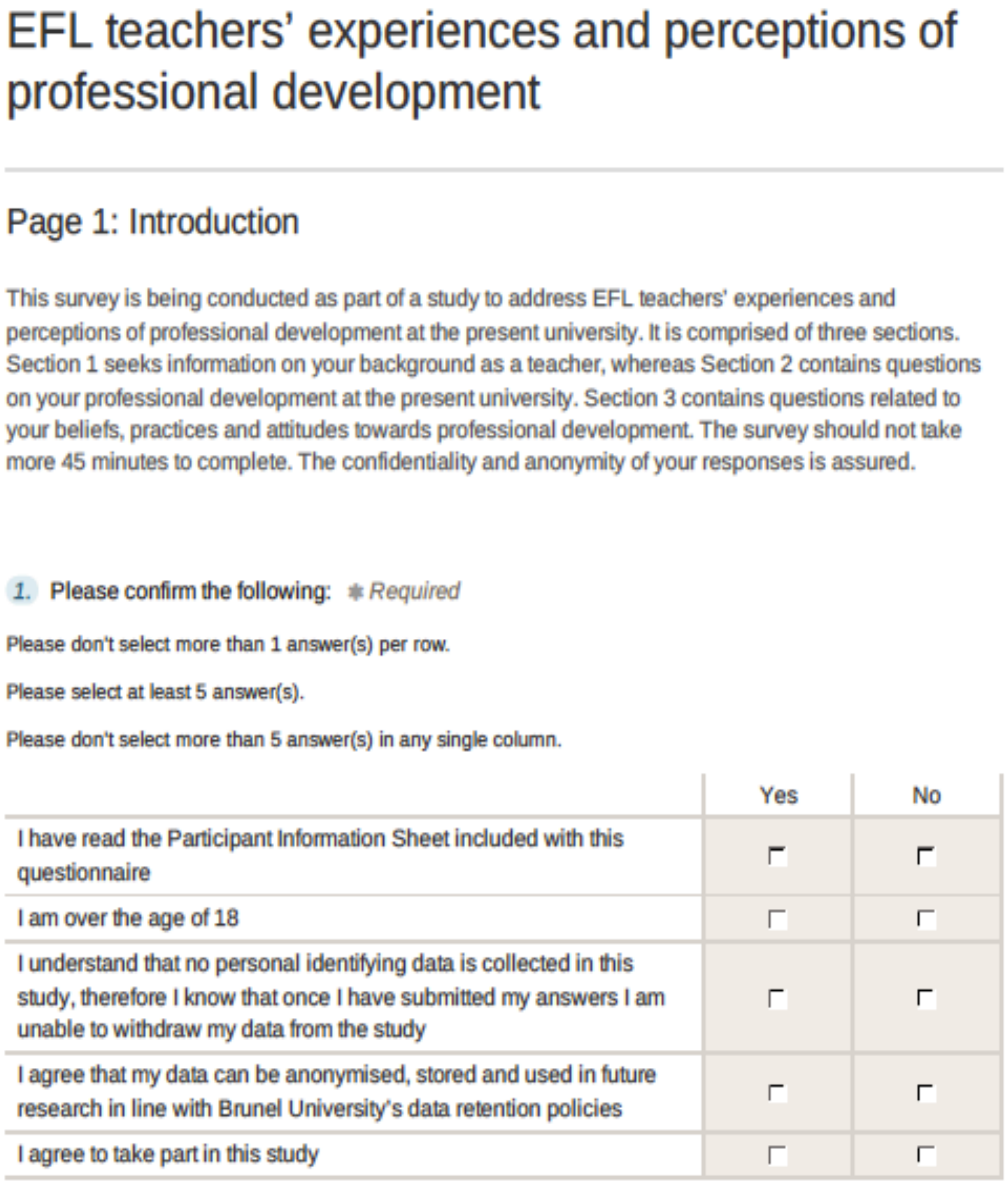
I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for participating in my research, I couldn't do it without you. I am super grateful for you all.
One more last thing, would it be possible to meet ONLINE as a group of practitioners? To go over the finer details of my findings and to get your reflective side of the experience.
Should only take about 30 mins, a very short discussion.

I've heard some of you made it abroad, super proud of you :) Therefore, I made a voting poll with different timings in GMT zone, hoping that one time slot suits all of you.

Please, click on the link below:
https://coda.io/d/Copy-of-Voting-table_dwiYdtbOqSC

Best Wishes,
Jawaher
Doctoral Researcher

(Appendix M): Copy of the online survey



EFL teachers' experiences and perceptions of professional development

Page 1: Introduction

This survey is being conducted as part of a study to address EFL teachers' experiences and perceptions of professional development at the present university. It is comprised of three sections. Section 1 seeks information on your background as a teacher, whereas Section 2 contains questions on your professional development at the present university. Section 3 contains questions related to your beliefs, practices and attitudes towards professional development. The survey should not take more 45 minutes to complete. The confidentiality and anonymity of your responses is assured.

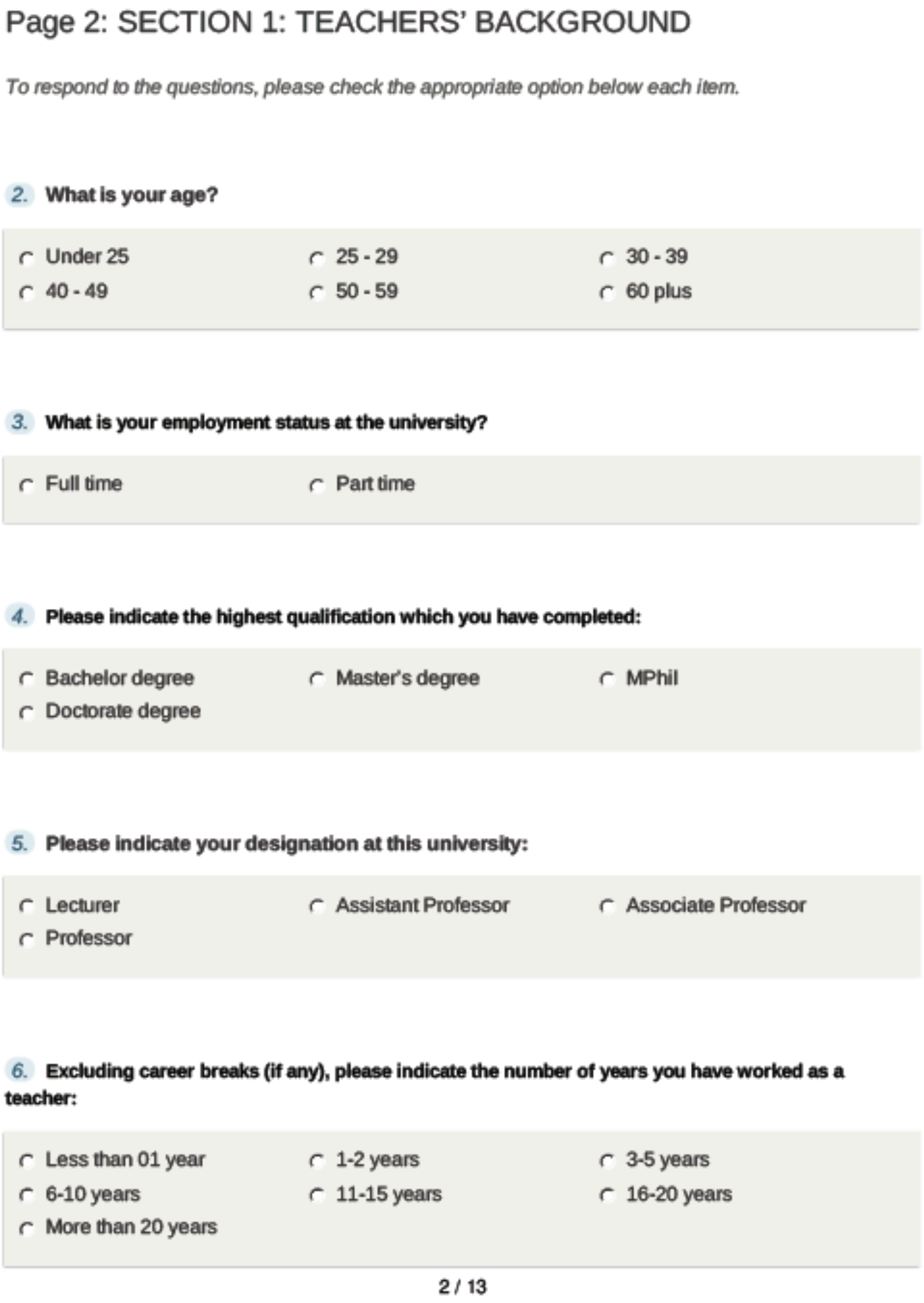
1. Please confirm the following: * *Required*

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 5 answer(s).

Please don't select more than 5 answer(s) in any single column.

	Yes	No
I have read the Participant Information Sheet included with this questionnaire	☐	☐
I am over the age of 18	☐	☐
I understand that no personal identifying data is collected in this study, therefore I know that once I have submitted my answers I am unable to withdraw my data from the study	☐	☐
I agree that my data can be anonymised, stored and used in future research in line with Brunel University's data retention policies	☐	☐
I agree to take part in this study	☐	☐



Page 2: SECTION 1: TEACHERS' BACKGROUND

To respond to the questions, please check the appropriate option below each item.

2. What is your age?

○ Under 25 ○ 25 - 29 ○ 30 - 39
○ 40 - 49 ○ 50 - 59 ○ 60 plus

3. What is your employment status at the university?

○ Full time ○ Part time

4. Please indicate the highest qualification which you have completed:

○ Bachelor degree ○ Master's degree ○ MPhil
○ Doctorate degree

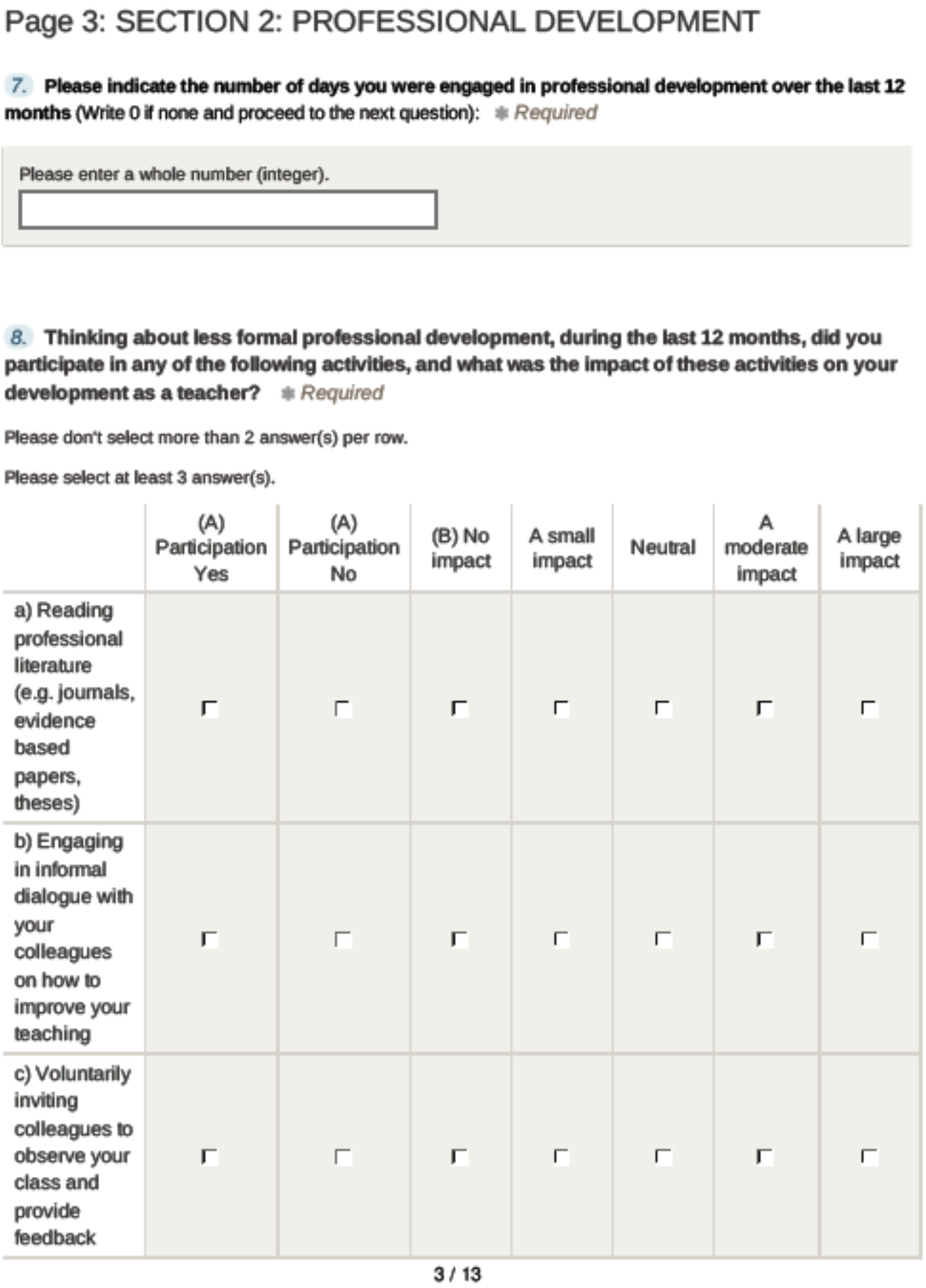
5. Please indicate your designation at this university:

○ Lecturer ○ Assistant Professor ○ Associate Professor
○ Professor

6. Excluding career breaks (if any), please indicate the number of years you have worked as a teacher:

○ Less than 01 year ○ 1-2 years ○ 3-5 years
○ 6-10 years ○ 11-15 years ○ 16-20 years
○ More than 20 years

2 / 13



Page 3: SECTION 2: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

7. **Please indicate the number of days you were engaged in professional development over the last 12 months** (Write 0 if none and proceed to the next question): *Required*

Please enter a whole number (integer).

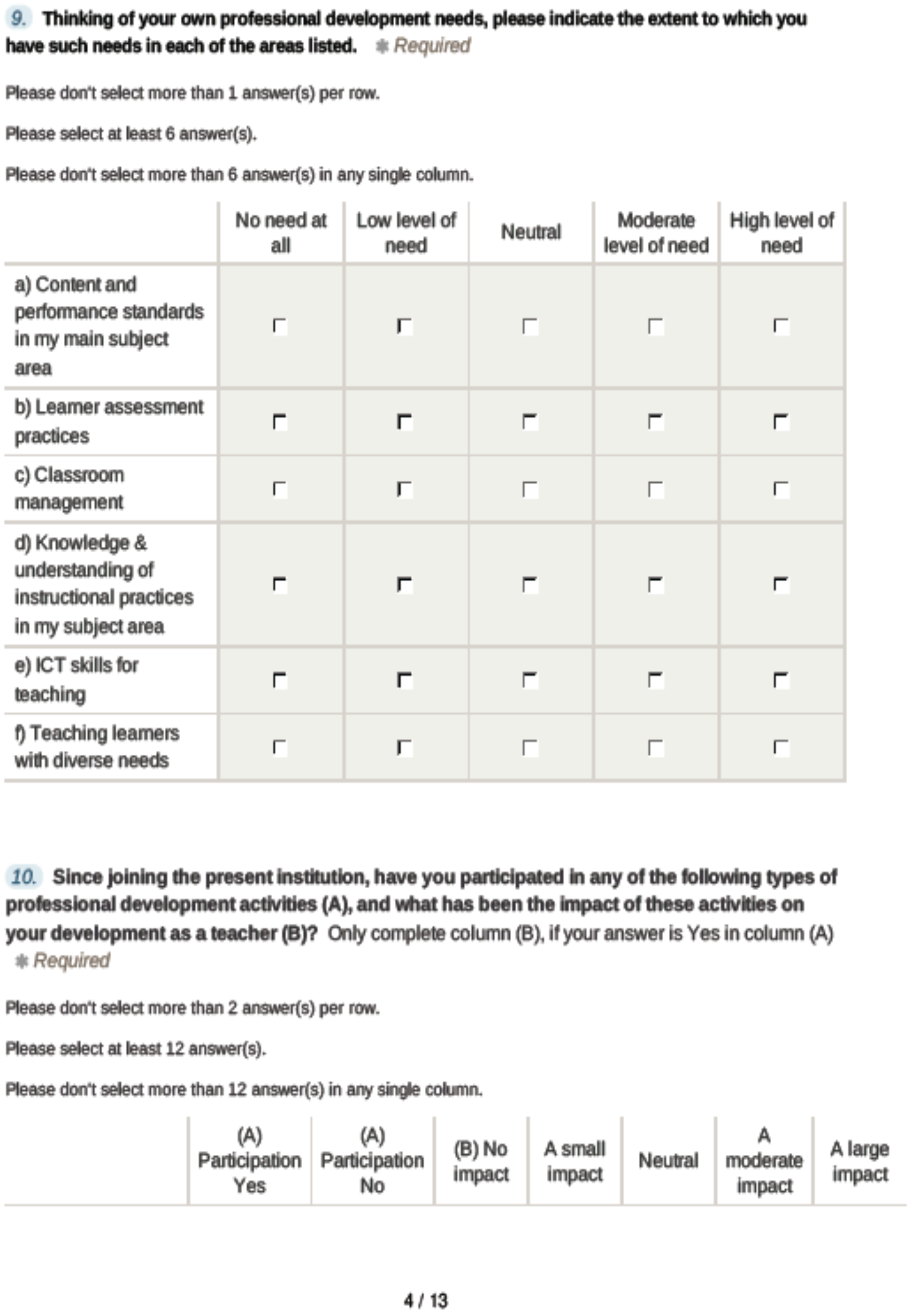
☐

8. **Thinking about less formal professional development, during the last 12 months, did you participate in any of the following activities, and what was the impact of these activities on your development as a teacher?** *Required*

Please don't select more than 2 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 3 answer(s).

	(A) Participation Yes	(A) Participation No	(B) No impact	A small impact	Neutral	A moderate impact	A large impact
a) Reading professional literature (e.g. journals, evidence based papers, theses)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Engaging in informal dialogue with your colleagues on how to improve your teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Voluntarily inviting colleagues to observe your class and provide feedback	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



9. **Thinking of your own professional development needs, please indicate the extent to which you have such needs in each of the areas listed.** *✱ Required*

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 6 answer(s).

Please don't select more than 6 answer(s) in any single column.

	No need at all	Low level of need	Neutral	Moderate level of need	High level of need
a) Content and performance standards in my main subject area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Learner assessment practices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Classroom management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Knowledge & understanding of instructional practices in my subject area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) ICT skills for teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) Teaching learners with diverse needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. **Since joining the present institution, have you participated in any of the following types of professional development activities (A), and what has been the impact of these activities on your development as a teacher (B)?** Only complete column (B), if your answer is Yes in column (A) *✱ Required*

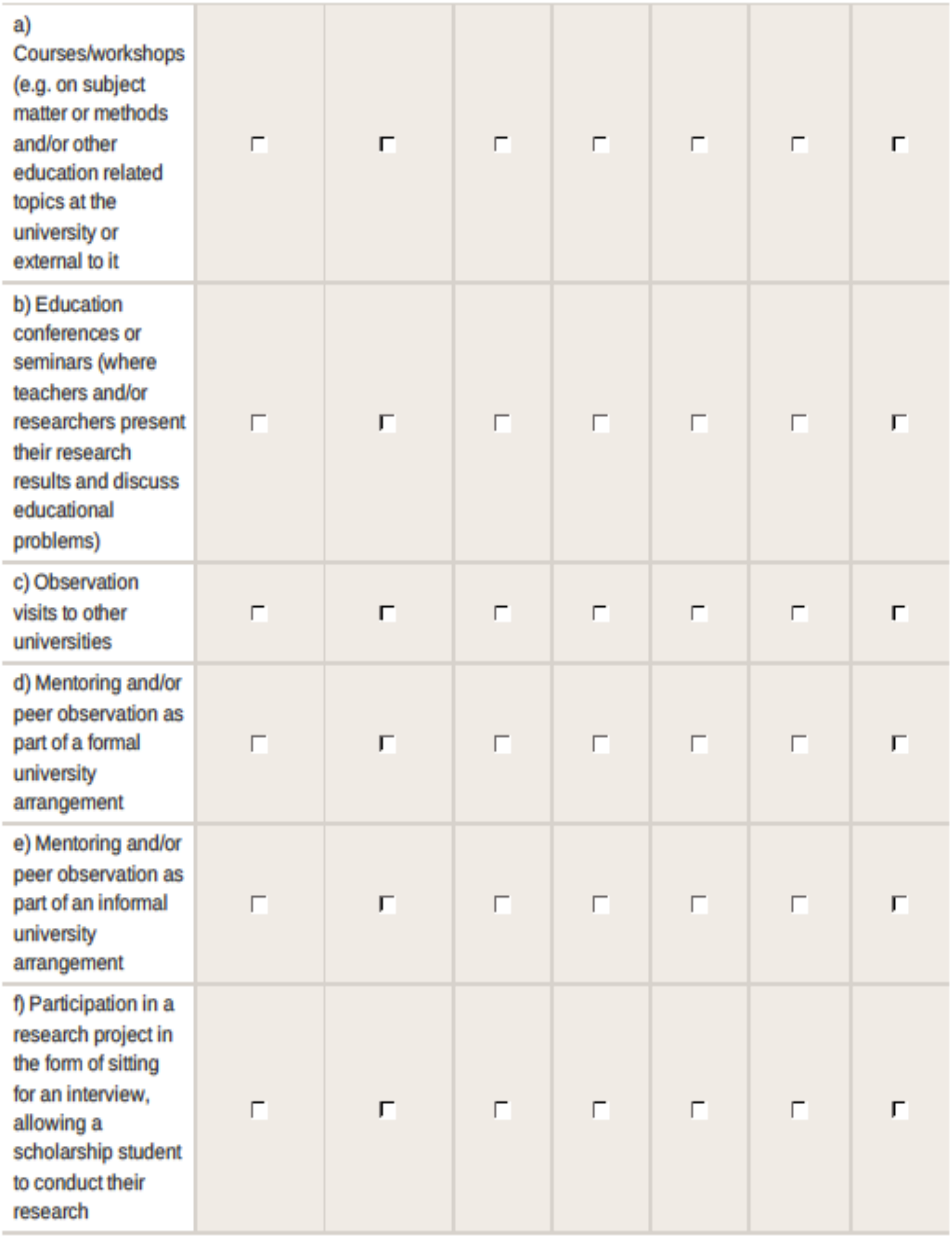
Please don't select more than 2 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 12 answer(s).

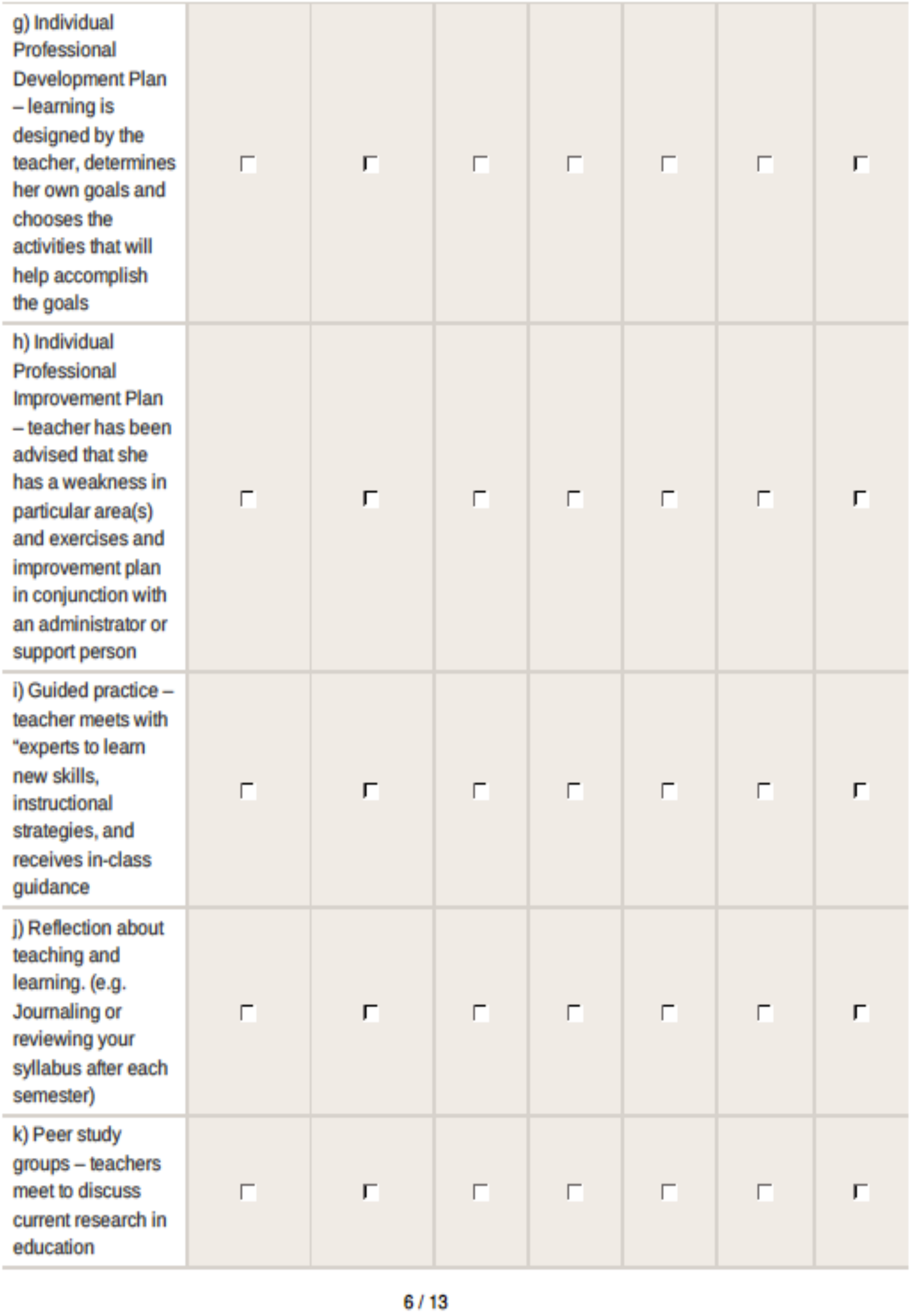
Please don't select more than 12 answer(s) in any single column.

	(A) Participation Yes	(A) Participation No	(B) No impact	A small impact	Neutral	A moderate impact	A large impact

4 / 13



a) Courses/workshops (e.g. on subject matter or methods and/or other education related topics at the university or external to it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Education conferences or seminars (where teachers and/or researchers present their research results and discuss educational problems)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Observation visits to other universities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Mentoring and/or peer observation as part of a formal university arrangement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) Mentoring and/or peer observation as part of an informal university arrangement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) Participation in a research project in the form of sitting for an interview, allowing a scholarship student to conduct their research	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



g) Individual Professional Development Plan – learning is designed by the teacher, determines her own goals and chooses the activities that will help accomplish the goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h) Individual Professional Improvement Plan – teacher has been advised that she has a weakness in particular area(s) and exercises and improvement plan in conjunction with an administrator or support person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i) Guided practice – teacher meets with "experts to learn new skills, instructional strategies, and receives in-class guidance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j) Reflection about teaching and learning. (e.g. Journaling or reviewing your syllabus after each semester)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k) Peer study groups – teachers meet to discuss current research in education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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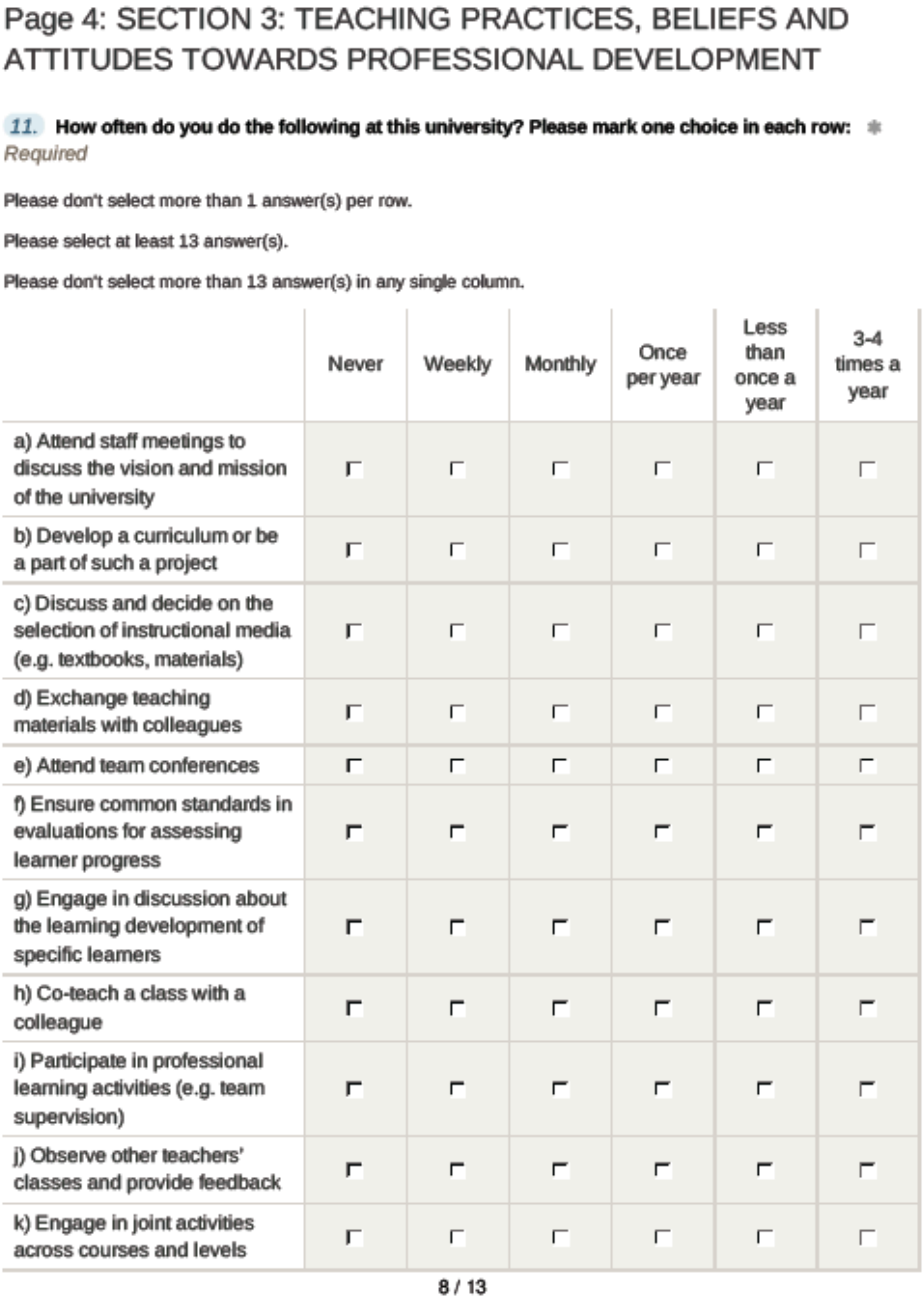
l) Inquiry/Action Research – teachers formulate questions, gather and analyze data and use their findings to advance instruction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



Page 4: SECTION 3: TEACHING PRACTICES, BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

11. **How often do you do the following at this university? Please mark one choice in each row:** *
Required

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 13 answer(s).

Please don't select more than 13 answer(s) in any single column.

	Never	Weekly	Monthly	Once per year	Less than once a year	3-4 times a year
a) Attend staff meetings to discuss the vision and mission of the university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Develop a curriculum or be a part of such a project	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Discuss and decide on the selection of instructional media (e.g. textbooks, materials)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Exchange teaching materials with colleagues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) Attend team conferences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) Ensure common standards in evaluations for assessing learner progress	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g) Engage in discussion about the learning development of specific learners	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h) Co-teach a class with a colleague	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i) Participate in professional learning activities (e.g. team supervision)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j) Observe other teachers' classes and provide feedback	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k) Engage in joint activities across courses and levels	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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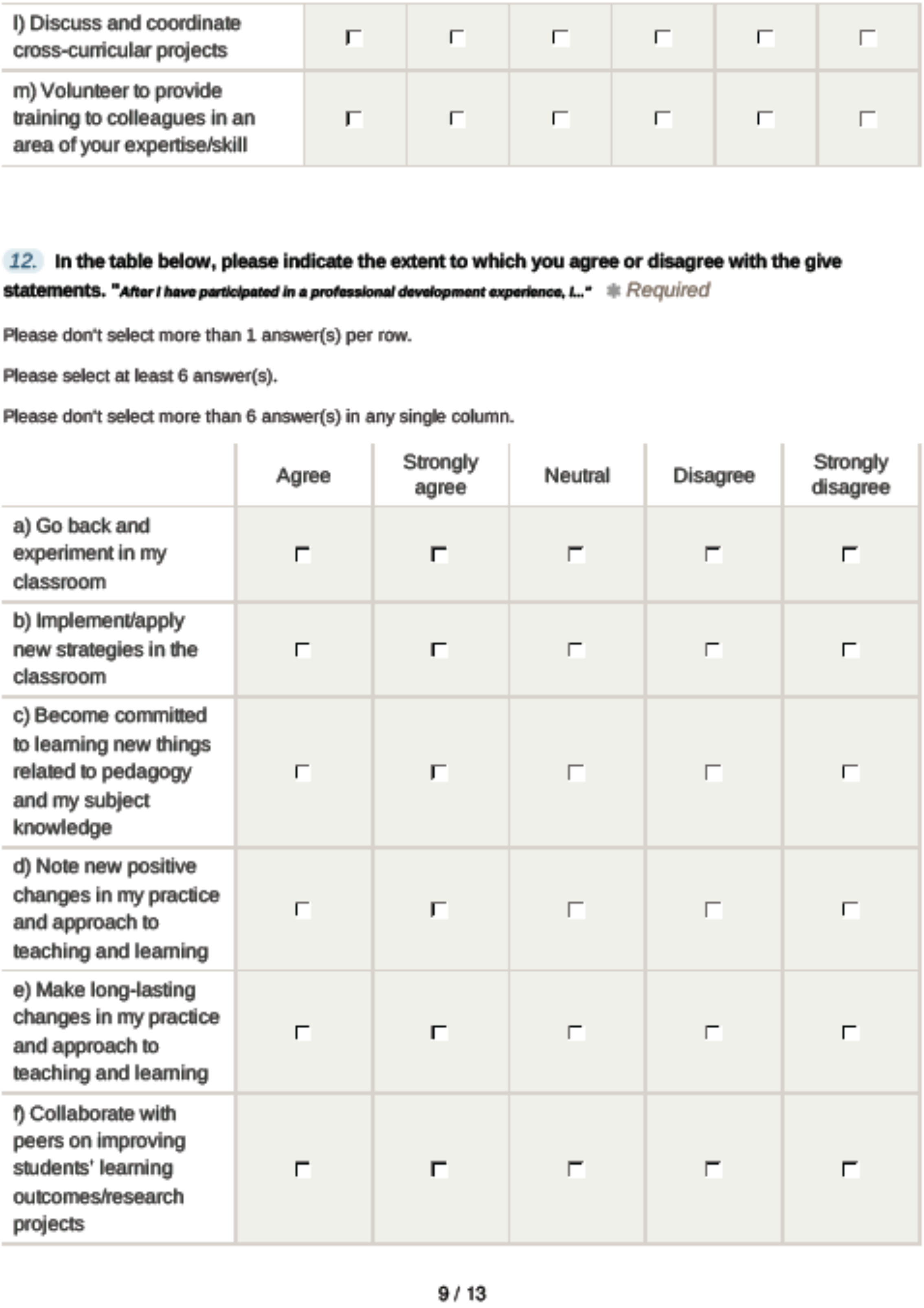

l) Discuss and coordinate cross-curricular projects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m) Volunteer to provide training to colleagues in an area of your expertise/skill	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. **In the table below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the give statements. "*After I have participated in a professional development experience, I...*"** * Required

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 6 answer(s).

Please don't select more than 6 answer(s) in any single column.

	Agree	Strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) Go back and experiment in my classroom	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Implement/apply new strategies in the classroom	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Become committed to learning new things related to pedagogy and my subject knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Note new positive changes in my practice and approach to teaching and learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) Make long-lasting changes in my practice and approach to teaching and learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) Collaborate with peers on improving students' learning outcomes/research projects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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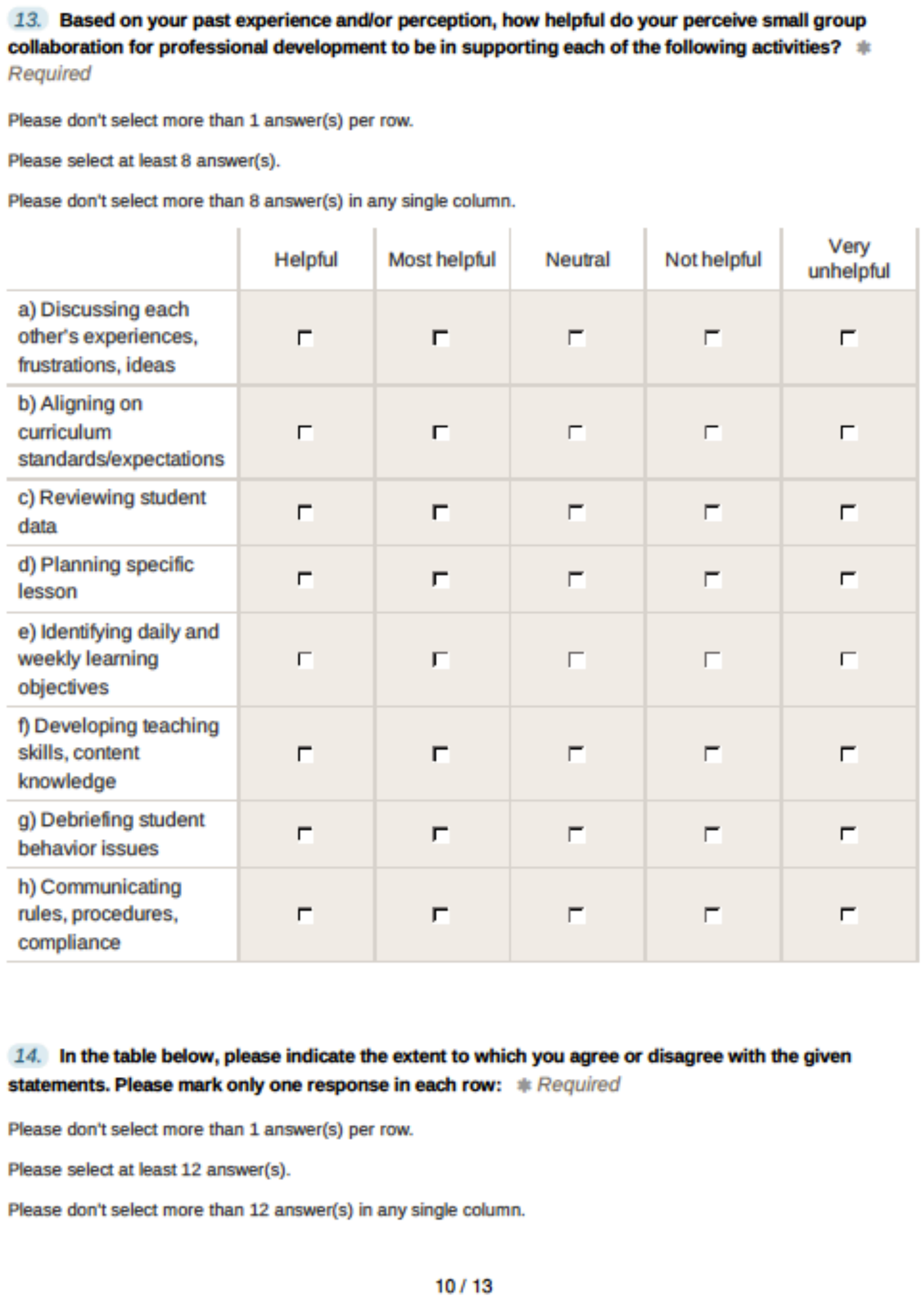


13. **Based on your past experience and/or perception, how helpful do your perceive small group collaboration for professional development to be in supporting each of the following activities?** ✱ *Required*

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 8 answer(s).

Please don't select more than 8 answer(s) in any single column.

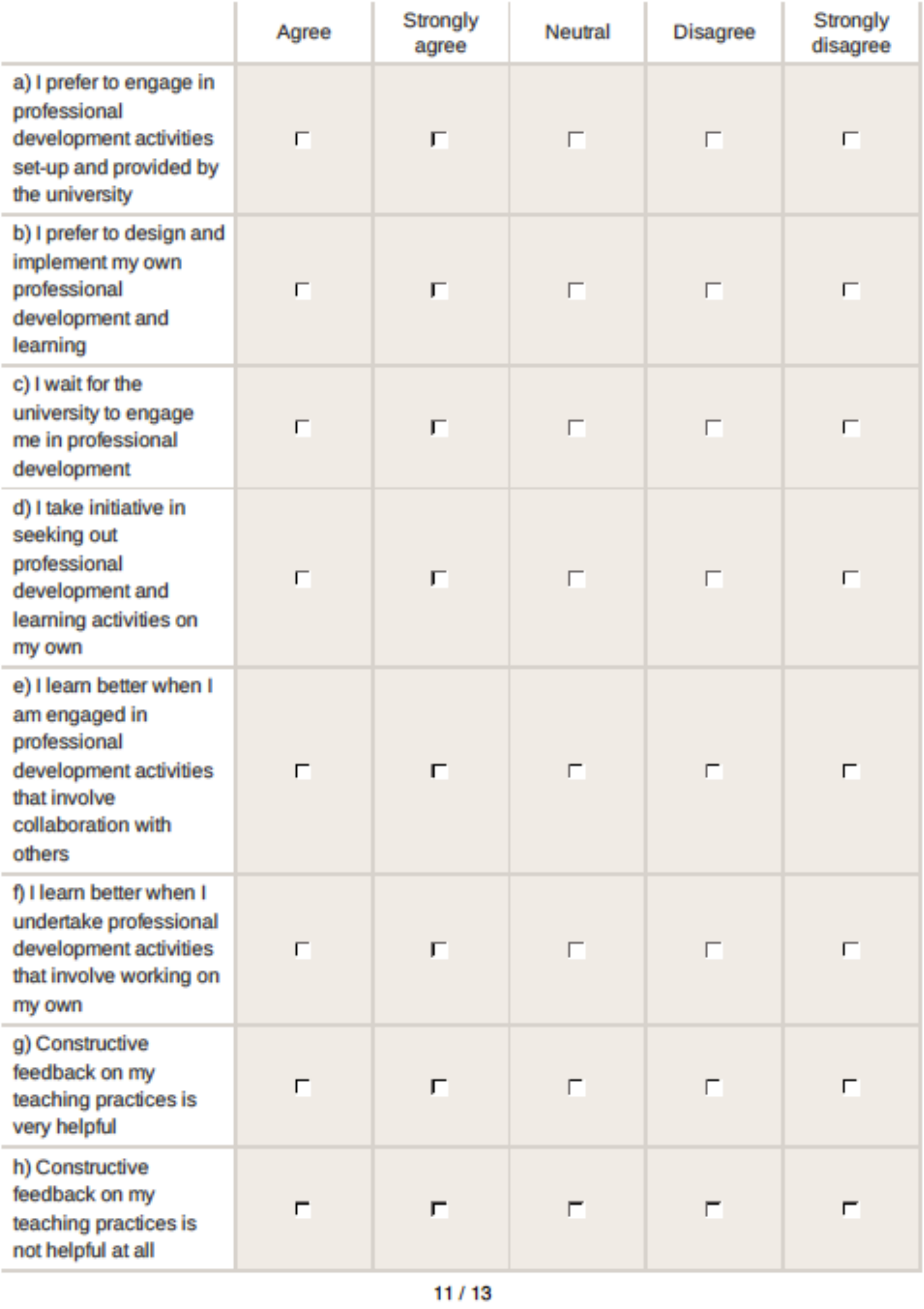
	Helpful	Most helpful	Neutral	Not helpful	Very unhelpful
a) Discussing each other's experiences, frustrations, ideas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Aligning on curriculum standards/expectations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Reviewing student data	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Planning specific lesson	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) Identifying daily and weekly learning objectives	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) Developing teaching skills, content knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g) Debriefing student behavior issues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h) Communicating rules, procedures, compliance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. **In the table below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the given statements. Please mark only one response in each row:** ✱ *Required*

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 12 answer(s).

Please don't select more than 12 answer(s) in any single column.



	Agree	Strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) I prefer to engage in professional development activities set-up and provided by the university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) I prefer to design and implement my own professional development and learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) I wait for the university to engage me in professional development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) I take initiative in seeking out professional development and learning activities on my own	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) I learn better when I am engaged in professional development activities that involve collaboration with others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) I learn better when I undertake professional development activities that involve working on my own	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g) Constructive feedback on my teaching practices is very helpful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h) Constructive feedback on my teaching practices is not helpful at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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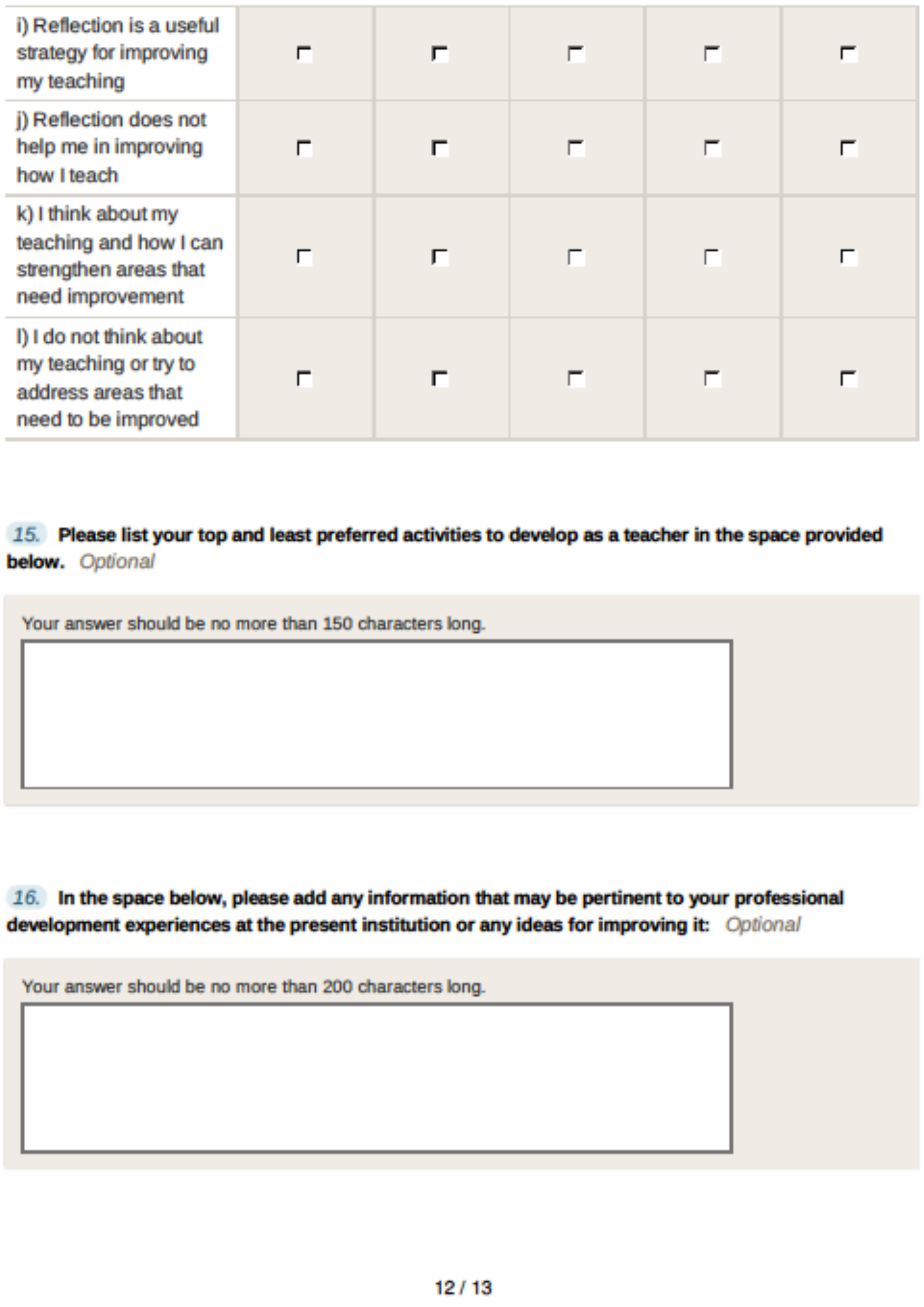

i) Reflection is a useful strategy for improving my teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j) Reflection does not help me in improving how I teach	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k) I think about my teaching and how I can strengthen areas that need improvement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l) I do not think about my teaching or try to address areas that need to be improved	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. **Please list your top and least preferred activities to develop as a teacher in the space provided below.** *Optional*

Your answer should be no more than 150 characters long.

16. **In the space below, please add any information that may be pertinent to your professional development experiences at the present institution or any ideas for improving it:** *Optional*

Your answer should be no more than 200 characters long.

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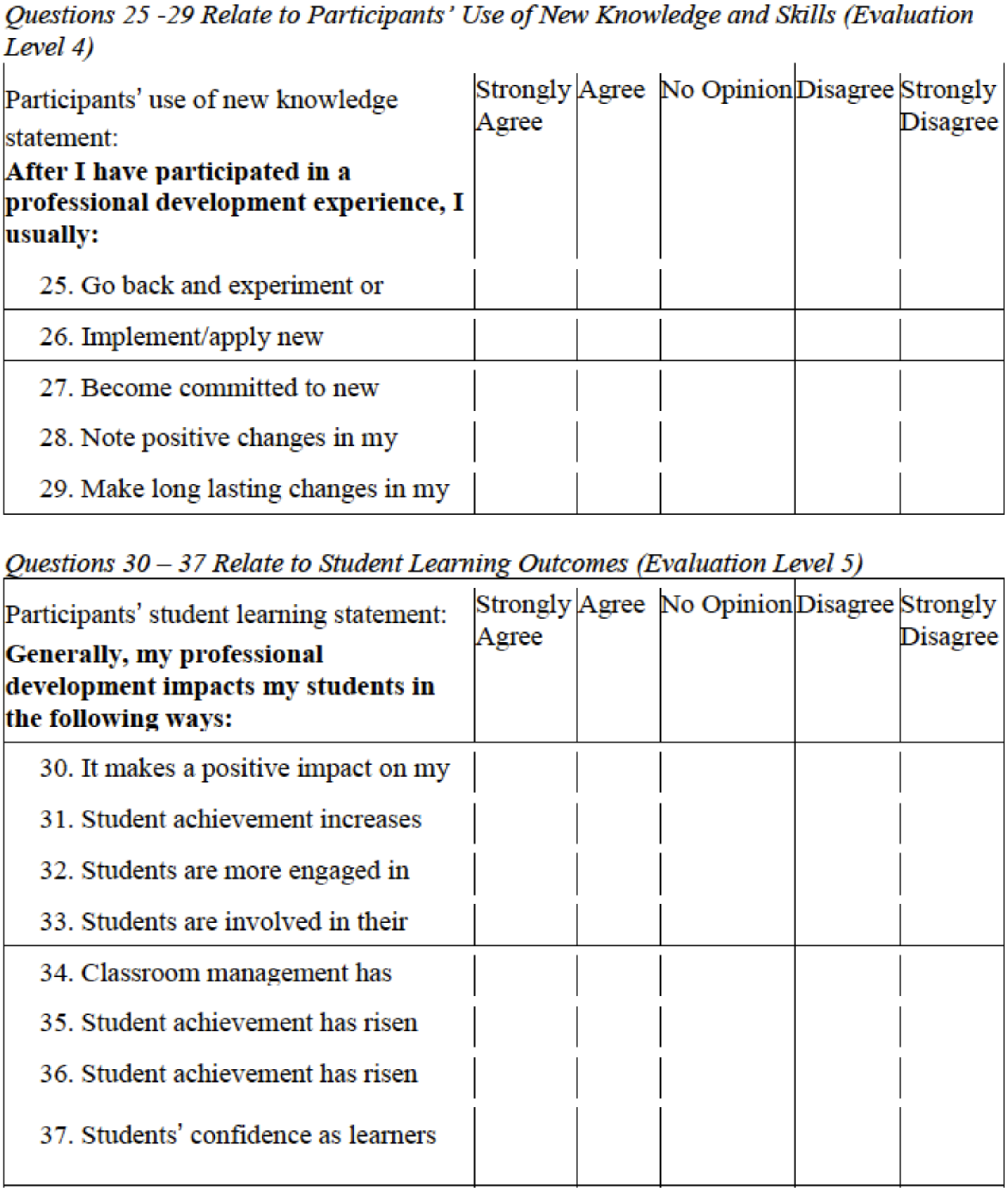
(Appendix N): A copy of the items adapted from Williams, S.L. (2014)



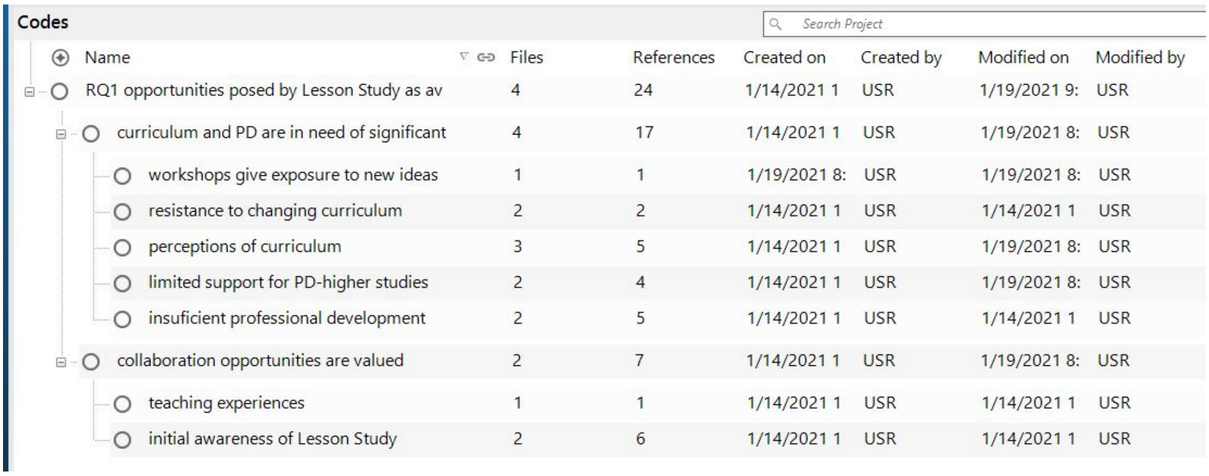
Questions 25 -29 Relate to Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills (Evaluation Level 4)

Participants' use of new knowledge statement: **After I have participated in a professional development experience, I usually:**	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25. Go back and experiment or					
26. Implement/apply new					
27. Become committed to new					
28. Note positive changes in my					
29. Make long lasting changes in my					

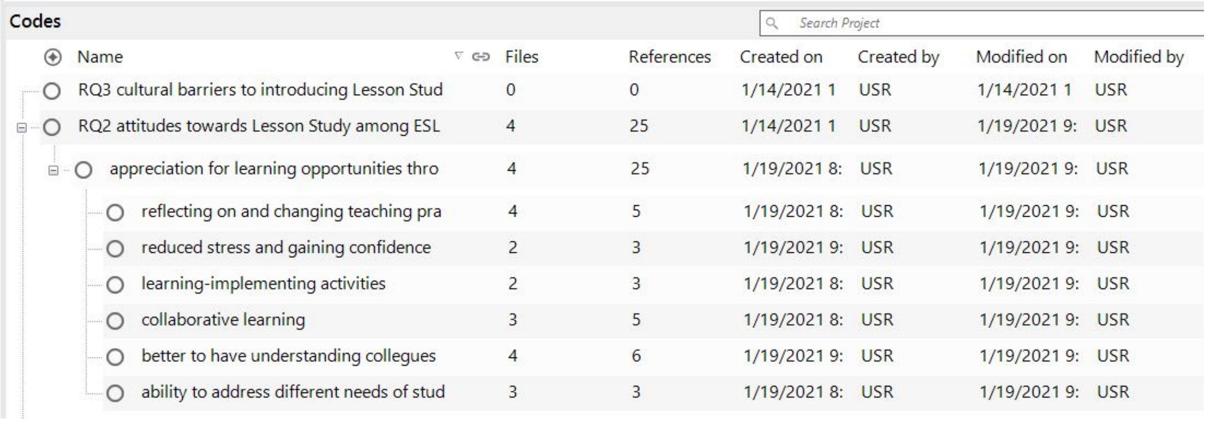
Questions 30 – 37 Relate to Student Learning Outcomes (Evaluation Level 5)

Participants' student learning statement: **Generally, my professional development impacts my students in the following ways:**	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
30. It makes a positive impact on my					
31. Student achievement increases					
32. Students are more engaged in					
33. Students are involved in their					
34. Classroom management has					
35. Student achievement has risen					
36. Student achievement has risen					
37. Students' confidence as learners					

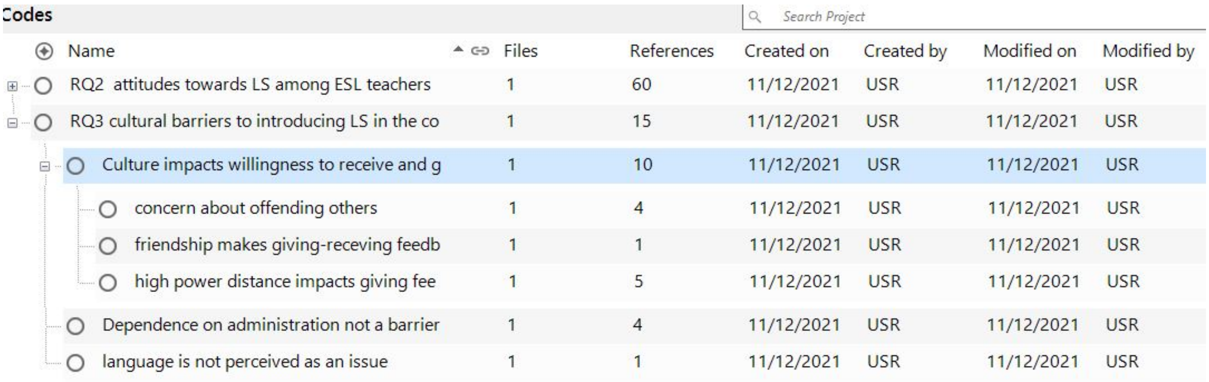
(Appendix O): NVIVO data codes



Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
RQ1 opportunities posed by Lesson Study as av	4	24	1/14/2021 1	USR	1/19/2021 9:	USR
curriculum and PD are in need of significant	4	17	1/14/2021 1	USR	1/19/2021 8:	USR
workshops give exposure to new ideas	1	1	1/19/2021 8:	USR	1/19/2021 8:	USR
resistance to changing curriculum	2	2	1/14/2021 1	USR	1/14/2021 1	USR
perceptions of curriculum	3	5	1/14/2021 1	USR	1/19/2021 8:	USR
limited support for PD-higher studies	2	4	1/14/2021 1	USR	1/19/2021 8:	USR
insuficient professional development	2	5	1/14/2021 1	USR	1/14/2021 1	USR
collaboration opportunities are valued	2	7	1/14/2021 1	USR	1/19/2021 8:	USR
teaching experiences	1	1	1/14/2021 1	USR	1/14/2021 1	USR
initial awareness of Lesson Study	2	6	1/14/2021 1	USR	1/14/2021 1	USR

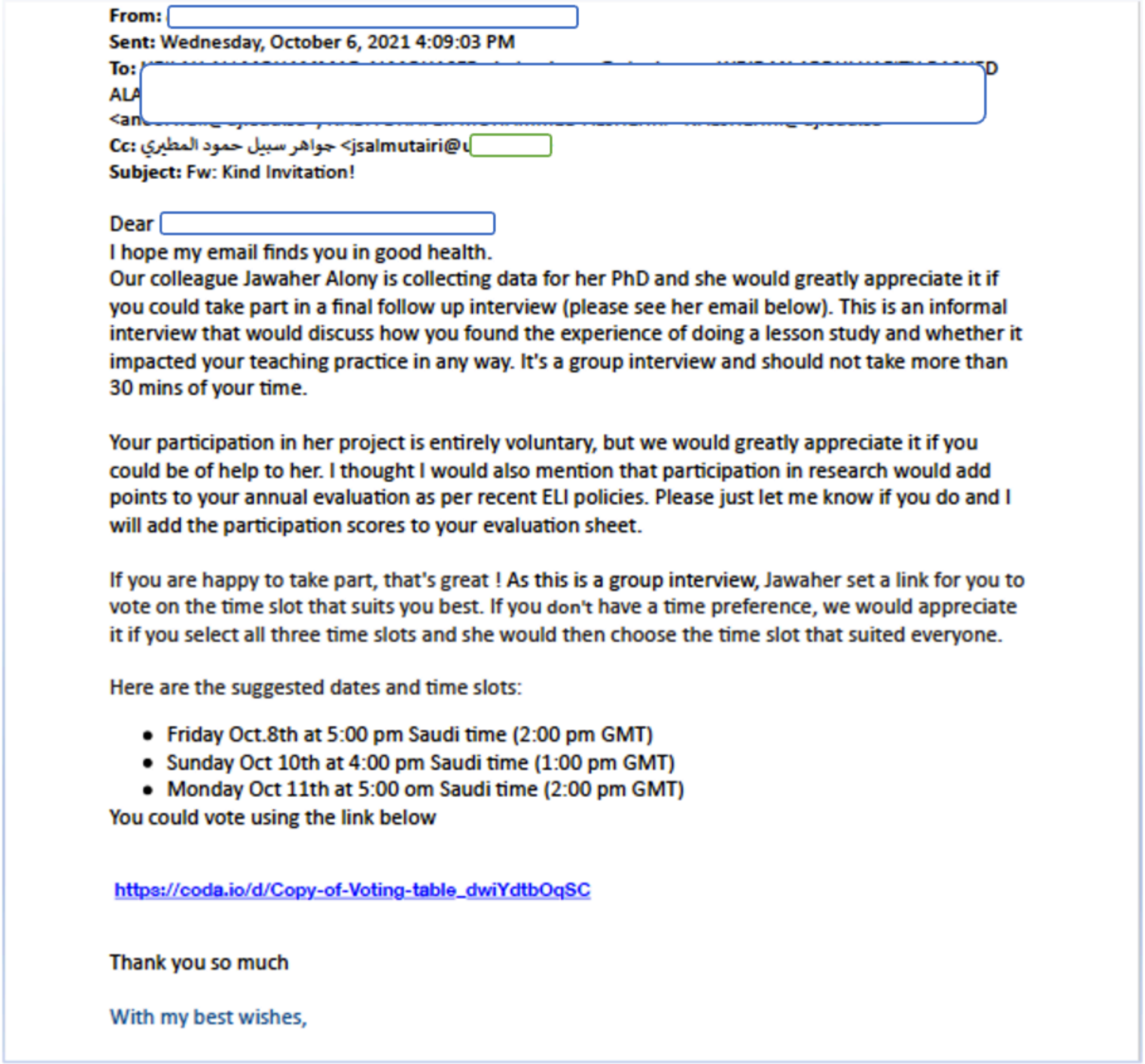


Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
RQ3 cultural barriers to introducing Lesson Stud	0	0	1/14/2021 1	USR	1/14/2021 1	USR
RQ2 attitudes towards Lesson Study among ESL	4	25	1/14/2021 1	USR	1/19/2021 9:	USR
appreciation for learning opportunities thro	4	25	1/19/2021 8:	USR	1/19/2021 9:	USR
reflecting on and changing teaching pra	4	5	1/19/2021 8:	USR	1/19/2021 9:	USR
reduced stress and gaining confidence	2	3	1/19/2021 9:	USR	1/19/2021 9:	USR
learning-implementing activities	2	3	1/19/2021 8:	USR	1/19/2021 9:	USR
collaborative learning	3	5	1/19/2021 8:	USR	1/19/2021 9:	USR
better to have understanding collegues	4	6	1/19/2021 9:	USR	1/19/2021 9:	USR
ability to address different needs of stud	3	3	1/19/2021 8:	USR	1/19/2021 9:	USR



Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
RQ2 attitudes towards LS among ESL teachers	1	60	11/12/2021	USR	11/12/2021	USR
RQ3 cultural barriers to introducing LS in the co	1	15	11/12/2021	USR	11/12/2021	USR
Culture impacts willingness to receive and g	1	10	11/12/2021	USR	11/12/2021	USR
concern about offending others	1	4	11/12/2021	USR	11/12/2021	USR
friendship makes giving-receving feedb	1	1	11/12/2021	USR	11/12/2021	USR
high power distance impacts giving fee	1	5	11/12/2021	USR	11/12/2021	USR
Dependence on administration not a barrier	1	4	11/12/2021	USR	11/12/2021	USR
language is not perceived as an issue	1	1	11/12/2021	USR	11/12/2021	USR

(Appendix P) Approval and meeting arrangement of the online focus group



From: [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, October 6, 2021 4:09:03 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: جواهر سبيل حمود المطيري <jsalmutairi@[redacted]
Subject: Fw: Kind Invitation!

Dear [redacted]
I hope my email finds you in good health.
Our colleague Jawaher Alony is collecting data for her PhD and she would greatly appreciate it if you could take part in a final follow up interview (please see her email below). This is an informal interview that would discuss how you found the experience of doing a lesson study and whether it impacted your teaching practice in any way. It's a group interview and should not take more than 30 mins of your time.

Your participation in her project is entirely voluntary, but we would greatly appreciate it if you could be of help to her. I thought I would also mention that participation in research would add points to your annual evaluation as per recent ELI policies. Please just let me know if you do and I will add the participation scores to your evaluation sheet.

If you are happy to take part, that's great ! As this is a group interview, Jawaher set a link for you to vote on the time slot that suits you best. If you don't have a time preference, we would appreciate it if you select all three time slots and she would then choose the time slot that suited everyone.

Here are the suggested dates and time slots:

- Friday Oct.8th at 5:00 pm Saudi time (2:00 pm GMT)
- Sunday Oct 10th at 4:00 pm Saudi time (1:00 pm GMT)
- Monday Oct 11th at 5:00 om Saudi time (2:00 pm GMT)

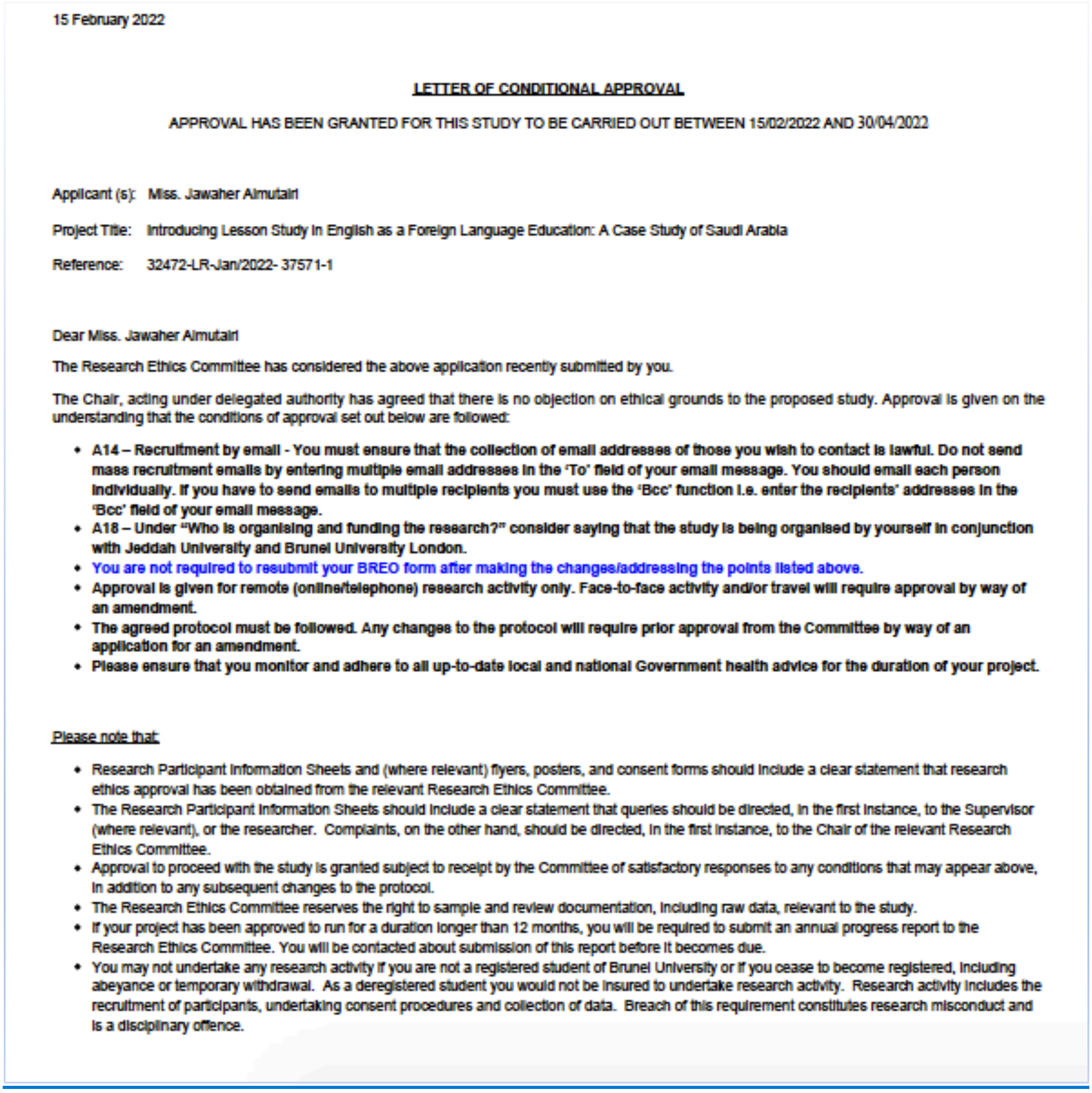
You could vote using the link below

https://coda.io/d/Copy-of-Voting-table_dwiYdtbOqSC

Thank you so much

With my best wishes,

(Appendix Q): Brunel's University Research Ethics committee's Approval for phase 3



15 February 2022

LETTER OF CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS STUDY TO BE CARRIED OUT BETWEEN 15/02/2022 AND 30/04/2022

Applicant (s): Miss. Jawaher Almutairi

Project Title: Introducing Lesson Study in English as a Foreign Language Education: A Case Study of Saudi Arabia

Reference: 32472-LR-Jan/2022- 37571-1

Dear Miss. Jawaher Almutairi

The Research Ethics Committee has considered the above application recently submitted by you.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- **A14 – Recruitment by email - You must ensure that the collection of email addresses of those you wish to contact is lawful. Do not send mass recruitment emails by entering multiple email addresses in the 'To' field of your email message. You should email each person individually. If you have to send emails to multiple recipients you must use the 'Bcc' function i.e. enter the recipients' addresses in the 'Bcc' field of your email message.**
- **A18 – Under "Who is organising and funding the research?" consider saying that the study is being organised by yourself in conjunction with Jeddah University and Brunel University London.**
- **You are not required to resubmit your BREO form after making the changes/addressing the points listed above.**
- **Approval is given for remote (online/telephone) research activity only. Face-to-face activity and/or travel will require approval by way of an amendment.**
- **The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee by way of an application for an amendment.**
- **Please ensure that you monitor and adhere to all up-to-date local and national Government health advice for the duration of your project.**

Please note that:

- Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.
- The Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.
- If your project has been approved to run for a duration longer than 12 months, you will be required to submit an annual progress report to the Research Ethics Committee. You will be contacted about submission of this report before it becomes due.
- You may not undertake any research activity if you are not a registered student of Brunel University or if you cease to become registered, including abeyance or temporary withdrawal. As a deregistered student you would not be insured to undertake research activity. Research activity includes the recruitment of participants, undertaking consent procedures and collection of data. Breach of this requirement constitutes research misconduct and is a disciplinary offence.

(Appendix R): Tables of descriptives results

TABLE 1 : DESCRIPTIVES OF Q, AND COMPOSITE 1

This table presents the descriptive data of teachers' PD. The N refers to the number of responses per each question. As this was a multiple-choice survey, the respondents had a choice between numbers for each answer. Min refers to the minimum number that the teachers selected, and the max refers to the highest number that the teachers selected. The M refers to the Median, which is the value that sits at midpoint of the distribution of numbers. This number indicates the number that sits in the centre of the dataset, which shows how the data is distributed. Last, SD is the standard deviation, which shows how the data is spread out around the mean.

Teachers' PD	*N*	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
Q7 Please indicate the number of days you were engaged in PD over the last 12 months	25	0	100	10.6	19.8
Q8 During the last 12 months, did you participate in any of the following activities? (see survey below)	23	2	5	3.7	0.79
Q9 Please indicate the extent to which you have PD needs in each of the areas listed.	25	1.3	5	3.1	1.000
Q10 Since joining the present institution, have you participated in any of the following types of PD activities?	25	2	5	3.7	0.65
Q11 How often do you do the following at this university? (see survey below)	25	1.4	4.4	2.49	0.74
Q12 Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the give statements (see survey below).	25	3.2	5	4.03	0.46
Q13 How helpful do you perceive small group collaboration for PD to be in supporting each of the following activities?	25	3.1	4.9	3.91	0.44
Q14 Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the given statements (see survey below).	25	3	5	3.49	0.39

Table 2: Frequencies of participants who did not complete Q10 item

The table below shows the percentage of participants who did not complete the questions listed below.

Item	*N*	%
q10.1 Courses/workshops	0	0
q10.2 Education conferences or seminars	2	8
q10.3 Observation visits to other universities	21	84

q10.4 Mentoring and/or peer observation as part of a formal Uni arrangement	16	64
q10.5 Mentoring and/or peer observation as part of an informal Uni arrangement	18	72
q10.6 Participation in a research project	8	32
q10.7 Individual PD Plan – designed by the teacher	14	56
q10.8 Individual PD Plan – advised by others	20	80
q10.9 Guided practice	17	68
q10. Reflection about teaching and learning	4	16
q10. Peer study groups	17	68
q10. Inquiry/Action Research	17	68

Table 3: Descriptives of Question 11 Items

This table presents the descriptive data for question 11 and its sub-questions.

Item	*N*	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
q11.1 Attend staff meetings	25	1	5	2.2	1.38
q11.2 Develop a curriculum or be a part of such a project	25	1	5	1.88	1.39
q11.3 Discuss and decide on instructional media	25	1	5	2.24	1.54
q11.4 Exchange teaching materials with colleagues	25	1	5	4.2	1.16
q11.5 Attend team conferences	25	1	5	2.84	1.57
q11.6 Ensure common standards in evaluations	25	1	5	2.84	1.6
q11.7 Engage in discussion about the learning development	25	1	5	2.64	1.66
q11.8 Co-teach a class with a colleague	25	1	5	2.64	1.47
q11.9 Participate in professional learning activities	25	1	5	2.44	1.50
q11.10 Observe other teachers' classes and provide feedback	25	1	5	1.96	1.43
q11.11 Engage in joint activities	25	1	5	1.88	1.45
q11.12 Discuss and coordinate cross-curricular projects	25	1	5	1.96	1.46
q11.13 Volunteer to provide teaching to colleagues	25	1	5	2.68	1.25

Table 4: Descriptives of Question 12 Items

The table below shows the descriptive data for question 12 and its sub-questions.

Item	*N*	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	25	3	5	4.08	0.49
q12.2 Implement/apply new strategies in the classroom	25	4	5	4.16	0.37
q12.3 Become committed to learning new things related to pedagogy and my subject knowledge	25	2	5	3.96	0.79
q12.4 Note new positive changes in my practice and approach to teaching and learning	25	2	5	4.08	0.64
q12.5 Make long-lasting changes in my practice and approach to teaching and learning	25	2	5	3.96	0.73
q12.6 Collaborate with peers on improving students' learning outcomes/research projects	25	2	5	3.92	0.95

Table 5: Descriptives of Question 13 Items

The table below shows the descriptive data for question 13 and its sub-questions.

Item	*N*	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
q13.1 Discussing each other's experiences, frustrations, ideas	25	2	5	4.36	0.81
q13.2 Aligning on curriculum standards/expectations	25	2	5	3.72	0.74
q13.3 Reviewing student data	25	3	5	3.84	0.62
q13.4 Planning specific lesson	25	2	5	3.88	0.67
q13.5 Identifying daily and weekly learning objectives	25	2	5	3.52	0.87
q13.6 Developing teaching skills, content knowledge	25	3	5	4.20	0.50
q13.7 Debriefing student behaviour issues	25	2	5	3.88	0.78
q13.8 Communicating rules, procedures, compliance	25	2	5	3.88	0.73

Table 6: Descriptives of Question 14 items

The table below shows the descriptive data for question 14 and its sub-questions.

Item	*N*	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
q14.1 I prefer to engage in PD activities set-up and provided by the university	25	2	5	3.60	0.76
q14.2 I prefer to design and implement my own PD and learning	25	2	5	4.20	0.91
q14.3 I wait for the university to engage me in PD	25	2	5	2.80	0.91
q14.4 I take initiative in seeking PD and learning activities on my own	25	2	5	4.12	0.73
q14.5 I learn better when I am engaged in PD activities that involved collaboration with others	25	2	5	4.00	0.87
q14.6 I learn better when I undertake PD activities that involve working on my own	25	2	5	3.76	0.88
q14.7 Constructive feedback on my teaching practices is very helpful	25	2	5	3.88	0.83
q14.8 Constructive feedback on my teaching practices is not helpful at all	25	2	5	2.60	0.91
q14.9 Reflection is a useful strategy for improving my teaching	25	3	5	4.36	0.57
q14.10 Reflection does not help me in improving how I teach	25	1	5	2.20	0.87
q14.11 I think about my teaching and how I can strengthen areas that need improvement	25	3	5	4.12	0.60
q14.12 I don’t think about my teaching or try to address areas that need to be improved	25	1	5	2.24	1.05

Table 7: Correlations Between Items from Q11 and Q12

The table below presents the correlation between each question 11 and 12. The lower the number, the more significant correlation between the questions. High correlation suggests that the two questions have a strong relationship and are likely to co-exist with one another.

Item	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom
q11.1 Attend staff meetings	.401	.630***	0.38	.433	.516	0.35
q11.2 Develop a curriculum or be a part of such a project	0.009	0.172	0.10	0.007	-0.079	-0.034
q11.3 Discuss and decide on instructional media	0.251	0.16	0.13	0.12	0.075	0.018
q11.4 Exchange teaching materials with colleagues	0.312	0.26	.473	0.334	0.263	0.122
q11.5 Attend team conferences	0.206	0.347	0.18	0.235	0.197	0.226

q11.6 Ensure common standards in evaluations	0.105	0.085	0.30	-0.032	-0.199	0.198
q11.7 Engage in discussion about the learning development	0.022	0.238	0.02	-0.159	-0.16	0.224
q11.8 Co-teach a class with a colleague	0.174	0.129	-0.35	-0.02	0.093	0.117
q11.9 Participate in professional learning activities	0.201	.464	0.05	0.273	0.12	0.133
q11.10 Observe other teachers' classes and provide feedback	0.332	0.365	0.07	0.213	0.223	0.143
q11.11 Engage in joint activities	.662***	.525	.507	.552	.508	0.361
q11.12 Discuss and	.561	.463	0.23	0.392	.449	0.347

coordinate cross-curricular projects						
q11.13 Volunteer to provide teaching to colleagues	0.161	0.259	-0.09	0.173	0.115	0.112

Note: *df* = 23 for all correlation coefficients; *** indicates that a relationship is statistically significant at *p* < .001.

Table 8: Correlations between Items from Q13 and Q12

This table presents the correlation between items in question 12 and 13.

Item	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom
q13.1 Discussing each other’s experiences, frustrations, ideas	0.238	-0.198	-0.042	-0.138	-0.12	.470
q13.2 Aligning on curriculum standards/expectations	-0.05	0.169	0.195	-0.215	-0.02	.559
q13.3 Reviewing student data	0.179	0.292	0.071	0.033	0.17	0.187
q13.4 Planning specific lesson	.411	0.08	-0.168	0.219	0.25	-0.278

q13.5 Identifying daily and weekly learning objectives	0.19	0.373	0.031	0.072	0.23	0.052
q13.6 Developing teaching skills, content knowledge	0.101	0.045	0.127	-0.182	-0.09	0.297
q13.7 Debriefing student behaviour issues	0.134	0.211	0.195	-0.063	0.21	0.378
q13.8 Communicating rules, procedures, compliance	0.261	0.227	-0.081	-0.158	0.07	0.226

Note: *df* = 23 for all correlation coefficients.

Table 9: Correlations between Items from Q14 and Q12

This table presents the correlation between items in question 12 and 14.

Item	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom	q12.1 Go back and experiment in my classroom
q14.1 I prefer to engage in PD activities set-up and provided by the university	0.31	.525	0.111	0.324	.416	0.069
q14.2 I prefer to design and implement my own PD and learning	0.056	-0.22	0.069	0.043	0.14	0.163

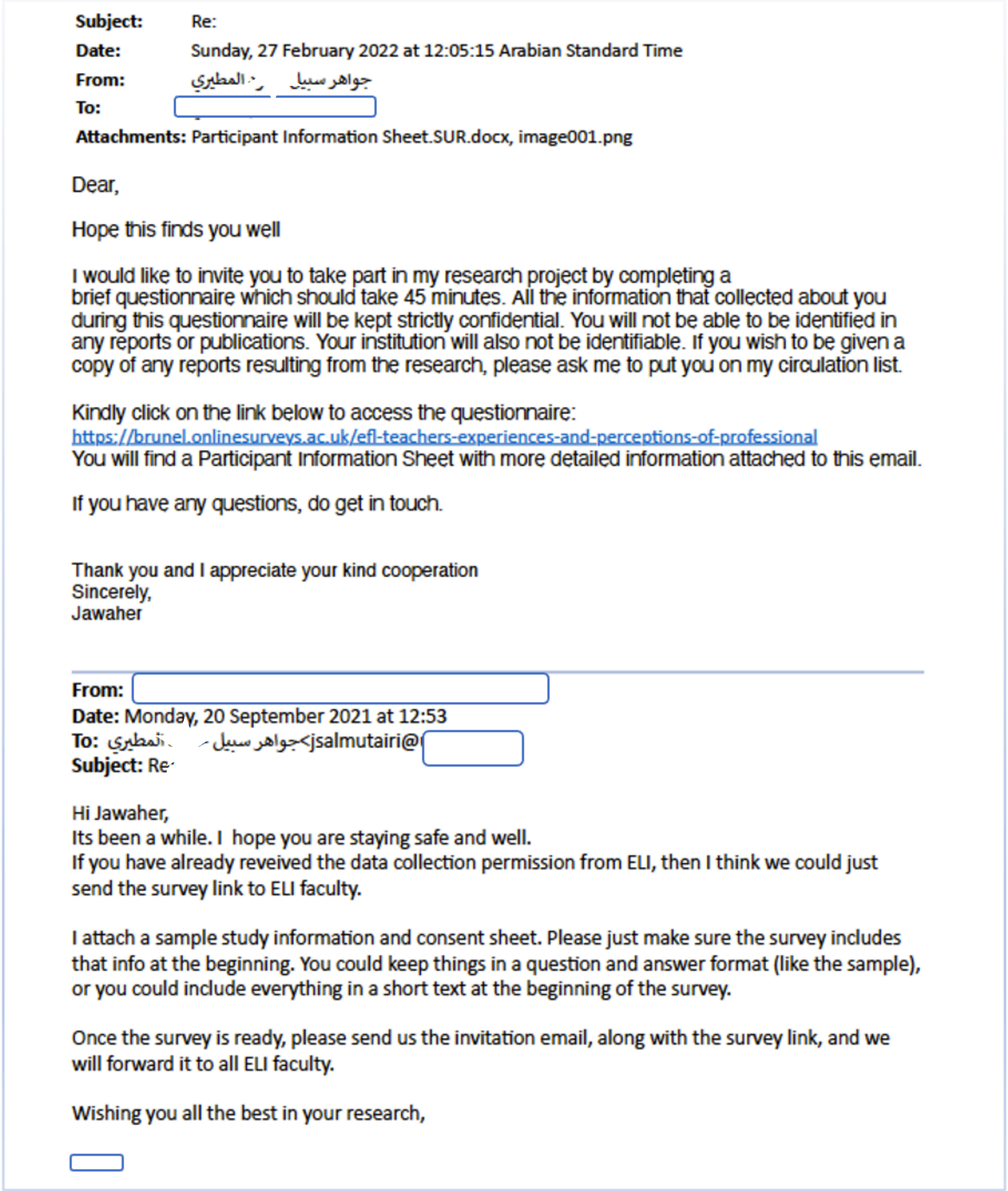
q14.3 I wait for the university to engage me in PD	0.222	0.342	0.277	-0.043	-0.08	.507
q14.4 I take initiative in seeking PD and learning activities on my own	0.205	0.08	-0.209	.516	.478	-0.286
q14.5 I learn better when I am engaged in PD activities that involved collaboration with others	0.195	0.129	-0.061	.451	0.39	0.05
q14.6 I learn better when I undertake PD activities that involve working on my own	0.046	0.122	0.226	0.11	0.05	0.225
q14.7 Constructive feedback on my teaching practices is very helpful	0.227	0.198	-0.261	0.019	0.06	0.145

q14.8 Constructive feedback on my teaching practices is not helpful at all	0.259	.439	0.266	0.2	0.10	0.153
q14.9 Reflection is a useful strategy for improving my teaching	0.19	-0.086	0.219	0.146	0.24	0.363
q14.10 Reflection does not help me in improving how I teach	0.156	.411	0.073	0.195	0.08	0.171
q14.11 I think about my teaching and how I can strengthen areas that need improvement	-0.034	0.097	0.362	-0.026	-0.08	0.309
q14.12 I don't think about my teaching or try to	0.042	0.216	0.012	0.094	0.07	0.144

address areas that need to be improved						

Note: *df* = 23 for all correlation coefficients.

(Appendix S): A copy of the online survey invitation



Subject: Re:
Date: Sunday, 27 February 2022 at 12:05:15 Arabian Standard Time
From: جواهر سبيل [redacted] المطيري
To: [redacted]
Attachments: Participant Information Sheet.SUR.docx, image001.png

Dear,

Hope this finds you well

I would like to invite you to take part in my research project by completing a brief questionnaire which should take 45 minutes. All the information that collected about you during this questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. Your institution will also not be identifiable. If you wish to be given a copy of any reports resulting from the research, please ask me to put you on my circulation list.

Kindly click on the link below to access the questionnaire:
https://brunel.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/efl-teachers-experiences-and-perceptions-of-professional
You will find a Participant Information Sheet with more detailed information attached to this email.

If you have any questions, do get in touch.

Thank you and I appreciate your kind cooperation
Sincerely,
Jawaher

From: [redacted]
Date: Monday, 20 September 2021 at 12:53
To: جواهر سبيل [redacted] المطيري<jsalmutairi@[redacted]
Subject: Re[redacted]

Hi Jawaher,
Its been a while. I hope you are staying safe and well.
If you have already reveived the data collection permission from ELI, then I think we could just send the survey link to ELI faculty.

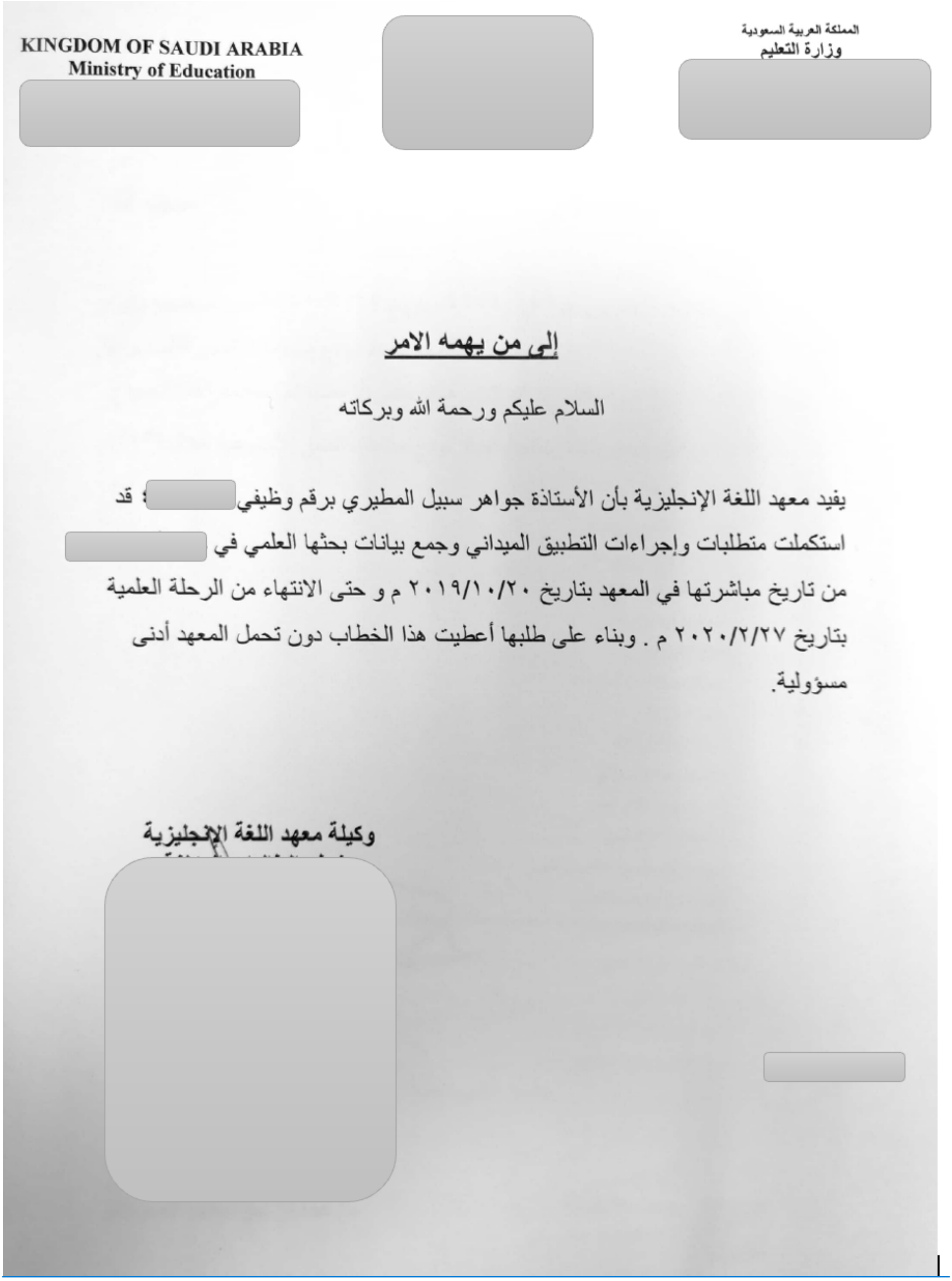
I attach a sample study information and consent sheet. Please just make sure the survey includes that info at the beginning. You could keep things in a question and answer format (like the sample), or you could include everything in a short text at the beginning of the survey.

Once the survey is ready, please send us the invitation email, along with the survey link, and we will forward it to all ELI faculty.

Wishing you all the best in your research,

[redacted]

(Appendix T): A copy of a confirmation of finished field trip from ELI



KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA
Ministry of Education
[redacted]

[redacted]

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التعليم
[redacted]

إلى من يهمه الامر

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

يفيد معهد اللغة الإنجليزية بأن الأستاذة جواهر سبيل المطيري برقم وظيفي [redacted] قد استكملت متطلبات وإجراءات التطبيق الميداني وجمع بيانات بحثها العلمي في [redacted] من تاريخ مباشرتها في المعهد بتاريخ ٢٠١٩/١٠/٢٠ م و حتى الانتهاء من الرحلة العلمية بتاريخ ٢٠٢٠/٢/٢٧ م . وبناء على طلبها أعطيت هذا الخطاب دون تحمل المعهد أدنى مسؤولية.

وكيلة معهد اللغة الإنجليزية

[redacted]

[redacted]