

The Role of Teacher Collaboration in Professional Development and Learning: A Case Study at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka

By
Fariza Binta Siddika
22157006

A thesis submitted to the BRAC Institute of Educational Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education in Educational Leadership & School Improvement

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our original work while completing my degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material that has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

Fariza Binta Siddika
22157006

Approval

The thesis/project titled “Understanding the Contribution of Teacher Collaboration to Professional Development and Learning Among Teachers at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka” submitted by

1. Fariza Binta Siddika (Student ID 22157006).

of Spring, 2024 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Leadership & School Improvement on December 24, 2024.

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:
(Member)

Mamunur Rashid
Senior Lecturer, BRAC Institute of Educational Development

Program Coordinator:
(Member)

Dr. Manjuma Akhtar Mousumi
Assistant Professor, BRAC Institute of Educational Development

External Expert Examiner:
(Member)

Nazmin Sultana
Lecturer, BRAC Institute of Educational Development

Head of the Institute:

Dr. Erum Mariam
Executive Director, BRAC Institute of Educational Development

Ethics Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis, titled “Understanding the Contribution of Teacher Collaboration to Professional Development and Learning Among Teachers at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka,” is my original work. The research findings presented are authentic and free from manipulation or misrepresentation. I have intentionally avoided bias, personal views, or prejudices to maintain an objective and impartial approach throughout the research process.

The study involved five participants from the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka: three senior school teachers, one academic administrator, and one junior school teacher, representing both male and female perspectives. Data collection was conducted through structured interviews with participants and observations of group meetings and professional development sessions. Privacy and confidentiality were strictly upheld, and informed consent was obtained in writing from all participants in alignment with ethical research practices.

This thesis is solely my work and has not been submitted or published elsewhere. All sources consulted during the research are duly acknowledged using an appropriate and accurate referencing style. The collected data has been securely stored, and access will only be granted upon formal request through proper channels.

I further affirm that this research complies with all ethical guidelines, institutional standards, and codes of conduct, ensuring the integrity and legitimacy of the study.

Abstract

This research focuses on understanding how teacher collaboration influences professional development and teaching practices at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka. The study explores how teamwork among teachers helps them grow, improve their teaching skills, and create a supportive learning environment. It also looks at the challenges teachers face when working together and how these can be addressed.

The research is important because it highlights how sharing ideas and working as a team can make teaching more effective and engaging for both teachers and students. To conduct the study, I used structured interviews with teachers and academic staff and observed classroom practices and team meetings.

The findings show that collaboration helps teachers share knowledge, solve problems together, and use innovative teaching methods. It also improves their confidence and ability to connect with students. However, challenges like time constraints and differing perspectives were noted, and solutions like better planning and using technology for teamwork were suggested. This study offers valuable insights into how schools can promote collaboration to support teachers' growth and enhance learning outcomes for students.

Keywords: Teacher Collaboration; Professional Development; Teamwork; Knowledge Sharing; Teacher Growth; Collaborative Problem-Solving

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, whose unwavering support and encouragement helped me persevere through the most challenging times.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Mamunur Rashid, for his unwavering support and invaluable guidance throughout my thesis research. His encouragement and insights have been instrumental in shaping this work.

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List of Acronyms

ECT	Early Career Educators
IEP	Individual Education Plans
IB	International Baccalaureate
MYP	Middle Years Programme
OCE	Outside Context Expert
PD	Professional Development
PLC	Professional Learning Communities
PYP	Primary Years Program
SCTM	Supported Collaborative Teaching Model

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Collaboration can be defined as a partnership, union, joint production, or creation of something. Two people, many people, strangers, or close friends can work together. Working together means committing to the prospect of creating a result that is superior to what could be created separately. When teachers collaborate, they can design creative lesson plans, talk about issues related to behavior or academic performance, assess the needs and challenges of each student, and provide supportive and encouraging feedback to one another in a structured setting.

Collaboration is becoming more and more important in the educational sector; teachers must be skilled collaborators to do their jobs well. This evolution has several causes, one of which is the increasing significance that society is placing on the phenomenon of teamwork. It appears that all organizations are moving toward having a collaborative or teamwork environment (Vangrieken, Dochy, & Raes, 2015). Many times, education is viewed as a crucial setting in which students can develop these teamwork abilities before entering the workforce. As teachers model cooperative learning for students by working as a team, teacher collaboration is crucial in preparing students to be skilled future collaborators in the classroom. (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen & Grissom, 2015).

In a Bangladeshi secondary school, a principal trained his teachers to be leaders through inventive and creative methods. Since authoritarian leadership is still more prevalent and the norm in Bangladesh, the leadership practices that have emerged in this school are noteworthy because they provide a model of shared responsibility for engagement with students and the community. (Salahuddin, Greenwood & Conner, 2018). On the other hand, the notable absence

of teacher collaboration and peer support aimed at enhancing classroom instruction in several Bangladeshi secondary schools is a cause for concern. There are several obstacles to creating a collaborative culture, such as the challenging curriculum, the belief that many students are not very capable, the educational backgrounds of the teachers, and external factors that affect the motivation of the teachers. It implies that while informal cooperation among teachers for mutual support may boost motivation, formal programs based on classroom observations are the only way to establish more cooperative working practices. (Thornton, 2006).

One major factor influencing the dynamics of education systems around the world is the difference between teachers who work in isolation and those who collaborate. This gap affects not just specific educators but also the overall efficacy of educational institutions as well as the learning experiences of students. Gaining an understanding of and closing this gap is essential for developing professional development, enhancing instructional strategies, and raising student achievement. Improving student outcomes, fostering professional development, and increasing teaching effectiveness all depend on closing the gap between teachers working alone and in teams. Teachers can create dynamic learning communities that benefit both teachers and students by addressing obstacles to teamwork, promoting a culture of collaboration, and offering support structures.

Through this research, I would like to explore the different effects of teacher collaboration that provides on teachers' professional growth and development. Teachers who are working in isolation and don't have enough understanding about collaboration should benefit from this study. It's not only effective for teachers but also encourages students to work in teams and makes them skilled future collaborators.

1.2 Research Topic and Title

The topic of this research is Teacher Collaboration. I wanted to explore teacher collaboration in the specific case of an educational institution in Bangladesh. My research title is The Role of Teacher Collaboration in Professional Development and Learning: A Case Study at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

According to Parker, Martin, Colmar, and Liem (2012), the initial three years of teaching in the United States are marked by a 46% teacher turnover rate. Low job satisfaction brought on by loneliness is a major cause of teacher burnout. Maybe there is not enough scope for time and resources for which teachers prefer to work in isolation rather than collaborating. Teachers who experience professional isolation believe that no one is interested in what they will accomplish as a result, they become dissatisfied at work and run out of energy. Being alone can lead to burnout, and negatively impact a person's physical, mental, and psychological well-being (Salvagioni et al., 2017)

Collaborative environments foster professional development and job satisfaction, whereas isolated work environments result in burnout and a profound sense of helplessness. Teachers in the United States may not have much opportunity to interact with other professionals in the school because they spend most of their working day in a classroom with students. Teaching is a profession linked to high levels of stress and professional attrition, as evidenced by research and firsthand experience (Harmsen et al., 2018; Kelchtermans, 2017; Suh, 2015). Almost half of all teachers in Australia leave the profession within the first five years of their employment, which is a long-standing problem in the field of education (Arnup & Bowles, 2016). The most frequent reason is burnout, which is defined as a state of feeling overwhelmed by ongoing workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. Various factors put educators at

higher risk of burnout, especially early career educators (ECTs), who are defined as those who have taught for fewer than five years. For instance, teachers may feel alone or unsupported by the administration of their school; these stressors can result in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). Organizational pressures, role-related distress, difficult student behaviors, and rigorous workloads are additional variables that may be involved (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015).

These days, teachers are both the learning object and the subject (Kullberg et al., 2016). To advance professionally, they must collaborate. Teachers now cooperate and learn from each other's experiences, as opposed to the past practice of waiting for the educator to inundate them with methods and techniques that were imposed from the outside through crash teacher training courses. Teachers can benefit from each other's knowledge because the antiquated "master" role has evolved (Avalos, 2017). Teachers who have formed societies will foster a beneficial learning environment that will transform their practice. Formerly, it was thought that theory enhanced practice; however, this new paradigm holds that practice enhances theory, and as a result, teachers no longer need to wait for directives from outside sources. Collaboration not only increases teachers' expertise and experience but also greatly enhances student learning and performance. Research indicates that student achievement is higher in schools where teachers work together on matters about their instruction (curriculum, syllabus, teaching strategies, etc.). Put differently, peers have an impact on teaching strategies, which in turn has an impact on students' learning (Goddard & Goddard, 2015; Supovitz, Sirinides, 2018). My study will aim to understand the impact of teacher collaboration on their learning and development. A key focus of the study is to identify the most effective collaborative methods and practices that enhance teaching skills and promote knowledge sharing. By exploring these strategies, the research aims to illuminate how educators can leverage teamwork to refine their instructional approaches and create more cohesive and impactful learning experiences. To

better understand the effects of teacher collaboration on educators' development and learning, the study will look at a few different factors, including peer support, instructional practices, professional learning communities, knowledge sharing, and overall teacher well-being. This study will find common themes about how teacher collaboration affects their learning and professional growth.

1.4 Research Questions

The goal of this qualitative research would be to obtain a more thorough knowledge of how teachers perceive the most supportive types of collaboration and how these perceptions affect their experiences as learners, educators, and people in general. Finding the most supportive types of collaboration as perceived by teachers will entail knowing which collaborative techniques are thought to be effective for professional development and most helpful. This study will look at the effectiveness of teacher collaboration on educators' learning with a focus on finding out what kinds of collaboration teachers find most productive.

Research questions:

1. How do teachers describe the most effective methods of collaboration in their professional practice?
2. In what ways does collaboration among teachers influence their professional growth and the learning outcomes they achieve?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

This research aims to delve into the intricate dynamics of teacher collaboration and its impact on professional development at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka. By examining the role of collaboration, the study seeks to uncover how shared practices among educators contribute to their growth, enhance their teaching capabilities, and foster a culture of continuous learning.

Furthermore, the study investigates the ways in which teacher collaboration translates into improved learning outcomes for educators. By examining the interplay between collaborative efforts and professional growth, the research seeks to understand how collective practices influence teaching effectiveness and innovation. In addition to identifying effective strategies, the study emphasizes promoting best practices in collaboration. Highlighting successful models of teamwork provides a blueprint for fostering a supportive and growth-oriented teaching environment, ensuring that educators feel empowered and valued in their professional journeys. Finally, the research addresses the challenges that teachers may encounter in collaborative settings. By identifying these obstacles, such as time constraints or differing teaching philosophies, the study aims to propose actionable solutions to overcome them. This approach ensures that collaboration becomes a sustainable and enriching aspect of professional development, ultimately contributing to a stronger educational community at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Understanding effective methods of teacher collaboration is vital for enhancing professional growth, instructional quality, and overall educational outcomes. Research in this area offers valuable insights for addressing challenges and improving practices. By leveraging collaboration, professional development initiatives can become more focused and practical, directly addressing the issues educators face. This collaborative approach not only refines teaching methods but also fosters strategies that benefit both educators and learners.

The study highlights how leadership plays a crucial role in facilitating teacher collaboration. Effective leaders can address challenges, provide necessary support, and create environments that encourage teamwork. Such collaboration enhances teacher professionalism, allowing educators to refine their skills, engage in reflective practices, and adopt innovative teaching

methods. Through shared learning experiences, teachers collectively explore strategies to improve classroom practices and deepen pedagogical knowledge, ultimately benefiting the entire school community.

By fostering a culture of collaboration, schools can build trust, teamwork, and mutual support, creating a cohesive and dynamic learning environment. This culture also strengthens professional development by aligning initiatives with teachers' needs and ensuring they are practical and impactful. Furthermore, teacher collaboration has a direct positive impact on student outcomes by promoting aligned instructional practices, cohesive curriculum design, and strategies tailored to diverse student needs.

Aligned with the mission to provide holistic education, this study underscores the transformative power of collaboration in achieving shared goals and improving educational excellence. It empowers educators to take ownership of their growth while inspiring teamwork that enhances teaching practices and enriches the broader educational experience for both teachers and students. In essence, it offers a comprehensive exploration of how collaboration drives professional excellence, supports student success, and strengthens learning communities.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Literature review

This research aims to examine how well teacher collaboration affects teachers' professional development and education. Given that conversations regarding curriculum, instruction, and professional development are essential components of effective teacher collaboration, it appears the students would have great achievement which is an advantage (Cansoy & Parlar 2018). Working in schools with higher levels of collaboration allows teachers to advance more quickly. These findings give credence to legislative initiatives to raise student achievement by encouraging teacher cooperation regarding team teaching (Ronfeldt et al., 2015). With the inclusion of participant teachers' perspectives, this study will be comprehensive and interpretive, contributing to the body of knowledge already available on teacher collaboration. Unlike previous fixed design studies, it will examine the influences of teacher collaboration from a different angle—that of the teachers themselves. It is necessary for me to first comprehend teachers' perspectives and experiences on the subject to comprehend how teacher collaboration affects teachers' learning and development. While in-person interactions often allow for richer, more nuanced data collection, the decision to rely on alternative methods was made due to logistical and contextual constraints. This limitation may affect the depth of interpersonal dynamics captured in the study. Nevertheless, the study aims to address this gap by ensuring a rigorous and reflective analysis of teachers' responses through other qualitative methods, such as virtual interviews or detailed questionnaires.

Future research on how teacher collaboration affects teacher learning may also benefit from the results of this study, potentially incorporating in-person methodologies to further explore this critical area.

2.2 Collaborative Model

Education organizations have a variety of collaborative models to select from. School administrators must create a thorough collaborative plan that fits the needs of both teachers and students as well as the school's culture, regardless of the collaborative model chosen. This should ideally be done in collaboration with the teachers. There is an ongoing description of efforts aimed at bettering teachers' practice as well as the practice of the future educators they collaborate with. The main goal of this work is to assist candidates for elementary teaching positions in developing lessons that enhance student learning. The Supported, Collaborative Teaching Model (SCTM) is a model that has been created and put into practice to assist teacher candidates in making the shift from student to teacher and to motivate them to use content-rich science instruction. The authors made several morally sound choices to address particular issues when creating this model. (Kervinen et al., 2016). Many types of collaborative models are being developed and implemented within schools such as:

1) Partnerships between teacher teams and outside context experts- Teacher teams can interact and engage with subject matter experts in a particular field through Outside Context Expert (OCE) partnerships. Professors at universities, researchers in education, professionals in business, and specialists are a few examples. Using this approach, teams can collaborate with experts who are current on the most recent research techniques related to a particular educational concept or topic. (Ermeling & Yarbo, 2016)

2) Collaboration between general and special educators- Teachers in the classroom collaborate with special education teachers who oversee the education of students with diverse disabilities in this partnership. This kind of cooperation aims to fulfill the needs of every student and guarantee that education is inclusive. This type of cooperation can include resource sharing, co-teaching, or communication between teachers as they create Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for specific students (Pellegrino et al., 2015).

3) Co-teaching teams -Co-teaching is the practice of having multiple teachers oversee the planning and delivery of a lesson in tandem. Since co-teaching enables teachers with varying degrees of experience and knowledge to contribute to the classroom and provides tailored instruction and attention for each student, it is advantageous for both teacher practice and student learning. (Taylor, 2017)

4) Interdisciplinary teams- When educators collaborate to create and implement interdisciplinary curricula, interdisciplinary teams come into existence. Differently, skilled teachers collaborate on lesson planning and decision-making. Teachers have the freedom to modify schedules and traditional age configurations by the needs of the lesson and the students thanks to this team-teaching structure.(Schaefer et al., 2016)

2.3 Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Professional

Development:

Productive teacher collaboration encourages the growth of professional learning communities, which in turn encourages educators to share knowledge, learn continuously, and improve their teaching practices. (Doğan & Adams 2018). Collaborative groups of educators called Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) strive to improve teaching methods, develop professional skills, and ultimately improve student learning outcomes.

Professional learning communities are linked to the growth of a collaborative culture in schools. The necessity of collaboration is a recurring theme in studies on the effective establishment of professional learning communities in schools.

As part of their PLC model, schools endeavor to foster collaborative work cultures, actively engage teachers to enhance their professional capacity to improve student learning, and critically reflect on lived experiences to improve practice (Stamper 2015). In a 2018 case study, Bouchamma, April, & Basque compared the adoption of a learning community in a school to

previous research. The authors provided a model that outlines the general traits of a learning community in their literature review. This model has certain specific elements, such as flexible structures, open communication, shared power, and shared goals. There are numerous allusions to "group" and "community" in the model. Schools that function as learning communities exhibit "shared leadership, shared values, collective learning, shared practice, and supportive conditions," according to the PLC dimensions. When working in learning communities, educators participate in collaborative practices more often. Teachers' approaches to their work change when they work in learning communities because a culture of isolationism is replaced with a focus on the team. Once the necessity of collaboration has been established, the next concern for schools is how to go about putting systems that foster collaborative abilities within the institution. To start understanding professional learning communities one should carefully read each word's definition: it is the outcome of people working together to move forward to a common goal. Each teacher's background, education, and experience constitute their professionalism in the classroom. The ongoing investigation of student learning is called learning. To improve teachers' skills and competencies, (Darling-Hammond, 2017) emphasizes the value of collaborative professional development. Opportunities for collaborative learning support teachers' continuous development and flexibility. The relationship between teacher collaboration and teacher professional development is essentially rooted in their mutual dedication to lifelong learning, and development, and the establishment of encouraging, cooperative learning environments that are advantageous to both teachers and students. When combined, these components create a potent strategy for school and professional development.

2.4 Teachers' Reactions to Cooperation:

Teacher perceptions of the impact of collaborative practices from over 15 schools were studied. Balyer et al., 2015 used data from case studies and survey results. The results of the data analysis showed that collaborative activities among teachers improved staff morale and

instructional practices. Instead of relying solely on personal experiences, teachers' interactions and sharing with one another provided the time and space to gain from a variety of viewpoints and experiences. According to Smith 2014 working together encourages teachers to move toward engagement with others around important questions of teaching and learning and reliance on their memories and experiences with schooling.

According to Goddard (2017), teacher collaboration enhances instructional practices and boosts educators' capacity to address complex issues in the classroom. There is hope that this improved capacity of educators to address difficult issues later will lead to higher student performance. Because there is less uncertainty about how to approach difficult problems and collaborate in a supportive environment, teachers frequently observe that effective collaboration can promote positive change in the classroom. Increased student achievement is correlated with teachers' collaborative practices that address learning-related issues (Paolini 2015). Instructors who collaborated felt that they shared responsibility for the learning of their students, according to a related study (Paolini 2015). When educators collaborate, they exchange ideas and creative approaches; in the process of collaborative conversations, teachers gain a voice in the curriculum and a range of tools to meet the needs of their students.

2.5 Leader and Collaborator Relationship:

Along with starting the school's direction, many other operations fall under the purview of school leaders. According to educational research, school leadership plays a critical role in creating collaborative learning environments that are encouraging and productive for educators. In collaborative settings, school leaders play a crucial role. Related research indicates that by providing opportunities for teachers to receive professional development, school administrators can have an indirect impact on how well students learn (Goddard 2017). The study by Goddard found that in schools where school leaders oversee instructional

leadership strategies, there is a positive effect of teacher collaboration. By initiating professional development opportunities, assigning time and resources, and offering instructional leadership to teachers, school leaders have an impact on the collaborative operations of teachers. Teacher collaboration happens more frequently when instructional leadership is given by the leadership and given priority. Teachers are more likely to actively engage in similar behaviors when school leadership models collaboration. This creates a collaborative culture within the school.

2.6 Collaboration Challenges:

The obstacles or difficulties that researchers have found in relation to cooperative teacher teams should be noted. Teachers who are required by administrators to work in teams but do not perceive the value in the meetings seem to put in minimal effort toward the group goals (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2015). Teachers must believe that their work is meaningful for them to collaborate meaningfully, and administrators must outline a clear plan for the school so that the staff can unite (Adams, 2021). Research on collaboration in school communities frequently produces oversimplified and optimistic descriptions of collaborative reforms. Nonetheless, educators must recognize and know how to handle the inevitable conflict that arises in teams (Taylor 2017). According to Taylor, conflict amongst teacher teams is a normal occurrence with the potential to foster organizational development. According to the author, when professionals interact with one another in teacher communities, micro-political processes like border politics, conflict, and ideology can cause problems. Philosophical disagreements regarding the best course of action going forward give rise to conflict. "In a professional community, promoting a collaborative culture may lead to conflict. Communities frequently become embroiled in conflict because they want significant adjustments made to school policies and procedures. According to Taylor's research contributions, administrators must clearly define the future goals of their schools.

According to academic literature, several factors prevent teachers from working together, as noted by (Abry et al.,2017). The "environment or culture" in which teachers work is one of the factors. If the school fails to foster collaboration, then attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors among teachers will suffer. Instructors may refrain from seeking assistance if they believe doing so diminishes their standing in the industry. Another drawback is that some educators worry they will lose control (autonomy) over their classrooms and believe that if they work together, they won't be given credit for team-driven projects. According to Abry, the second factor is "physical," meaning that teachers do not allocate the time required for productive formal collaboration. It basically boils down to a scheduling problem. Lastly, "social processes" that are connected to ineffective teamwork make up a third factor. The traditional isolated structures have left teachers without the experiences and skills necessary for productive collaboration. It is stated that increasing teachers' capacity for productive collaboration requires professional development (2017). Teachers bring a variety of unique qualities to the workplace, which makes teamwork intrinsically challenging. Personalities, unique and shared experiences, values, educational perspectives, and ideas about what constitutes an effective education are just a few examples of the differences that exist. If diverse teacher qualities are not effectively managed, they may lead to negative collaborative cultures and negative social interdependence.

Typically, formalized teacher collaboration occurs outside of the classroom, where educators use their pedagogical approaches with students. Apart from team teaching and peer observations, team meetings are a common place for collaboration as educators share their experiences and display student work. Teachers can only learn from one another through collaboration if they are willing to share, and professional conversations can be steered or shut down by micropolitics. Research indicates a connection between greater teacher collaboration and advancements in teaching pedagogy and student achievement (Taylor et al., 2019). Proponents of collaborative practices among educators have grown over the past 20 years.

However, because educators are reluctant to abandon long-held beliefs and habits, the improvement in teaching methods is happening slowly (Roth, Druker, Garnier, Lemmens, Chen, Kawanaka, & Gallimore, 2006).

Enhancing collaborative communities requires ongoing professional development. Collaboration is hampered, though, by the conventional methods of delivering professional development (short-term, expert lecture, no follow-up).

According to Lindvall (2017), there is a consensus in academic literature that teachers who attend one-day workshops and listen to motivational presenters rarely alter their teaching practices in a way that significantly improves student learning. It is assumed by the traditional method of professional development in education that researchers are the source of knowledge about effective teaching practices. Teachers receive the information from the researchers after that, acting as passive recipients. Collaboration is not a part of the traditional professional development framework. According to a study by Mann (2022), when professional development had a collaborative structure, 95% of teachers adopted new practices in their instruction. Teachers who use practices derived from traditional professional development models implement them at a rate of 5–10%, compared to the 95% that collaborative models demonstrate.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework explores the relationship between teacher collaboration, professional development, teaching practices, and student learning outcomes. Teacher collaboration, through co-teaching, interdisciplinary teamwork, and partnerships with experts, fosters the sharing of ideas and innovative strategies.

Collaboration enhances professional development, equipping teachers with improved skills and reflective practices that translate into more effective teaching methods. These improved

practices lead to better engagement, inclusiveness, and ultimately, enhanced student learning outcomes.

The framework also recognizes challenges such as time constraints and differing perspectives, highlighting the role of school leadership in fostering a supportive and collaborative environment. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) serve as a key enabler, promoting shared responsibility, continuous improvement, and a collaborative culture.

In summary, the framework demonstrates how effective teacher collaboration drives professional growth, improves teaching practices, and positively impacts student achievement, while addressing the challenges in collaborative efforts.

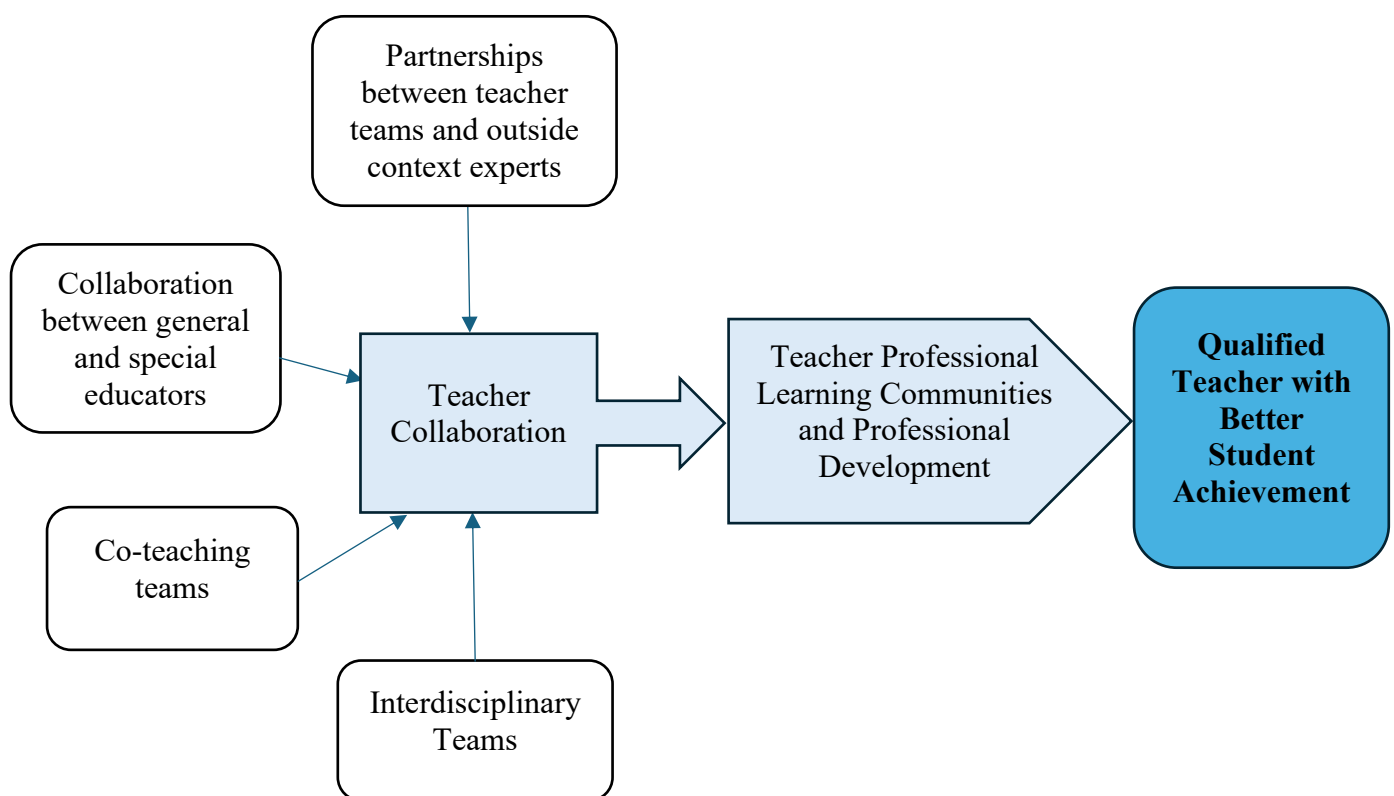


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

The paper by Ketokivi and Choi (2014) on the resurgence of case research as a scientific methodology is useful in this regard. According to them, the word "qualitative" about research denotes an analysis of ideas and their interpretations within particular research contexts (p. 233). In line with this statement, Fawcett et al. (2014, p. 6) say in their trail guide to success in publishing that qualitative research as scientific inquiry relies on storytelling to make sense of real-world dilemmas. Ensuring the authenticity of the research is the primary concern when it comes to qualitative methods. A case study is a research method that provides an in-depth, detailed examination of a specific subject, such as an individual, group, institution, or phenomenon, within its real-life context. It is particularly useful when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined, and the researcher seeks to understand the complexities and nuances of the subject in depth. A case study is a particularly effective method for this study because it enables a detailed, context-rich examination of teacher collaboration within a specific educational setting. Teacher collaboration involves multiple factors, including institutional culture, leadership, and individual teacher practices, all of which interact in dynamic ways. A case study allows for an in-depth analysis of these complex interactions, capturing the nuances that might be missed with other methods. By focusing on a particular group or school, the case study can provide insights into how collaboration influences professional development, instructional strategies, and student outcomes. Additionally, the findings from a case study can be directly applied to similar contexts, offering practical strategies for enhancing collaboration in other educational settings. Overall, the case

study method is well-suited to exploring the multifaceted nature of teacher collaboration and providing a deeper understanding of its impact.

Because I am more interested in learning about the effects of teacher collaboration in teachers' professional development and learning and for this reason, the qualitative case study design was chosen for this investigation. Merriam & Grenier (2019) acknowledged that a case study can occasionally act as a "catchall" for non-experimental or survey-type research. They said that although case studies can be quantitative, they are more likely to be qualitative. They distinguished case studies from other qualitative research methods, though, because they emphasize in-depth descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bounded system (individual, program, intervention, etc.).

I would like to propose using a qualitative research approach for my research project. Because of its capacity to convey the depth and complexity of educators' viewpoints on cooperation, the qualitative method has been selected. This method will allow me to gain detailed insights which is in line with the exploratory nature of my research questions.

Also, I can investigate a great deal about the viewpoints, experiences, and opinions of teachers by using qualitative methods like observations and interviews. This is crucial for capturing the subtle aspects of teamwork that might be difficult to measure. Understanding the context-specific elements influencing teachers' perceptions of collaboration is made possible through qualitative research. Using this method, I can investigate the distinctive features of the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka and how they influence teamwork techniques. Using qualitative methods to answer structured research questions is especially beneficial. They make it possible for me to gather unstructured data, giving educators the freedom to freely express their opinions and guarantee a more genuine portrayal of their viewpoints.

3.2 Research Site

The study will be conducted in the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka, which is situated in the Bashundhara Residential Area, where the total student number is 777, consisting of 180 staff including teachers and administrators 100 females and 80 males staff. The Aga Khan Academy Dhaka is the fourth in the network of the Aga Khan Academies established by His Highness the Aga Khan. The first Aga Khan Academy opened in Mombasa, Kenya in 2003, the second in Hyderabad, India in 2011, the third in Maputo, Mozambique in 2013 and the fourth in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2022. It is a private organization and it follows the International Baccalaureate curriculum and teaches from KG to Grade 12. I chose this site to investigate the teachers' collaborative practices because of the school's distinctive features. Additionally, the school is a familiar environment, and there is an ongoing staff rapport, which served as an introduction. Teachers joining here have experience working in international and national school cultures. I have explored some teachers who are having problems coping with the culture of teamwork because of not having enough possibility to collaborate, which is the reason for my choosing this topic. Being the lead researcher also puts me in the insider/outsider role, which broadens my perspective.

The goal of this research is to explore how effective collaboration techniques can be identified and implemented in educational settings to enhance learning outcomes for both teachers and students. By investigating the impact of teacher collaboration on professional development and instructional strategies, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how collaborative practices can be applied in curricula to foster better learning environments. This research aims to offer insights that educators and administrators can use to refine their approaches to collaboration, ultimately improving educational practices.

3.3 Research Participants

The participants for this study will include teachers from Grades 6 through 12 and 1 Academic Administrator. The research employs a structured email interview process, involving 5 teachers and 1 Middle Years Programme (MYP) Coordinator. Participants will receive a set of pre-designed questions via email, which they will respond to at their convenience. Invitations to participate in the study will be sent through formal letters or email communication.

The selected participants represent a range of educational backgrounds and exhibit varying degrees of collaboration in their professional roles. They include educators who regularly engage in team planning sessions as part of their collaborative practices. Observing and analyzing these practices during regular planning periods will provide insights into how collaboration impacts their professional growth and learning.

The study focuses on Senior School teachers due to the challenges they have faced during the transition to the International Baccalaureate (IB) framework. Senior School consists of lead subject teachers for Bangla, Math, Science, Integrated Humanities, Arts, English, and Design, with three teachers per grade level from Grade 6 to Grade 12 working under each subject lead.

In addition, the broader school demographics include:

- **Junior and Senior School Specialists:** 3 music teachers, 3 physical education teachers, 2 socio-emotional counselors, 1 Lead Pastoral care 3 special education teachers.
- **Support Staff:** Assisting kindergarten teachers.
- **Administrative Roles:** 1 Dean of Studies, 1 Junior School Principal, 1 Primary Programme Coordinator, 1 Senior School Principal, 1 Middle Years Programme (MYP) Coordinator, 1 Diploma Programme Coordinator, and 1 Head of Academy.

- **Administrative Departments:** Professional Development, Human Resources, Finance, and Operations teams.

The participating teachers have varying levels of experience, ranging from one to thirty-two years. These diverse backgrounds and professional expertise will provide a rich dataset to explore the reasons for teacher collaboration and its influence on professional growth and learning.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

The participants for this study were thoughtfully chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of teacher collaboration and its contribution to professional development and learning at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka. The selection includes diverse roles and perspectives within the educational community:

- 1 Teacher from Junior School: Including a Junior School teacher ensures representation of early childhood and primary education perspectives, where foundational collaboration practices are often developed.
- 3 Teachers from Grades 6 to 12: These participants represent secondary education and include a range of subject specializations, contributing insights into the unique collaborative dynamics of middle and high school teaching.
- 1 Middle Years Programme (MYP) Coordinator: The MYP Coordinator, who serves as the Academic Administrator, brings a broader organizational and leadership perspective. This role is key to understanding how collaboration is facilitated and supported at a systemic level.

By including individuals from these distinct categories, the study aims to capture a holistic view of collaboration across different grade levels and professional roles. This diversity will

provide richer data and help identify commonalities and differences in collaborative practices across the school.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

I have selected one academic admin staff member to learn more about their plans for professional development (PD) for teachers. I wanted to understand what kinds of PD they are planning and what has already been done. I also wanted to hear how they are organizing teacher collaboration to support teacher growth and development. I have conducted 4 structured interviews with academic admins and teachers to learn more about their plans, what has been done, if there have been any noticeable changes in student growth and achievement, and any issues they've faced due to a lack of teacher collaboration.

To better understand teacher collaboration, I observed various collaborative practices such as grade-level meetings, faculty meetings, support groups within the school, and informal collaboration.

After analyzing the data, I had created a list with some common categories based on the participants' professional experiences and their collaborative activities with other educators. This involved finding recurring themes and patterns from the interviews and observations. In the end, identifying these patterns helped to clarify the research problem.

In-depth data collection techniques were used to gather qualitative data for this investigation. To better understand the impact that teacher collaboration has on teacher learning and development, interviews, and observations of teachers working together were used. To collect detailed information for this investigation, I have used techniques like observations and interviews. These helped me to understand how teacher collaboration influences their learning and development.

3.5.1 Observation Method

Watching how teachers worked together and shared information helped me understand their collaboration better. During these observations, I took descriptive notes, which were reviewed later to identify patterns and ensure there was no bias or influence from the researcher. The observations also showed how teacher collaboration affected their learning and development. Some observations took place during professional development sessions, grade-level meetings, and support team meetings during teachers' planning times when academic administrators conducted sessions. I aimed to observe at least five teachers during these meetings.

The following guidelines were followed during the observation:

1. The goals of the observations were clearly defined, focusing on how teacher collaboration impacted their learning and development.
2. Specific parts of collaboration were identified to observe, such as team teaching, co-planning, or professional learning communities.
3. Different settings were chosen, including classrooms, meeting rooms, and informal spaces, to observe various forms of collaboration.
4. All participants understood the observation process and had given their consent.
5. Efforts were made to avoid bias, focusing on capturing real interactions and behaviors.
6. I positioned myself in a way that didn't disrupt the teachers and allowed them to act naturally.
7. Quiet methods, like silent notetaking or audio recording (with consent), were used to document observations.
8. Attention was given to how teachers communicated, shared resources, and supported one another.
9. Instances of collaborative planning, joint problem-solving, and group reflection were noted.

10. The impact of collaboration on teaching practices and student engagement was observed.

11. Detailed descriptions of what was seen were provided, supported by examples.

3.5.2 Structured Interview Method

The interviews helped uncover how teachers at the school collaborated and why each teacher supported or opposed it (if any). These were conducted by sending a well-organized set of questions via email, and the responses were recorded with the participants' consent. Three teachers from grades 6 to 12 and one MYP Coordinator were chosen for the interviews, and the questions were sent to them along with a timeline for their replies. I collected the data from each response and analyzed it in detail.

The interviews followed a method suggested by Creswell (2007). As the interviewer, I:

1. Carefully selected teachers to be interviewed.
2. Chose an interview format that would provide the most useful information.
3. Recorded the interview for accuracy.
4. Allowed enough time for the interviewees to answer open-ended questions.
5. Chose a suitable and comfortable location for the interview.
6. Obtained consent from the interviewees.
7. Stayed focused on the topic and treated the interviewees with respect.

3.6 Role of the Researcher

In this study, my role was to balance being an insider and an outsider to foster candid and open responses. While I couldn't conduct in-person interviews, I adapted my approach to ensure that participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences remotely. I aimed to maintain an impartial and neutral stance during interactions, ensuring that participants could freely express their perspectives without feeling influenced or constrained. My role included actively

understanding, allowing the conversation to unfold naturally while still guiding it to address key topics relevant to the research.

Additionally, I was committed to upholding the highest ethical standards throughout the data collection process. This included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and prioritizing the well-being of all participants. My objective was to create a respectful and safe environment for participants to share their insights, regardless of the format of the interaction.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data set for this study included structured interviews conducted via email and class observation reports. Although I could not conduct in-person interviews, the email-based approach allowed participants to thoughtfully reflect on their experiences and provide detailed responses. The data, rich in narrative and subjective insights, captured the opinions, reflections, and experiences of teachers regarding teamwork at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka.

To analyze the data, I first identified themes and patterns that highlighted effective forms of collaboration, their impact on teachers' professional development and learning, and external factors influencing these perceptions. By examining variations in responses, I explored a range of viewpoints and experiences among educators.

Thematic analysis was employed to systematically identify recurring patterns within the data. A coding framework was developed based on the research questions and emerging themes, ensuring consistency in the analysis. Responses were methodically coded, and the data were compared across participants and reports to identify overarching patterns, variances, and any outliers.

This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of teacher collaboration and its contributions to professional growth and learning, even in the absence of in-person interaction.

3.8 Ethical Issues and Concerns

The ethical considerations for this study were carefully designed to prioritize the rights, well-being, and privacy of all participants. The study followed a transparent and respectful approach to ensure that participants felt comfortable and supported throughout the research process.

To begin with, all participants received detailed information about the study's objectives, methods, potential risks, and anticipated benefits. This ensured they had a clear understanding of what their participation involved. Before engaging in the study, participants provided informed consent, signifying their agreement to take part with full awareness of their rights. These rights included the ability to withdraw from study at any time, without facing any consequences or pressure to continue.

Confidentiality and privacy were central to this study. All data collected, whether from structured interviews conducted via email or classroom observations, were handled with strict confidentiality. Any personally identifiable information was removed or anonymized before the findings were shared in reports or publications. Data were securely stored, with access restricted to the researcher, ensuring that participants' information always remained protected.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Teachers had the freedom to decide whether they wished to be involved, without any coercion. The questions posed during the study were designed to be non-intrusive, focusing on their professional experiences with collaboration. However, it was acknowledged that some discussions about teamwork dynamics could cause slight emotional discomfort. Recognizing this possibility, the study included measures to mitigate such risks.

In cases where participants felt they needed additional support after sharing their experiences, they were provided with information on available professional development resources or counseling services. Additionally, to safeguard their privacy further, only aggregated data were

used in any reports or publications arising from the study, ensuring individual responses could not be traced back to any specific participant.

Finally, open and transparent communication was maintained with participants throughout the research process. They were kept informed about the study's progress and any relevant updates, fostering trust and a sense of collaboration between the researcher and the participants.

Through these measures, the study sought to uphold the highest ethical standards, ensuring that participants were treated with respect and care while allowing their voices to contribute meaningfully to the research.

3.9 Credibility and Rigor

As a researcher, my academic and professional background equipped me with the skills and knowledge necessary to conduct this study effectively. My training included coursework and practical experience in qualitative research methods, providing me with the capability to design, implement, and analyze a study of this nature. Additionally, my academic journey involved developing a strong understanding of the importance of teacher collaboration and professional development, topics that aligned closely with my research interests.

I brought prior knowledge and experience related to the research topic, having worked in educational environments where collaboration among teachers was a key aspect of professional practice. This firsthand exposure deepened my understanding of how teamwork could influence professional growth and learning among educators.

The development of this study followed a systematic process to ensure its rigor and validity. I began by constructing a research outline and a research matrix, clearly defining the objectives, questions, and methodology of the study. This was followed by the creation of a detailed research proposal, which was reviewed and refined to align with academic standards and ethical guidelines. This structured approach provided a strong foundation for the research.

In terms of personal and professional characteristics, I recognized that my dual role as both a researcher and someone familiar with the educational context could influence the study. To mitigate bias, I maintained a neutral and impartial stance throughout the data collection and analysis processes. My decision to conduct structured interviews via email, instead of in-person interviews, allowed participants the space to reflect on their responses without external influence.

To ensure the study's credibility and rigor, I adhered to ethical practices, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining open communication with participants. The thematic analysis was conducted systematically, with a coding framework designed to identify recurring patterns and themes, ensuring a methodical and transparent approach to data interpretation.

Through this process, I aimed to produce a study that not only reflected the experiences and perspectives of the participants but also adhered to the highest standards of research integrity and academic rigor.

3.10 Limitations of the Study

All research studies come with certain limitations, and it is essential to recognize and address them honestly. In this study, several challenges arose that impacted the depth and scope of the research, limiting its overall generalizability and breadth.

Firstly, the findings may be most relevant to the Aga Khan Academy in Dhaka, as the contextual and organizational factors specific to this institution could limit the applicability of the results to other educational settings. While efforts were made to include participants from diverse roles within the school, the findings remain shaped by the unique dynamics of this environment.

Time constraints significantly influenced the study. Due to my illness, I was unable to conduct in-person or online interviews as initially planned. Furthermore, the participants' busy schedules, workload, and time limitations made it challenging to arrange interviews even remotely. These factors reduced opportunities for direct interaction, which may have impacted the richness of the qualitative data collected. I also intended to include responses from two additional participants, but they declined as the winter break had already begun. Unfortunately, by the time they return, my paper submission deadline will have passed.

The political situation in the region also constrained my ability to conduct sufficient classroom observations. Limited access to these observational opportunities hindered my ability to gather more comprehensive insights into the collaborative dynamics of the teaching environment.

Additionally, the qualitative nature of this study introduces an inherent level of subjectivity, as data interpretation is influenced by the researcher's perspective. While this method allows for a deep exploration of participants' experiences, interpretations may vary, and the potential for bias cannot be eliminated.

Despite these limitations, I have taken steps to mitigate their impact and enhance the credibility of the study. I have clearly acknowledged the contextual nature of the findings and have provided implications that are specific to the Aga Khan Academy in Dhaka. Participants were carefully chosen to reflect a range of roles and experiences within the organization, helping to reduce issues of generalizability.

I have also been transparent in reporting the constraints of the research process, including time limitations, participant accessibility, and the challenges posed by external factors. To address the subjectivity of the data, I adhered to a strict and well-documented methodology, ensuring consistency in data collection and analysis. Recognizing the study's limitations, I have

suggested directions for future research, including longer-term projects that could explore similar themes with a broader participant pool and greater observational opportunities.

While these limitations may have influenced the depth and breadth of the study, they do not diminish the value of the insights gained. By reflecting honestly on these challenges and maintaining a rigorous approach, the study offers a meaningful contribution to understanding teacher collaboration and professional development within its specific context.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the findings from classroom observations and interviews conducted with teachers to explore collaborative practices and their impact on professional growth and student learning. The data is organized thematically, addressing the research questions and providing an account of observed and reported practices. Each finding is supported by specific examples while maintaining the confidentiality of participants. To maintain the confidentiality of the participants I have mentioned their responses by “Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 4”.

4.2 Summary of Key Finding

The findings reveal the transformative potential of collaboration in enhancing professional growth, teaching practices, and student outcomes. Through regular collaborative efforts, educators can align goals, refine instructional strategies, and create cohesive learning experiences. Such practices not only strengthen consistency in teaching but also encourage innovative approaches and the integration of diverse perspectives into lesson design. Collaborative environments foster resource-sharing and collective problem-solving, enabling educators to address challenges effectively and improve their confidence in managing classrooms and engaging students. Moreover, these efforts have a profound impact on student learning, promoting critical thinking, real-world problem-solving, and active participation, while also supporting improved behaviors and academic performance. These insights emphasize the role of collaboration in driving professional and instructional excellence within educational settings.

4.3 Results

In this section, I will present findings that highlight key themes emerging from the data collected through structured interviews, classroom observations, and supporting documents. The analysis will explore how teachers engage in collaborative practices, their impact on professional growth, and the influence of these practices on teaching and learning outcomes.

One significant finding is the role of structured team planning, where regular team meetings help teachers align curriculum goals, share strategies, and ensure consistency in instruction across classrooms. Observations and interviews revealed that these sessions foster cohesive lesson planning and enhance instructional effectiveness. Another important practice is interdisciplinary collaboration, where teachers from different subject areas co-design lessons that integrate multiple perspectives, creating meaningful and interconnected learning experiences. Teachers also emphasized the value of resource sharing and collective problem-solving, describing how the exchange of materials and ideas enriches their teaching and addresses challenges in student learning.

Collaboration was found to significantly enhance professional growth, with teachers refining their teaching strategies through team discussions and professional development sessions. These collaborations introduced innovative approaches, such as inquiry-based learning and technology integration, which were adapted and implemented in classrooms. Furthermore, the observations showcased how collaborative efforts positively impacted student learning, with lessons designed collaboratively encouraging critical thinking, active participation, and real-world problem-solving.

The findings also addressed challenges in collaboration, such as time constraints, and highlighted how teachers used asynchronous tools and maintained regular communication to

overcome these obstacles. Data from observations and interviews illustrated the practical solutions teachers employed to sustain collaboration despite these difficulties.

The findings are supported by data from interviews with three teachers and observations conducted in science and design classes, offering a detailed account of collaborative practices and their outcomes. Pseudonyms are used to protect participant confidentiality, and additional documentation, including sample interview transcripts and observation notes, is provided in the appendices to add depth and context to the analysis. This section provides a comprehensive overview of the results, showcasing how teacher collaboration contributes to professional and instructional development.

Structured Team Planning: Structured team planning refers to a collaborative approach where team members, often within a professional or organizational context, follow a clearly defined process to plan and execute tasks or achieve specific goals. This approach involves the use of organized strategies, roles, timelines, and tools to ensure that all team members work together effectively and efficiently. Observations and interviews highlighted the importance of regular team planning sessions. Teachers described these as pivotal for aligning goals, sharing strategies, and ensuring consistency across classrooms. For example, Teacher 1 noted:

“Our weekly team meetings allow us to align our curriculum and adapt strategies to meet our shared objectives.”(Structured Interview, 03,11,2024)

He also noted how they do it and keep track of their team meetings so that it never gets skipped as all of them are busy. They send reminder emails and calendar invitations so that they always show on their calendar. Apart from this, he noted that:

“We use regular team meetings and collaborative planning sessions to set clear goals and align our teaching strategies. By discussing our progress and sharing feedback,

we maintain a unified approach and adjust our plans as necessary to meet shared objectives.”(Structured Interview, 03,11,2024)

Teacher 4 noted that by organizing grade-level meetings, they have solved many problems, one of them she mentioned is:

“During one such session, the team identified a student underperforming in a specific area of mathematics. By discussion in collaborative meeting helped the teacher realize that students were struggling with basic concepts. This helped the team to adjust their instructional approach, introducing more hands-on activities and scaffolding to address gaps in understanding with the support of the learning support department.”(Structured Interview, 02,10,2024)

These structured sessions ensure that students experience cohesive and well-planned instruction, reinforcing their learning across grade levels. To make sure that teachers adopt the practice of collaborative planning time, there are timeslots allotted in their timetables. According to teacher 4:

“There are dedicated time slots, once a week, co-teachers come together to plan lessons, align strategies, and share best practices. Additionally, department meetings are held weekly to discuss specific departmental needs, ensuring that resources, assessments, and student support are aligned.” (Structured Interview, 02,10,2024)

Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Interdisciplinary collaboration refers to the process of professionals or experts from different disciplines working together to address a shared goal or solve a complex problem that benefits from multiple perspectives and areas of expertise. This type of collaboration encourages the integration of knowledge, methods, and insights from various fields to create more comprehensive and innovative solutions. Teachers emphasized the value of interdisciplinary projects, where colleagues from different subject areas co-design

lessons to integrate multiple perspectives. For instance, Teacher 1 cited cross-disciplinary work as fostering a more meaningful and integrated learning environment:

“Working with teachers from other departments has helped me design lessons that connect science concepts with real-world problems.”(Structured Interview, 03,11,2024)

Teacher 1 also noted how he was teaching in isolation and how having these interdisciplinary meetings changed his instructional strategies,

“Yes, working with other teachers fosters a sense of shared responsibility because we are collectively invested in our students’ success. This shared commitment motivates us to support one another and work towards common educational goals.” (Structured Interview, 03,11,2024)

I have also observed some of the sessions where teacher coaches came from other Academies where they took some PDs and had departmental meetings. However, I was not allowed to attend their departmental meetings. After attending a session that was conducted by an external trainer teacher 3 noted that:

“Recently I had complete a professional development course which is Communication and Time Management. This PD is helping me a lot in both teaching and personal life. For teaching, as I am very new at teaching so this PD session is helping me how to communicate with students so that can take the class properly, manage students to be focus on class and properly manage the time of class and timely execute the lesson plan properly.” (Structured interview, 10,11,2024)

In one of the structured interviews, teacher 2 shared that the most useful form of teamwork according to him was interdisciplinary collaboration, he noted that;

“Interdisciplinary collaboration, where teachers integrate concepts from various subjects into a cohesive learning experience, has had the biggest impact on my teaching journey till now. It allows students to see connections between subjects, promoting critical thinking and application of knowledge.”(Structured Interview, 04,10,2024)

Resource Sharing and Collective Problem-Solving: Teachers frequently shared materials, strategies, and tools to enrich their teaching practices. In one instance, Teacher 2 explained:

“Sharing resources with my colleagues not only saves time but also introduces innovative techniques that I might not have considered.”(Structured Interview, 04,10,2024)

Collaboration also facilitated problem-solving. Departments collectively addressed learning gaps through group discussions, as described by Teacher 1 when identifying student difficulties in specific scientific concepts. Teacher 3 also noted that he was struggling with classroom management and lesson planning before having collaboration meetings, after attending weekly meetings and collaborating with other teachers he is now more confident about managing the classroom and planning lessons on a unit basis. He noted that;

“When I started teaching, managing students in class and engaging them with lesson plans was so difficult but after collaboration with teachers now I can do both. So that how collaborations help.”(Structured Interview, 10,11,2024)

Professional Growth through Development and Reflection refers to the continuous process by which individuals improve their skills, knowledge, and effectiveness in their professional roles by actively engaging in learning opportunities and regularly evaluating their practices. This approach emphasizes both acquiring new competencies and critically assessing one's experiences to foster improvement. Collaboration enabled teachers to refine their teaching

practices. For instance, Teacher 3 shared how weekly planning meetings in the Primary Years Program (PYP) helped him align technology with curriculum goals:

“Collaborating with my peers allowed me to integrate IT tools effectively into our units, creating a cohesive and engaging learning experience.”(Structured Interview, 10,11,2024)

Teachers also credited professional development sessions for introducing innovative teaching strategies, such as inquiry-based learning and differentiated instruction, which were later adapted collaboratively. Teacher 2 noted that a PD session helped him to learn some updates on safeguarding essentials, he noted:

“During a recent safeguarding essentials course on KAYA, I deepened my understanding of student safety and well-being. This training reshaped my approach to creating a safe classroom environment, emphasizing not just academic growth but also emotional and physical security. It also guided me in implementing a more empathetic and student-centered approach in my teaching.”(Structured Interview, 04,10,2024)

Teacher 4 noted in one of her responses that they had planned many sessions for teachers’ professional and learning growth which were evident now in their instructional strategies, as an example she noted that:

“We have scheduled PD time twice a week which focuses on term-based learning activities. For example, session on use of technology and Managebac software, where teachers work in groups to brainstorm how these methods can be applied in their own classrooms. Another example of how PD led to improved collaboration was when we introduced a school-wide focus on differentiated instruction. For this teacher were introduced to differentiation techniques and then collaborated in subject-specific

groups to design differentiated lesson plans tailored to their students' needs”
(Structured Interview, 04, 10,2024).

Impact on Student Learning: Observations from a science class (Observation 1, 10,10,2024) showcased how collaborative planning translated into engaging lessons. The use of digital tools and inquiry-based methods energized students, encouraging active participation and critical thinking. Similarly, in the design class (Observation 2, 13,10,2024), collaborative efforts were evident in the integration of technology and problem-solving tasks. These activities promoted real-world application, enhancing student understanding and engagement. It was mentioned by teacher 4 that students' academic performance improved after analyzing their formative and summative assessments due to teachers' collaboration and improved instructional strategies. She mentioned that:

“The data of formative and summative assessments gives clear indication for the collaboration. At the end of each term, survey conducted with various stake holders- teachers, students and parents also indicates on the level of collaboration evident in the teaching practices” (Structured Interview 02,10,2024).

Improvement in students' behaviors and reduced disciplinary issues are also suggesting that teacher collaboration helped the teachers to grow into their role professionally.

Overcoming Challenges in Collaboration: Time constraints were a common obstacle, but teachers employed asynchronous tools and maintained regular communication to mitigate this issue. Teacher 2 explained:

“While finding time to meet is challenging, we’ve found ways to collaborate effectively through shared digital platforms.” (Structured Interview, 04,10,2024)

Teacher 4 noted that it was difficult for her earlier to make teachers understand the effectiveness of collaborative planning meetings. Teachers were used to working

independently and their previous experiences with collaborative planning meetings were not fruitful as those sessions were kept for longer hours. To overcome this challenge, teacher 4 noted that:

“To make collaboration feel manageable rather than an added burden, I encourage efficient use of collaborative time. For example, instead of long meetings, we focus on short, targeted discussions or quick check-ins” (Structured Interview, 02,10,2024)

It was also observed during the PD sessions that teachers were asked to write their reflections and feedback on the previous sessions.

The findings highlight key themes about teacher collaboration and its influence on professional growth, teaching strategies, and student learning outcomes. Structured team planning emerged as a pivotal practice, with regular team meetings fostering curriculum alignment, strategy sharing, and instructional consistency. These sessions enable teachers to collaboratively solve problems, such as addressing learning gaps, and to adjust teaching approaches effectively. Dedicated time slots and efficient planning tools ensure that collaborative efforts remain consistent and manageable, ultimately leading to cohesive teaching practices across grade levels. Another significant finding is the role of interdisciplinary collaboration, where teachers from different subject areas co-design lessons that integrate diverse perspectives. This approach enhances teaching by promoting meaningful connections between subjects, fostering critical thinking, and encouraging real-world problem-solving among students.

Resource sharing and collective problem-solving also stood out as essential components of effective collaboration. Teachers reported that exchanging materials and strategies enriched their teaching practices, saved time, and introduced innovative techniques. Team discussions provided opportunities to address challenges, such as classroom management and lesson planning, leading to increased teacher confidence and effectiveness. The collaboration further

supported professional growth through development and reflection, with teachers refining their instructional strategies through professional development sessions and collaborative meetings. Workshops on topics like inquiry-based learning, differentiated instruction, and technology integration provided tools for continuous improvement, while reflective activities enabled teachers to assess and adapt their practices.

These collaborative practices had a measurable impact on student learning outcomes, as observed in science and design classes. Lessons developed through collaboration were engaging, encouraged critical thinking, and supported real-world applications. Teachers also noted improvements in student performance, behavior, and engagement, attributed to their enhanced instructional strategies. Despite challenges such as time constraints, teachers found ways to sustain collaboration through asynchronous tools, focused meetings, and consistent communication. These findings underscore the transformative potential of teacher collaboration in driving professional development and improving educational experiences for both teachers and students.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Effective Methods of Collaboration

The findings of this research underscore the pivotal role of teacher collaboration in enhancing professional practices and improving student learning outcomes. Key themes emerged from observations, interviews, and document analysis, including structured planning, interdisciplinary collaboration, resource sharing, and the integration of professional development into teaching practices. These findings align with existing literature, such as Honigsfeld and Dove (2021), which emphasizes the transformational potential of collaborative practices in educational settings. Regular team meetings were found to be essential for aligning curriculum goals, sharing strategies, and ensuring instructional consistency. These sessions allow teachers to collaborate on solving problems, such as addressing learning gaps, and adjusting teaching approaches. Dedicated time slots and efficient planning tools ensure these collaborative efforts remain manageable and effective. Interdisciplinary collaboration also emerged as a powerful method, with teachers from different subject areas co-designing lessons to integrate diverse perspectives. This practice promotes deeper connections between subjects, fosters critical thinking, and encourages real-world applications of knowledge. The observed integration of interdisciplinary concepts and technology in the design class highlighted the benefits of structured planning, while resource sharing and collective problem-solving facilitated innovative approaches to teaching and classroom management. This aligns with Vangrieken et al. (2017), who identify regular team meetings as critical for fostering alignment and shared instructional goals, and Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who highlight the positive effects of cross-disciplinary approaches on student engagement.

5.2 Impact of Collaboration on Growth and Learning

Teacher collaboration not only enhances professional growth but also has a direct influence on student learning outcomes. Professional development sessions and collaborative meetings provide teachers with opportunities to refine their instructional strategies. For example, training on inquiry-based learning, differentiated instruction, and technology integration offered tools for continuous improvement. Teachers shared how these sessions supported their development and helped adapt innovative techniques to their classrooms. This aligns with De Simone (2020), who emphasizes the role of professional development in promoting collaborative practices and improving teaching quality. The influence of collaboration on student learning was evident in both the design and science classes, where team-based problem-solving and resource sharing led to student-centered learning approaches that encouraged critical thinking and real-world applications. These efforts supported student engagement and improved academic performance, demonstrating the power of teamwork to address diverse student needs. Teachers also noted that collaborative efforts to identify and address learning gaps led to targeted interventions, contributing to improved student outcomes. Despite challenges such as time constraints and heavy workloads, teachers found ways to sustain collaboration through asynchronous tools, focused meetings, and consistent communication, reinforcing the idea that collaboration positively influences both professional growth and student learning outcomes. These results mirror the findings of Goddard et al. (2015), which highlight barriers to collaboration but also suggest ways to overcome them. Overall, the study supports the hypothesis that teacher collaboration enhances both instructional practices and student success, aligning with existing research on the benefits of collaboration in educational settings.

5.3 Conclusion

This research demonstrates that teacher collaboration plays a crucial role in enhancing both professional practices and student learning outcomes. The findings reveal that structured team planning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the sharing of resources significantly improve instructional effectiveness. Regular collaborative meetings provide teachers with opportunities to align curriculum goals, share strategies, and solve problems collectively. These practices foster a cohesive teaching environment that enhances instructional consistency, encourages critical thinking, and promotes real-world problem-solving among students. Furthermore, professional development sessions, focused on areas such as inquiry-based learning, technology integration, and differentiated instruction, equip teachers with innovative tools to continuously refine their teaching methods.

Collaboration not only improves individual teaching strategies but also contributes to a more coherent and aligned curriculum, ultimately benefitting student learning outcomes. The integration of interdisciplinary projects and the use of technology in lesson design, as observed in the study, align with contemporary educational goals, including fostering creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills in students. Additionally, resource sharing and collective problem-solving enable teachers to address learning gaps effectively, leading to targeted interventions that support diverse student needs.

While challenges such as time constraints and workload pressures remain, teachers have found practical solutions to sustain collaboration, such as using asynchronous tools and focusing on short, targeted meetings. These efforts highlight the transformative potential of collaboration in educational settings and underscore the importance of fostering a culture of teamwork among educators.

In conclusion, the findings of this research confirm the positive impact of teacher collaboration on both professional growth and student success. By continuing to prioritize and support collaborative practices, schools can foster environments that not only improve teaching but also enhance the learning experiences of students, preparing them for the challenges of the future. The study supports existing literature on the benefits of teacher collaboration and offers practical insights for schools aiming to cultivate effective, collaborative teaching cultures.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance teacher collaboration, for their professional growth and learning

1. Allocating more time for collaboration through providing more dedicated time within teachers' schedules for team meetings and interdisciplinary collaboration to align goals and share strategies.
2. Fostering a culture of peer learning and resource sharing by encouraging a culture of sharing materials, ideas, and strategies through digital platforms or collaborative planning sessions.
3. Integration of collaborative reflection into professional development by incorporating opportunities for collective reflection during PD sessions to refine teaching strategies and improve practices.
4. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration by organizing regular interdisciplinary workshops or planning sessions for teachers to share expertise and develop innovative teaching strategies.
5. Providing Ongoing PD Focused on Collaboration by offering PD programs focused on communication, teamwork, and collaborative teaching strategies, such as co-teaching and inquiry-based learning.

6. Creation of teacher-led professional learning communities (PLCs) to support the establishment of teacher-led PLCs to promote collective goal setting, reflection, and mutual support in applying new teaching strategies.

By implementing these recommendations, Aga Khan Academy Dhaka can further enhance its teacher collaboration efforts, creating a robust professional development culture that promotes continuous growth, improved teaching practices, and ultimately, better student outcomes.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Consent Letter

Date:

Title of the Study: Understanding The Contribution of Teacher Collaboration to Professional Development and Learning Among Teachers at The Aga Khan Academy Dhaka

Dear [Name of Participant],

With this letter, I'm extending an invitation for you to take part in the study, "Understanding the Impact of Teacher Collaboration at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka." I, Fariza Binta Siddika am employed at The Aga Khan Academy Dhaka in the Admin Department, and I kindly ask for your voluntary participation in this research.

The study's objective is to investigate and comprehend the perspectives, experiences, and reflections of educators about cooperation at the Aga Khan Academy in Dhaka. Your observations will aid in improving our comprehension of how teacher collaboration affects student growth and learning.

You will be required to [take part in a structured interview/observation by me in group meetings or classroom] if you consent to participate. The duration of the interview/observation is approximately [3 to 6 Weeks], and it will be accurately captured on audio or if you are not comfortable, I will take notes. Your answers will be kept private, and during the analysis process, any personally identifiable information will be removed.

Participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to stop participating in the study if you are feeling inappropriate at any moment. You won't experience any repercussions for declining to participate, and your choice will not affect your relationship with the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka.

The highest level of confidentiality will be applied to all data gathered for this study. Your name and any other identifying information will remain private, and the research team will be the only ones with access to the safely stored data.

There aren't many risks involved in taking part in this study. On the other hand, you provide insightful commentary by sharing your experiences, which could help the larger educational community. The results will be shared in a way that preserves participant privacy.

You can reach me at [acdb@hotmail.com] or [017*****] for any queries regarding the study.

By putting your signature on this form, you attest to the fact that you have read, comprehended, and freely chosen to take part in the study.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for your willingness and your time to participate in this research.

Regards,

Fariza Binta Siddika

Administration

The Aga Khan Academy Dhaka

Appendix B. Interview Guide

Questions prepared for the interview:

For Teachers:

Section 1: Your Role and Daily Routine

1. How would you describe your daily role as a teacher? How many years have you been teaching?
2. If your role were part of a puzzle, how do you think it fits into the larger picture of the school operations?

Section 2: Learning and Professional Development

3. Can you share when you learned something new through professional development?
How did it affect the way you teach or approach your work?

Section 3: Collaboration with Other Teachers

4. In your experience, what are the main benefits of working closely with other teachers?
5. What types of teamwork between teachers do you think have the biggest impact on student success?
6. When you collaborate with other teachers, how do you all make sure you're working toward the same goals? Can you describe how this process works?
7. How has collaboration with other teachers changed your teaching? How would you compare your classroom before and after you began collaborating with others?
8. Do you feel that working with other teachers creates a sense of shared responsibility for students' success? Why or why not?

Section 4: Trying New Ideas in the Classroom

11. How often do you try new strategies in your classroom? How do you determine whether these new ideas are helping your students?

12. If you didn't have the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers, how do you think your teaching would be different?

For Academic Admin:

Section 1: General Overview of Collaboration

1. How would you describe the current culture of teacher collaboration in your school?
How has this evolved?
2. What role do you believe teacher collaboration plays in the success of the school and student outcomes? Can you give an example of where collaboration directly impacted student success?
3. How do you ensure that collaboration among teachers remains productive and aligned with the school's goals?

Section 2: Support for Teacher Collaboration

4. What systems or structures are in place to support collaboration among teachers (e.g., team meetings, shared planning time, etc.)? How effective do you think these are?
5. How do you as a school leader encourage and promote a collaborative environment among your staff? Are there specific strategies or incentives you use to foster collaboration?
6. What challenges do you face in promoting teacher collaboration, and how do you address them?

Section 3: Collaboration and Professional Development

7. How does professional development in your school incorporate opportunities for teachers to collaborate? Can you share an example where professional development led to improved collaboration?
8. How do you ensure that teachers have the skills and knowledge to collaborate effectively? Are there any specific training or workshops you provide?

Section 4: Measuring and Monitoring Collaboration

9. How do you measure or evaluate the effectiveness of teacher collaboration in your school? Are there specific indicators or outcomes you track?

Section 5: Impact on Teachers and Students

11. From your perspective, what are the most significant benefits of teacher collaboration for your staff?
12. How do you believe teacher collaboration directly impacts student learning and achievement?

Section 6: Vision for the Future

13. What is your vision for improving or expanding teacher collaboration in your school in the future? What resources or changes would you like to see to better support this?
14. If you had no limitations, what changes or initiatives would you implement to enhance collaboration among teachers?

Appendix C. Observation Guidelines

Guidelines for Observation:

1. Clearly define the goals of the observations, focusing on how teacher collaboration impacts their learning and development.
2. Identify specific parts of collaboration to watch, like team teaching, co-planning, or professional learning communities.
3. Choose different settings, like classrooms, meeting rooms, and informal spaces, to observe various forms of collaboration.
4. Make sure all participants understand the observation process and have given their consent.
5. Avoid bias and focus on capturing real interactions and behaviors.
6. Position myself in a way that doesn't disrupt the teachers and allows them to act naturally.
7. Use quiet methods, like silent notetaking or audio recording (with consent), to document observations.
8. Pay attention to how teachers communicate, share resources, and support one another.
9. Note instances of collaborative planning, joint problem-solving, and group reflection.
10. Observe how collaboration impacts teaching practices and student engagement.
11. Provide detailed descriptions of what you see, supported by examples.